

## Vaquita Facts

- The vaquita has only been known to science since 1958.
- Vaquita means “little cow” in Spanish.
- At about 5 feet (1.5 m) long, it’s the smallest species of cetacean.
- The range (ca. 4,000 sq. km) is only about 1/4 the size of metropolitan Los Angeles.
- The vaquita lives only about a 4.5 hour drive from San Diego.
- Unlike other porpoises, vaquitas give birth only every other year.
- Calves are born in the spring (March/April).
- They live to be about 20-21 years old.
- Vaquitas have never been held captive in aquaria.
- The vaquita is the rarest and **most-endangered** species of marine mammal in the world.
- Its fate is tied to that of the upper Gulf of California ecosystem.
- The vaquita could go extinct in a year or two if we do not act NOW.



The vaquita lives only at the red triangle!

**For more information, check these websites:**

[www.vivavaquita.org](http://www.vivavaquita.org)

[www.vaquita.tv](http://www.vaquita.tv)

[www.cetosresearch.org/research/vaquita/vaquita.htm](http://www.cetosresearch.org/research/vaquita/vaquita.htm)

[www.ine.gob.mx/con-eco-vaquita](http://www.ine.gob.mx/con-eco-vaquita)

<http://www.cedointercultural.org/content/view/69/66/lang,en/>

[www.savethewhales.org/vaquita.html](http://www.savethewhales.org/vaquita.html)

<http://swfsc.noaa.gov/>

<http://www.acsonline.org/>

Photos taken under permit (Oficio No. DR/488/08) from the Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT), within a natural protected area subject to special management and decreed as such by the Mexican government.

Vaquita Fund  
Cetos Research Organization  
c/o Cetos Atlantic/Ann Zoidis  
11 Des Isle Ave  
Bar Harbor ME 04609  
(207) 266-6252  
[www.cetosresearch.org](http://www.cetosresearch.org)

v3 2015

# THE VAQUITA



THE WORLD'S  
MOST  
ENDANGERED  
MARINE  
MAMMAL



*Vaquitas are very unique, and they don't look or act like any other dolphin or porpoise in the world...*

## What is a vaquita?

The vaquita is a small porpoise (whales, dolphins, and porpoises are called cetaceans by scientists). It is one of only seven species of true porpoises, and is the only one that occurs in warm waters of the eastern Pacific. It is found in a tiny area in the extreme northern Gulf of California, near Baja California, Mexico. It is a unique species, with a body shape and color pattern unlike that of any other. It has a tall dorsal fin (for a porpoise) and a beautiful color pattern on the face, with dark eye rings and lip patches that look like an application of "goth" make-up. There is only one small population, and if the species goes extinct, it will be gone forever.



## Why should we be worried?

The vaquita has probably always been rare. But in the last few decades, the small population has plummeted by about 8-19%/year, as gillnets set for fish and shrimp kill more porpoises than are born. The population in 2014 was estimated to be only 97 individuals, and is declining quickly. If rapid progress is not made, the vaquita will be extinct in a few short years. The very perilous situation of the vaquita has been recognized by the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which lists it as **Critically Endangered**), the Mexican government, and the US government (both of which list the vaquita as **Endangered**).

## Can they be saved?

Yes, the vaquita can be saved! Unlike some endangered species that have no place left to live in the wild, the vaquita's home in the Gulf of California is clean and healthy. The only real problem is the gillnets that entangle and kill vaquitas. If these can be eliminated from the small area where vaquitas occur, the species will likely recover. We can save the vaquita!

## What you can do...

- Tell all your friends and family about the vaquita and its plight.
- Do not buy shrimp or fish caught with gillnets (support fishermen who don't use gillnets).
- Sign petitions supporting vaquita conservation.
- Write to congress and ask them to support Mexican action to save the vaquita.
- Write letters of support to Mexico's Ministry of Environment (SEMARNAT) and president.
- Go to [www.vivavaquita.org](http://www.vivavaquita.org) to learn more about how you can help.
- Donate to the Vaquita Recovery Fund -  
Send a tax-deductible check to:

Cetos Research Organization/Vaquita  
c/o Cetos Atlantic  
<visit [www.vivavaquita.org](http://www.vivavaquita.org)  
to get more information>



*Nicola is an adult female with two large notches. She gave birth in 2008.*



*Midnick has a single large notch midway up the dorsal fin.*



*Fingertip is a female with a uniquely-shaped dorsal fin. She had a baby in 2008.*



*Some vaquitas have body scarring that can be used to identify them.*



*Topnick is an animal with a large nick high up on the fin.*



*Some vaquitas can not be identified by natural marks.*