



Gillnets like these are used to catch fish and shrimp in the Gulf of California, but the nets can ensnare the endangered vaquita marina porpoise, causing the porpoises to drown.

## **Porpoise in Peril:** Help protect the most endangered small marine mammal in the world

For more information please visit:  
[www.savebiogems.org/uppergulf/](http://www.savebiogems.org/uppergulf/)  
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NRDC is racing against time to prevent the extinction of the vaquita marina (*Phocoena sinus*), the world's smallest porpoise and now its most endangered small marine mammal. With only 100 to 400 porpoises left, the vaquita could become the second marine mammal to go extinct in our lifetimes purely because of destructive human activities. The main threat to vaquitas is the accidental entanglement in nets set for fish and shrimp that is exported from Mexico to U.S. consumers. Immediate action must be taken on both sides of the border to protect this critically endangered porpoise.

**The High Cost of Unsustainable Shrimp**  
Shrimp is the most popular seafood in the United States, with the average American consuming around 4 pounds a year. But shrimp comes with high costs to wildlife and ecosystems: the gillnets used to catch shrimp can be deadly for the vaquita marina, which get entangled in the nets' webbing and drown. With so few vaquita left, it is critical that fishing communities stop using gillnets and move to more sustainable harvesting methods for shrimp. Please work with us to make sure that your seafood purchases do not contribute to the extinction of the vaquita marina.

### **Upper Gulf of California: The Vaquita's Only Home**

While many marine mammals range across wide expanses of ocean, the vaquita marina is found only in the Upper Gulf of California, Mexico, giving it the smallest geographic distribution of any porpoise (see map). Home to 33 other species of marine mammals and 891 species of fish, the Upper Gulf is also one of the most biodiverse marine ecosystems in the world. Its nutrient-rich waters are an important spawning ground for blue and brown shrimp as well as a critical nursery and feeding area for porpoises, dolphins, and whales.



## Porpoise in Peril

Although the Mexican government created the Upper Gulf of California and Colorado River Delta Biosphere Reserve in 1993 to protect the vaquita and its habitat, rampant over-fishing, uncontrolled shrimp trawling, and the use of gillnets have degraded the marine environment and jeopardize the vaquita.

### NRDC Fights for the Endangered Vaquita

In March 2005, NRDC launched a campaign to protect the vaquita and its rich marine habitat. By July of that year, we had obtained unprecedented commitments from local fishermen and Ocean Garden, Inc., the largest U.S. importer of Mexican shrimp, to prevent further vaquita drownings in fishing nets and to improve the sustainability of the fishery as a whole. As a direct result, fishermen have taken measures to cut down on illegal and off-season fishing.

NRDC is now working with Mexican partners and an international committee of scientists to develop new protections for the vaquita, create economic alternatives for local fishing communities, and generate global awareness and financial support to eliminate entangling gillnets.

### NRDC Partners with Local Fishermen

Providing fishermen with sustainable economic alternatives is the only way to gain the support of local communities and save the vaquita. Without the participation of local fishermen, government regulation of the Biosphere Reserve will continue to be ineffective.

NRDC is working with fishermen in the Gulf of Santa Clara, the largest fishing community in the area, to permanently give up their gillnets used to fish sharks and manta rays in exchange for compensation to start up sustainable projects in their community. NRDC plans to work with these fishermen to remove the nets and develop a community-based monitoring program to ensure that they stay out of the water.



**Upper Gulf of California:**  
The vaquita's only home

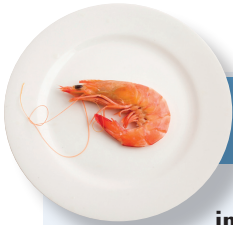


The vaquita marina—so rare that no photographs exist of the species—lives only in the Upper Gulf of California, Mexico.

### Preventing the Vaquita's Extinction

There is still time to protect the vaquita, but it will require the commitment and financial support of people who are dedicated to saving marine life and protecting our oceans. The Mexican Government must enforce an effective monitoring program—one that includes independent, third-party verification—to keep gillnets out of the water. NRDC will press the government, fishermen, and Ocean Garden, Inc. to create a comprehensive program of monitoring and enforcement throughout the vaquita's habitat.

We have a rare opportunity to save a species, but we need your help. Please help us remove entangling nets from vaquita habitat by visiting [www.biogems.org](http://www.biogems.org) and taking action today. With your help, NRDC can work together with fishermen to create a future for the vaquita and the communities of the Upper Gulf.



### FAST FACTS

#### Shrimping in The Upper Gulf of California

- Approximately 23,000 tons of shrimp were caught each year in the Gulf of California from 1994 to 2000.
- Shrimp nets catch species other than shrimp at a rate of 1:10, affecting as many as 400 different species in the Upper Gulf of California.
- Nearly 200,000 tons of species other than shrimp are taken in by gillnets (by-catch) each year in the Upper Gulf of California.
- Shrimp nets drag across every shallow place in the Upper Gulf of California an estimated four times a year, destroying marine habitat.
- No more than 400 *vaquita marinas* are thought be alive today, making them one of the world's rarest marine mammals.