



Vaquita Porpoise

Why in News?

According to the United States Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), **Vaquita porpoise (*Phocoena sinus*)** is nearing extinction and immediate measures are needed to save the remaining population.

What are Porpoises?

- Porpoises are among the smallest members of the [cetacean family](#) (**whales, porpoises and dolphins**).
- They are only **distant relatives of dolphins** (they last had a common ancestor roughly 15 million years ago).
- There are only seven species of porpoise, the most popular being the widely distributed harbour porpoise.
- Many species, including the **vaquita, are barely studied**. Most of what we know about them comes from examining animals that have been washed ashore.

What is Vaquita Porpoise?

- **About:** [//](#)



- The vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*) is the world's smallest cetacean. Its name means "**little cow**" in Spanish.
- It has a dark ring around the eyes **is its most striking feature**, along with a proportionally **large dorsal fin**.
- It is unique **among the porpoises as it is the only species of that family found in warm waters**, and the size of the dorsal fin is believed to be an adaptation to that, allowing for extra body heat to dissipate.
- Like many other species of porpoise, vaquita tend to be shy and elusive, avoiding boats

when approached.

▪ **Habitats:**

- Found only in the northern Gulf of California (Sea of Cortez) in Mexico. Most commonly seen in shallow waters up to 50 metres deep.

▪ **Threats:**

- The vaquita population has been in sharp decline for decades, recently accelerated by **illegal fishing with gill-nets for the vulnerable totoaba**, a large fish sought after for its swim bladder.
- The small animal frequently gets caught in fixed fishing nets (gill-nets), as by-catch.

▪ **Protection Status:**

- **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered.
- **CITES:** Appendix I

Source: DTE

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