

SAVE THE VAQUITA



Save the Vaquita K-5 Curriculum Booklet 1: Fact Sheets



A cooperative program of **WhaleTimes, Inc.** and **Oregon Coast Aquarium**



VAQUITA

TEAM VAQUITA

WhaleTimes, Inc.
Oregon Coast Aquarium's Oceanscape Network
Southwest Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries

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SAVE THE VAQUITA



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and more!

Vaquita (Phocoena sinus)

Status: **CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**



LENGTH: 4 to 5 feet (1.3 to 1.5 m)

DIET: fish, squid, crustaceans

HOME: northern Gulf of Mexico

FOUND: 13-160 feet (4-50 m) deep

PREDATORS: large sharks

LIFESPAN: 20 years

Most people have never heard of the **world's most endangered whale** – the vaquita. This porpoise is as long as a 12-year old kid.

Home Tiny Home

Vaquitas live within a small part of the Gulf of California. They are only found within an area that is half the size of the Island of Hawaii.

Secretive Whales

Scientists didn't know the vaquita existed until the 1950s. Unlike other flashy whales, vaquitas do not do fancy jumps or leaps. Except when taking a breath, they spend most of their time under water. Vaquitas avoid boats and people. Scientists have noticed that when they get the rare opportunity to see vaquita, the porpoises stay about a half-mile (1 km) away from the research boat.

Scientists who study vaquitas peer through binoculars for hours to catch a single glimpse of one taking a quick breath before it disappears beneath the surface.

Pretty Porpoise

Dark rings around a vaquita's eyes and lips adds to the its unique beauty and list of secrets. Scientists do not know how or if the exotic coloration helps the porpoise.

A vaquita's triangle-shaped dorsal fin is higher and wider (compared to its body size) than most porpoises. The male vaquita's dorsal fin is slightly larger.

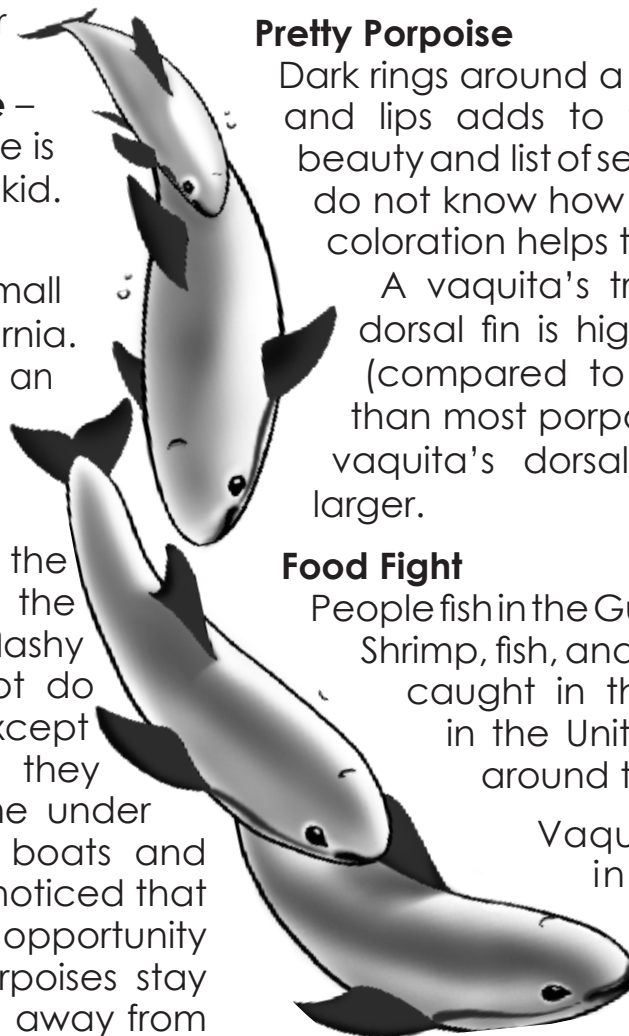
Food Fight

People fish in the Gulf of California. Shrimp, fish, and other seafood caught in the Gulf is sold in the United States and around the world.

Vaquita get caught in nets set for shrimp, squid, and fish.

Vaquita also get caught in nets illegally set to catch a critically endangered fish called the *totoaba*.

There might only be 30 vaquita left in the entire world. Can you help us save them?



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Help save vaquita and other ocean animals by eating sustainably caught seafood. Read more about sustainable seafood on the WhaleTimes "What is Sustainable Seafood?" fact sheet.

Totoaba (Totoaba macdonaldi)



Status: CRITICALLY ENDANGERED

A huge, silvery fish called the totoaba lives in the Gulf of California, Mexico. (Pronounced: tō-twah-bah)

A totoaba is the size of a large man. It reaches lengths up to 6.5 feet (2 m) and weights up to 220 pounds (100 kg).

Migration and Nursery Time

Totoaba adults spend part of the year in central Gulf of California. In the winter, adults swim northward. They swim to their nursery area. This is where they lay their eggs.

After the eggs hatch, the young fish grow up in the nursery.

Young totoaba stay in the safety of the nursery for 2 to 3 years. When totoaba are old enough, they begin to travel with the adults.

Personal Flotation Device

Totoaba hunt and live in water down as deep as 82 feet (25 meters). That's about as deep as 7 swimming pools stacked on top of each other. Totoaba hunt crabs, sardines, anchovies and other small fish near the ocean floor.

To hover just above the ocean floor or remain at whatever depth they need, totoaba (like other bony fish) have a **swim bladder**. Think of it as a balloon-like organ inside the fish. By inflating

or deflating this the swim bladder, a totoaba can float 6 feet down or 80 feet down without struggling or wasting energy. SCUBA divers use a piece of equipment called a "buoyancy compensator" for the same reason.

Drummer Fish

Totoaba are part of the croaker family. Fish in this family use the swim bladder to make sounds. The fish vibrate special muscles against the swim bladder to create drumming or frog-like croaking sounds.

Save Totoaba to Save the Vaquita?

The fate of the totoaba and the fate of the vaquita are connected. They are not predators or prey of each other.

However, both hunt near the seafloor. Both are caught in nets set for other animals. In addition, vaquita are caught in nets illegally set for totoaba. Both are **critically endangered**.

Your help is vital to saving and protecting totoaba, vaquita, and other ocean animals.

Help save vaquita and other ocean animals by eating sustainably caught seafood. Read more about sustainable seafood on the WhaleTimes "What is Sustainable Seafood?" fact sheet.

What is Sustainable Seafood?



Eating sustainable seafood is one very important way you can protect the ocean. What is sustainable seafood?

Sustainable seafood is any kind of *seafood caught in ways that protect the population, other animals, and their habitat. If seafood is sustainably caught, it means:

1. Some animals are left undisturbed so they can have young and keep the population at a healthy level.
2. Animals are caught in a way that doesn't destroy the habitat, so the animals left behind can find food, shelter, and places to raise their young.
3. Harvesting methods used do the least amount of harm to non-targeted animals, so those populations also remain healthy.

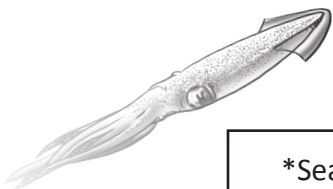


Why is this important? The ocean is the food bank for people throughout the world. We need to be sure there will always be food available for people and the animals.

We cannot keep our ocean healthy if we remove all the fish, shrimp or other seafood. If people take most or all one kind of fish, for example, there will not be enough left to reproduce, keep the populations healthy and strong, or enough food for other animals.

Plus, vaquita, totoaba, sharks, dolphins, sea turtles, penguins, seabirds,

---more---



*Seafood includes fish, shrimp, crabs, lobster, squid, octopus, sharks, rays, abalone, or any other kind of ocean animal people eat.



What is Sustainable Seafood? pg 2

fish, squid, and many other ocean animals are accidentally caught in nets set for seafood.

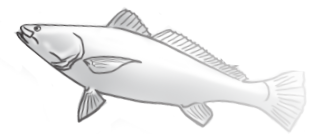
How can you help? **Choose to only eat sustainable seafood.** But how do you know if the plump, pink shrimp at the seafood counter or the fish on the menu are sustainably caught? It's simple.

Ask, "Is your seafood sustainably caught?"

- If the answer is yes, then enjoy!
- If not, or if the staff doesn't know, order something else.

By supporting sustainable seafood efforts with your money, you encourage markets, restaurants, and chefs to demand it from suppliers and fishers. That encourages everyone to choose and support good fishing practices and to protect the ocean.

**Our choices make a difference — help save ocean animals.
Demand sustainable seafood.**



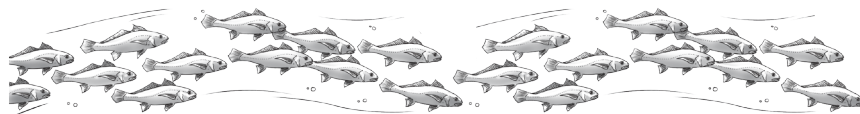
Learn more:

[Fish Watch, NOAA](http://www.fishwatch.gov): www.fishwatch.gov

[Seafood Future](http://www.aquariumofpacific.org/seafoodfuture/overview), Aquarium of the Pacific:

www.aquariumofpacific.org/seafoodfuture/overview

[Seafood Watch](http://seafoodwatch.org), Monterey Bay Aquarium: seafoodwatch.org



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Vaquita (Phocoena sinus)

Status: **CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**



Save Totoaba to Save the Vaquita

The fate of the totoaba and the fate of the vaquita are connected. They are not predators or prey of each other. However, both hunt near the seafloor. Both animals are caught in nets set for seafood. In addition, vaquita are caught in nets illegally set for totoaba. Both are **critically endangered**.

LENGTH: 4 to 5 feet (1.3 to 1.5 m)

WEIGHT: 99 to 110 lb (5 to 50 kg)

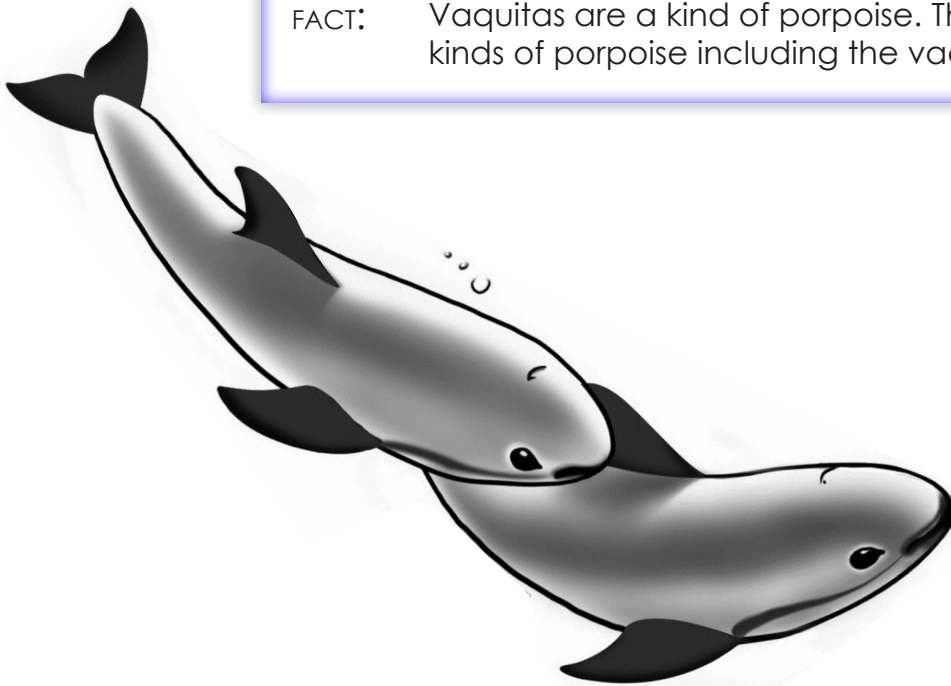
HOME: only in the Gulf of California, Mexico

FOUND: 13-160 feet (4-50 m) deep

DIET: fish, squid, crustaceans

LIFESPAN: 20 years

FACT: Vaquitas are a kind of porpoise. There are seven kinds of porpoise including the vaquita.



Vaquita and totoaba are accidentally caught in nets set for shrimp and other animals. **Help save vaquita and other ocean animals by eating sustainably caught seafood.** Learn more about sustainable seafood in WhaleTimes “What is Sustainable Seafood?” fact sheet.

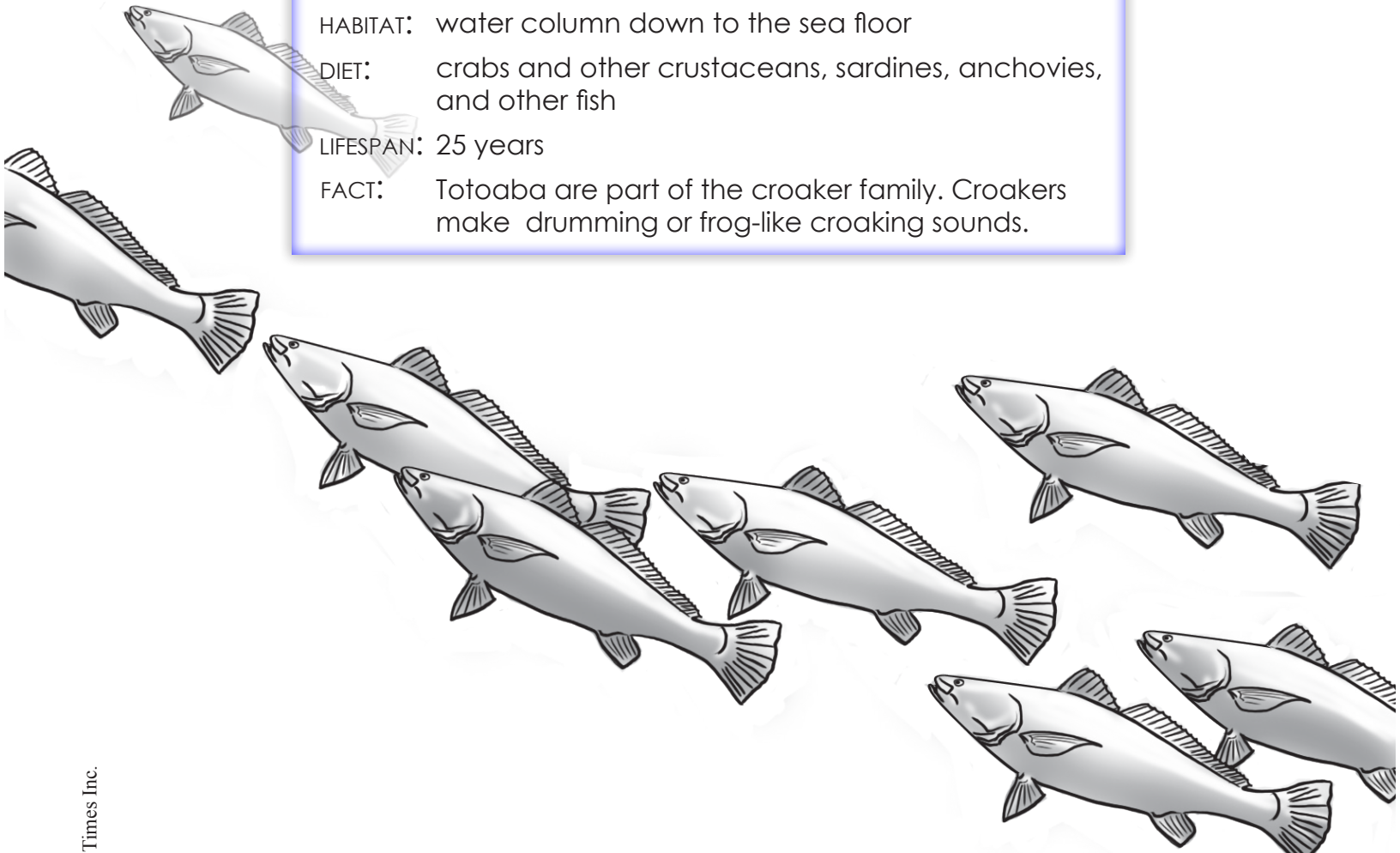
Totoaba (Totoaba macdonaldi)

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LENGTH: Up to 6.5 feet long (2 m)
WEIGHT: Up to 220 pounds (100 kg)
HOME: only in the Gulf of California, Mexico
HABITAT: water column down to the sea floor
DIET: crabs and other crustaceans, sardines, anchovies, and other fish
LIFESPAN: 25 years
FACT: Totoaba are part of the croaker family. Croakers make drumming or frog-like croaking sounds.

Vaquita and totoaba are accidentally caught in nets set for shrimp and other animals. **Help save vaquita and other ocean animals by eating sustainably caught seafood.** Learn more about sustainable seafood in WhaleTimes "What is Sustainable Seafood?" fact sheet.

Shrimp



There are many kinds of shrimp. Shrimp are an important kind of food for ocean animals and people around the world.

BLUE SHRIMP (*Penaeus stylirostris*)

LENGTH: 9 inches (23 cm), carapace 3.23 inches (5.9 cm)

FOUND: Eastern Pacific from Mexico to Peru, including Gulf of California

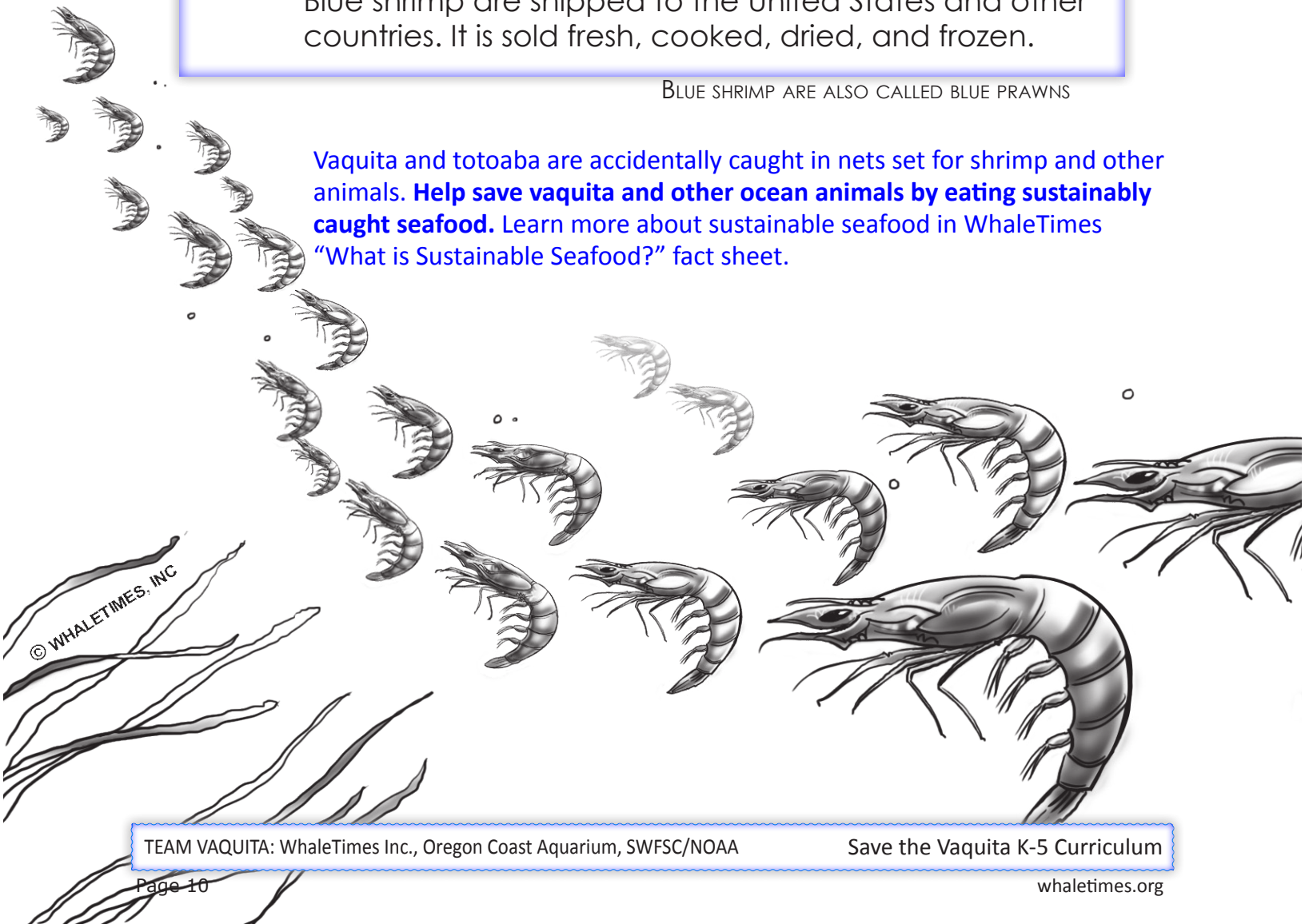
HOME: Usually up to 89 feet (27 m) down, but can live deep as 148 feet (45 m)

HABITAT: Blue shrimp live in the mud on the ocean floor.

FACT: People use nets in- and off-shore to catch blue shrimp. Blue shrimp are shipped to the United States and other countries. It is sold fresh, cooked, dried, and frozen.

BLUE SHRIMP ARE ALSO CALLED BLUE PRAWNS

Vaquita and totoaba are accidentally caught in nets set for shrimp and other animals. **Help save vaquita and other ocean animals by eating sustainably caught seafood.** Learn more about sustainable seafood in WhaleTimes "What is Sustainable Seafood?" fact sheet.

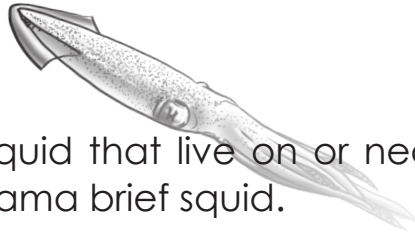


What's in a Vaquita's Lunchbox?



Squid

Vaquitas eat squid that live on or near the ocean floor. Vaquitas often hunt Panama brief squid.



Panama Brief Squid (*Lolliguncula panamensis*)

LENGTH: 3 inches (8 cm)

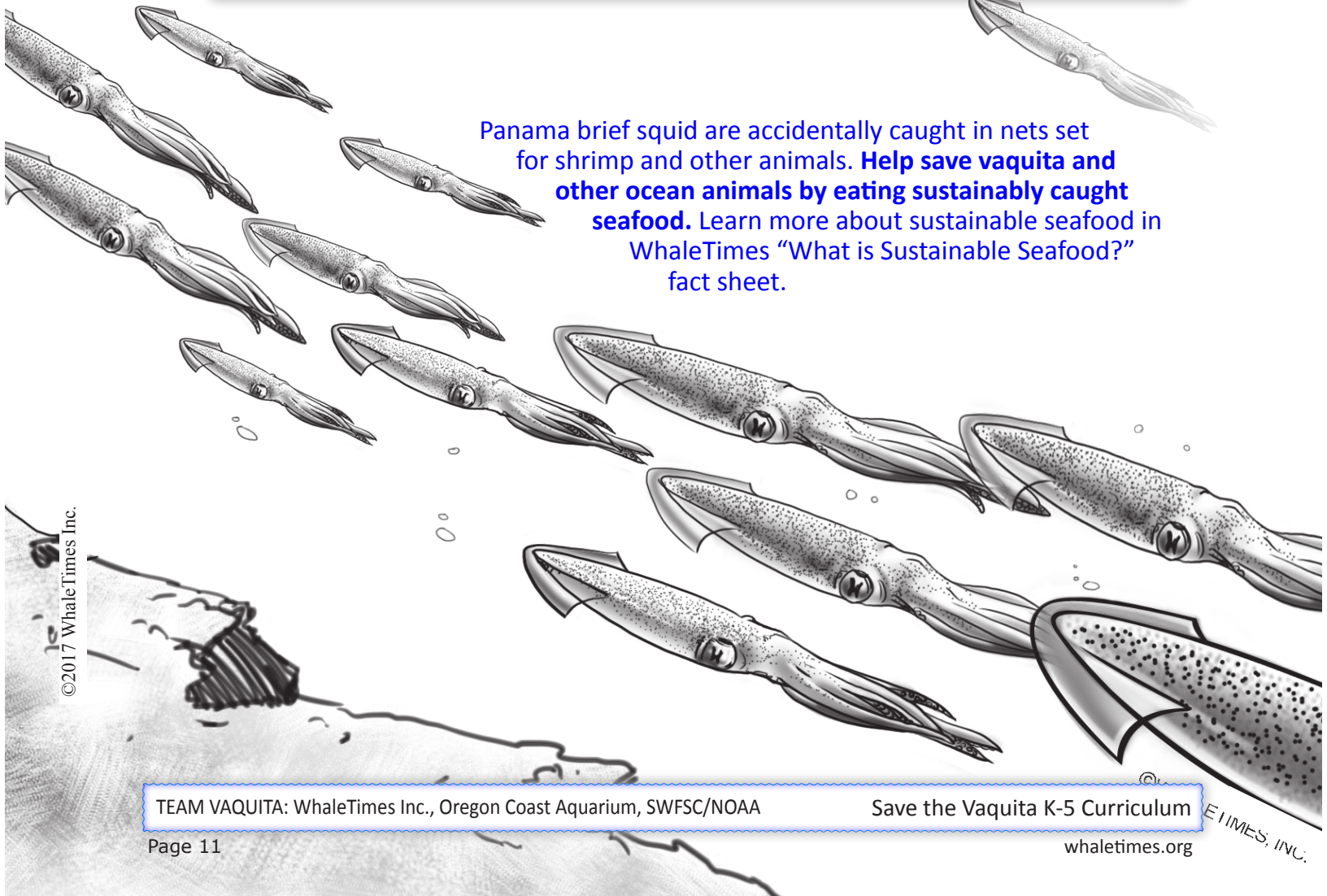
FOUND: as deep as 2,952 ft (75 m)

HOME: Eastern Pacific from the Gulf of California to Peru.

DIET: mainly Pacific sardine (*Sardinops sagax*)

FACT: Squid have 8 arms and 2 feeding tentacles. Squid can change color, texture, and body shape. This helps them communicate, find mates, and hide from predators or prey.

Panama brief squid are accidentally caught in nets set for shrimp and other animals. **Help save vaquita and other ocean animals by eating sustainably caught seafood.** Learn more about sustainable seafood in WhaleTimes "What is Sustainable Seafood?" fact sheet.



What's in a Vaquita's Lunchbox?



Fish

Vaquitas eat fish that live on or near the ocean floor. Like all whales, vaquitas do not chew their food. They swallow it whole. Two kinds of fish vaquitas eat are the Gulf croaker and sharpnose anchovy.



GULF CROAKER (*Micropogonias megalops*)

LENGTH: 16 inches (40 cm)

FOUND: as deep as 328 ft (100 m)

HOME: Gulf croakers live in estuaries, lagoons, deep water, and river mouths in the Gulf of California.

FACT: Fish in the croaker family make croaking or drumming sounds by vibrating muscles against their swim bladders.

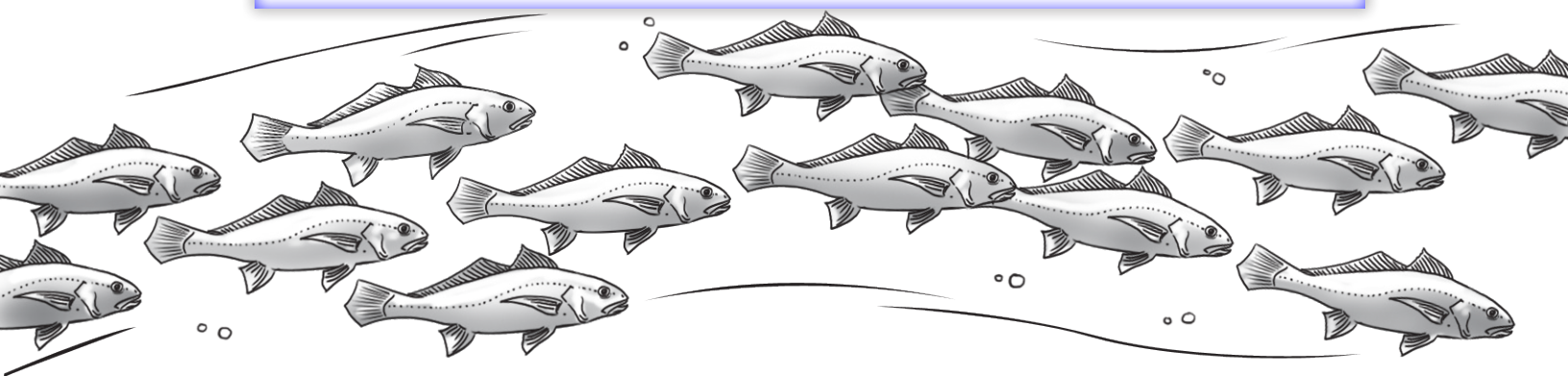
SHARPNOSE ANCHOVY (*Anchoa ischana*)

LENGTH: 3.7 to 5.5 inches (9.5 to 14 cm)

DIET: plankton, fish eggs, and larvae

FOUND: up to 160 ft (50 m)

FACT: Anchovies swim in large schools, or groups. They are eaten by many ocean animals, as well as people.



These two kinds of fish are accidentally caught in nets set for shrimp and other animals. **Help save vaquita and other ocean animals by eating sustainably caught seafood.** Learn more about sustainable seafood in WhaleTimes "What is Sustainable Seafood?" fact sheet.

Vaquita

Vaquitas eat fish and squid.



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Shrimp

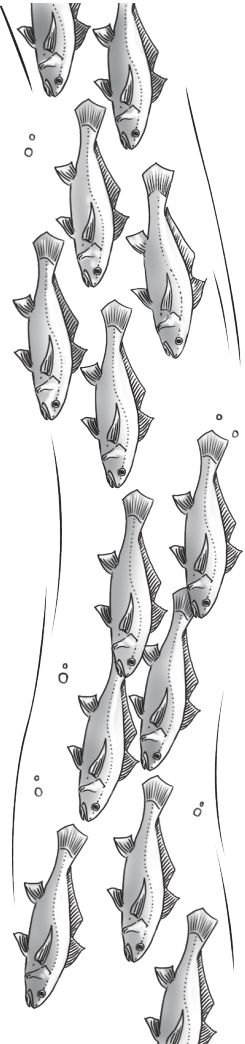
People and sea animals eat shrimp.



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Fish

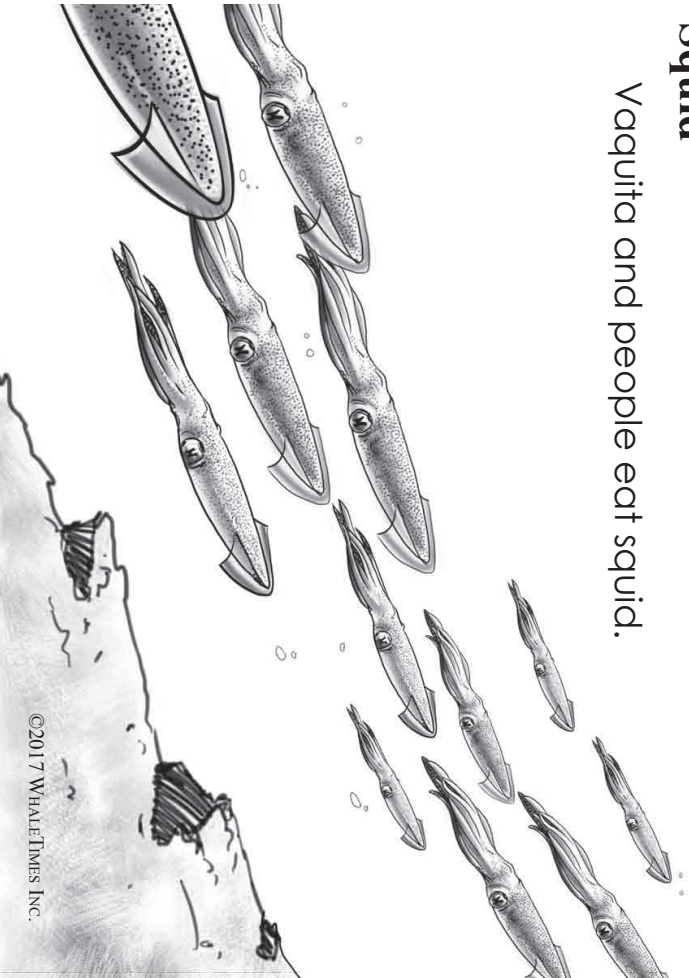
Many kinds of fish live in the sea.



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Squid

Vaquita and people eat squid.

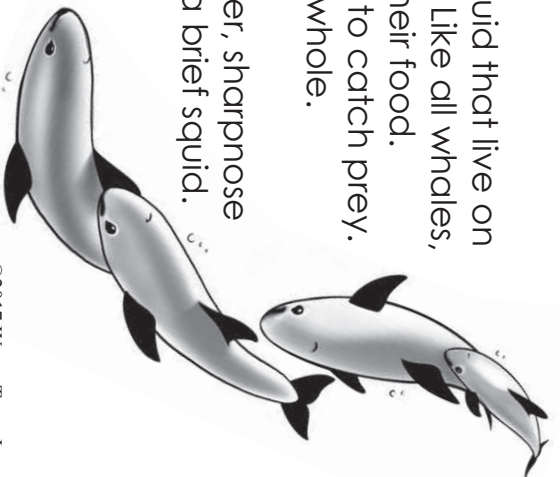


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Vaquita

Vaquitas eat fish and squid that live on or near the ocean floor. Like all whales, vaquitas do not chew their food. Vaquitas use their teeth to catch prey. They swallow their food whole.

Vaquitas eat Gulf croaker, sharpnose anchovies, and Panama brief squid.

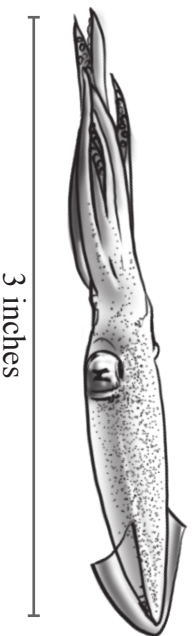


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Squid

Panama Brief Squid (*Loliguncula panamensis*)

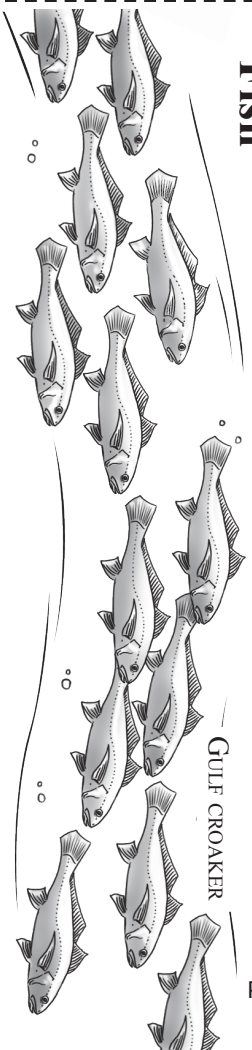
Panama brief squids eat Pacific sardines. This small squid is only 3 inches (8 cm long).



This squid is life-size!

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Fish



GULF CROAKER

Gulf croakers (*Micropogonias megalops*)

Gulf croakers eat worms, fish, mussels, crabs, and shrimp.

Sharpnose anchovies (*Anchoa ischana*)

Sharpnose anchovies eat tiny animals called zooplankton.

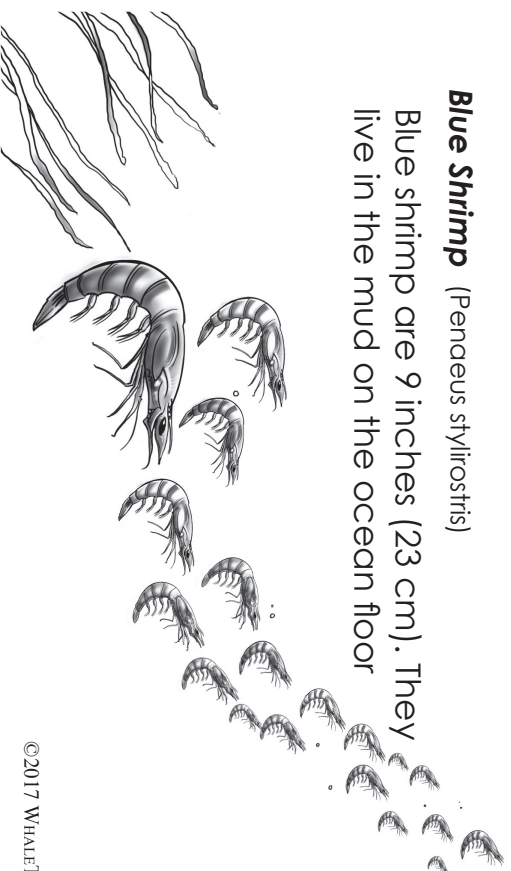
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Shrimp

People eat many kinds of shrimp. Blue shrimp are caught where the vaquitas live. The shrimp are shipped to the United States and other countries. It is sold fresh, cooked, dried, and frozen.

Blue Shrimp (*Penaeus stylirostris*)

Blue shrimp are 9 inches (23 cm). They live in the mud on the ocean floor



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SAVE THE VAQUITA



Looking for vaquita related fact sheets, activities, or more information? Check out:

- › SAVE THE VAQUITA (K-5th grade) Curriculum at www.whaletimes.org
- › VAQUITA (6-12 grade) Curriculum Modules at www.oceanscape.aquarium.org
- › The latest research and information at Southwest Fisheries Science Center/ NOAA Fisheries (swfsc.noaa.gov/MMTD-Vaquita/)



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