

# 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.**