

Celebration of Conservation

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Vaquita Refuge Coordinates
Latitude: 31°15 N
Longitude: 114°30 W

FROM: Jake, the SeaDog
TO: Team Vaquita Virtual Science Team
SUBJECT: Watching and listening for vaquita

Hello Team Vaquita!

The vaquita's shy nature and the murky water of the Gulf of California add to the many challenges in studying this tiny porpoise. How do scientists learn more about vaquita or determine population size if they can't see them?

The answer includes two amazing tools. The first tool is a pair of giant binoculars the scientists call "big eyes." The binoculars most people own for watching birds or other wildlife make things seem seven or eight times closer than they really are. Big eyes make things seem 25 times closer! Big eyes help scientist see the vaquita before the vaquita hear or react (swim away) to their boat.

Another tool scientists use to locate vaquita is a CPOD. It is an "acoustic monitor." What is that? The CPOD listens and records sounds -- specifically the sounds vaquitas make. Like other toothed whales, vaquita use echolocation to find the food they eat. Humans We can't hear the sounds or clicks vaquita use to echolocate or communicate. But the CPOD devices and records it. Scientists set up CPODs in a grid pattern within the vaquita refuge. CPOD listens for the porpoises. Then scientists use the vaquita's clicks to find and count vaquita in the area.

Special binoculars -- old school. CPOD -- new school. Both excellent ways to help study vaquita. Are there any old school or kinds of equipment or technology we can use? How about inventing something new? What kind of tools or technology could you design or invent to study and save vaquita?

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Celebration of Conservation Mission



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