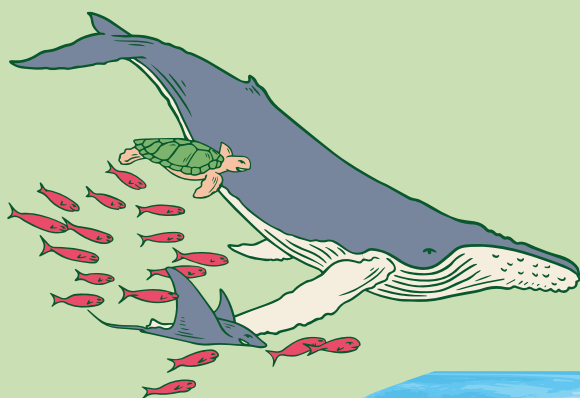
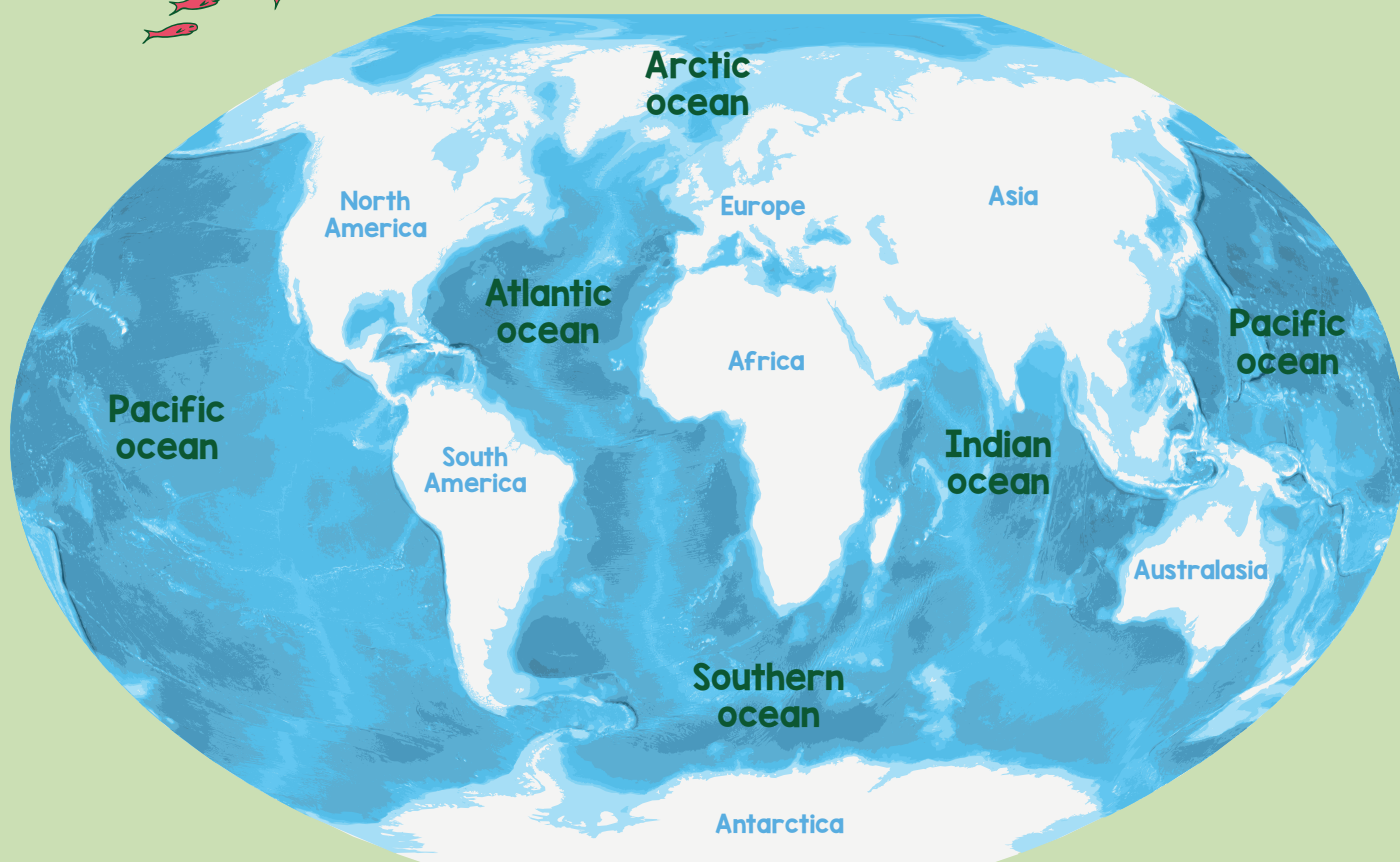




The oceans are vast. Water covers approximately 72% of the Earth's surface. Oceans have incredible wildlife, provide livelihoods for billions and stabilise our climate. Given the size, we might think our oceans are invincible. But they aren't. Our oceans are under an increasing number of threats. Greenpeace is helping protect them.



Why do the oceans matter?

Our oceans are vital to all life on Earth. Without healthy oceans, even humans would find it difficult to survive. Here are some of the reasons why.

- They provide at least half the oxygen we breathe.
- People all over the world rely on the oceans for food. A billion people, largely in developing countries, depend on fish as their main source of protein.
- Many ingredients for life-giving

medicines come from the oceans.

- Eight out of every ten creatures on Earth live in the oceans. In fact, they teem with life that scientists have only just started to discover.
- They are an important carbon sink (a natural reservoir that absorbs and stores more carbon dioxide than it releases) making them vital to regulating our climate. The deep oceans are the largest reservoir of stored carbon on Earth. They store more than 50 times the amount of carbon in the atmosphere!

What's the problem?



Oil drilling

Oil is a fossil fuel. It can be found deep under the ocean floor so energy companies, like BP and Shell drill into the seabed to get it. This results in direct threats to the oceans. Oil spills – like the Deepwater Horizon oil spill that happened in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 – kill and poison marine life. Dangerous blasts of noise, called seismic blasts, are used to search for oil. These blasts are so loud that they penetrate through the ocean and miles into the seafloor. They harm whales, turtles, dolphins and fish, often deafening them and causing them to abandon their habitat.



Industrial fishing

The fishing industry has become more high-tech within recent decades. Giant ships use sonar to find fish schools (groups) with increasing accuracy. Industrial fishing ships can fish further out to sea and to depths of thousands of metres. Ships are now reaching areas, such as the Arctic and Antarctic, that were once too remote. The result is that many fish species that were once common, like cod and tuna, are now threatened with extinction.

Fishing methods used by these ships are often highly destructive. Gigantic ships drag nets across the seabed – a process called bottom trawling. These nets smash everything in their way, destroying fragile coral reefs. Also, most fishing methods catch other species accidentally. In fact, as many as 300,000 whales, dolphins and porpoises are killed every year in fishing nets. This is called bycatch and includes turtles, sharks, dolphins and other fish.



Plastic waste

Every year, 12 million tonnes of plastic ends up in the ocean. That's the equivalent of emptying a rubbish truck into the ocean every minute. Marine animals, like dolphins and turtles, can become trapped, strangled, smothered or even killed by this plastic. A type of plastic pollution that is a particular threat to wildlife is 'ghost gear'. This is abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear. Over the past few decades, plastic has been increasingly used in ropes, nets and fishing lines. This ghost gear can pose a threat to wildlife for decades, litter fragile landscapes like coral reefs and cause hazards to ship navigation.



Deep sea mining

The earth's deep sea is less explored or understood than the moon. Until recently, it has been out of reach but as technology develops, it's being explored by companies and governments. They want to send machines to extract metals and minerals from the seabed. These would be used in new technology, like smart phones and computers. But it's incredibly risky as it could destroy entire ecosystems and disturb important carbon stores which help to control climate change.



Burning fossil fuels

Scientists think that of all the extra heat being created, more than 90% has been absorbed by the oceans. But this extra carbon dioxide makes the water more acidic which negatively impacts marine ecosystems. The Great Barrier Reef, for example, is dying because of this increasing acidity. This is called ocean acidification.

What's the solution?

We need to protect the oceans from overfishing, plastic pollution, mining for minerals and drilling for oil and gas. Here's what Greenpeace is doing about it.



Sustainable fishing

Industrial fishing methods are destroying the oceans. We need smaller boats that use less destructive methods and don't catch more fish than the ocean can sustain. Greenpeace is persuading the government to support sustainable fishing boats and challenging big companies that use unsustainable methods.

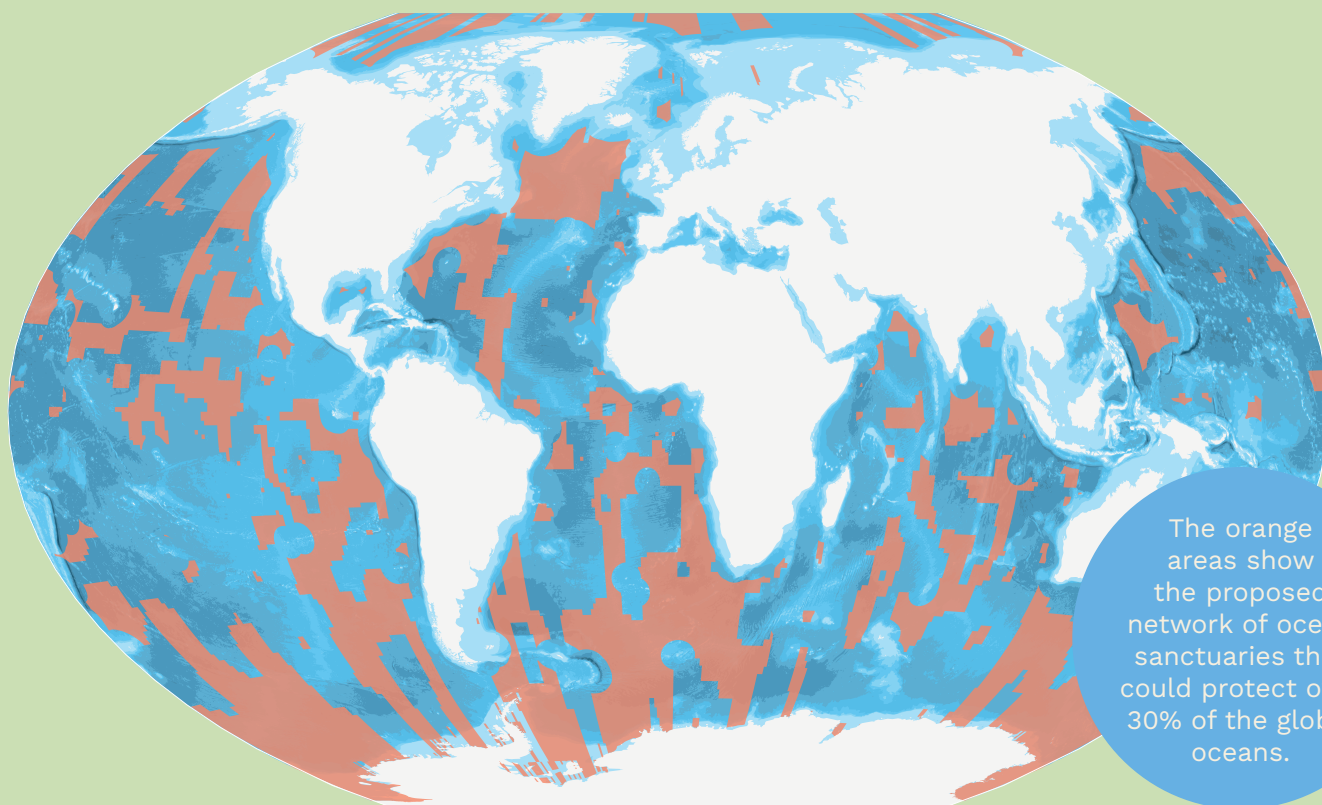
For example, Thai Union, the biggest tuna company in the world and owner of John West, was using fishing methods that led to a large amount of bycatch. This bycatch included endangered species, like the silky sharks. Greenpeace exposed Thai Union's negative methods. This led to Thai Union making an agreement in 2017 with Greenpeace to tackle illegal fishing, overfishing and improve the livelihoods of their workers.



Global ocean sanctuaries

Only 1% of our global oceans are currently protected. Greenpeace's research team, along with scientists, have worked out that to avoid the worst effects of climate change and safeguard wildlife, we need to protect at least 30% of our oceans by 2030. They are calling for a global network of ocean sanctuaries. Global ocean sanctuaries are areas that are off limits to all extractive and destructive uses like mining and industrial fishing. They are the most effective way to reverse the current ocean crisis and restore damaged ecosystems.

As the global oceans are not owned by any one country, it means we need a Global Ocean Treaty – a set of rules that all countries would agree to abide by. World leaders are meeting at the United Nations to develop this new set of rules to protect the oceans. Greenpeace is calling for a Global Ocean Treaty with clear objectives and a legal duty to cooperate to protect, preserve and restore ocean health through a clear network of sanctuaries.



The orange areas show the proposed network of ocean sanctuaries that could protect over 30% of the global oceans.

What can you do?

There are lots of ways to help protect the oceans, from eating less fish to avoiding single-use items like plastic bags. With your help, we can make sure turtles, whales and dolphins are out of harms way, with healthy oceans that are in the best position to tackle climate change. For more on this subject, check out the 'Climate Emergency' information sheet.



1



Know your fish

Ask your parents or carers if you can eat less fish than normal (or even not at all). If you are eating fish, check it has been caught sustainably.

Make sure tuna is dolphin-friendly and caught using a pole and line.

2



Share your knowledge

The easiest way to help the oceans is to talk to your friends and family about the problem and the solutions. It's important people know what's happening and how to help. Share [this link](#) with them.

3



Use less plastic

Can you imagine a life with less plastic? We use more than we need and a lot of this pollutes our oceans. Here's how to use less.

- Buy loose fruit and veg from the supermarket.
- Replace disposable items with ones that you can use again and again.
- Use a reusable bag.
- Carry a refillable water bottle.
- Choose reusable cutlery, plates, bowls and cups instead of throw-away plastic ones.

Invite a Greenpeace Speaker

Ask an adult to invite a Greenpeace Speaker to talk to your class or club. They'll share their knowledge of the challenges our planet faces and ways you can help. Find out more: www.act.gp/speakers