

# SEA SHEPHERD CONSERVATION SOCIETY



**REPORT FROM**

**THE FRONTLINES**



SEA SHEPHERD

**Ships on the water. Captains and crews defending the line between extinction and survival for endangered marine wildlife in the most fragile ecosystems on earth.**

That is what we do at Sea Shepherd, and just as importantly, it's who we are.

Scientific consensus tells us we're already in a decisive decade for the survival of the ocean, but 2030 isn't a distant horizon for Sea Shepherd. Every day on our vessels, the red alert urgency of this moment is as clear as it is compelling. We stand between poachers and the marine wildlife they drive to the edge of extinction, and that defense defines who we are. Sea Shepherd is Direct Action on the oceans right now, today, and next week, and next month.

For us, there is no time to waste. 2030 is today.

That simple phrase defines our plans for 2024, and animates the 2023 achievements described here that so many of you made possible.

Our ships protect the bright line between survival and extinction for whales, dolphins, turtles and so many other animals pushed to the brink by humankind's illegal pillaging of the oceans. Our entirely donation-driven work in 2023 stretched from the Faroe Islands north of Scotland, where we are leading a global coalition to end the barbaric slaughter of Pilot Whales and Bottlenose Dolphins, to the Upper Gulf of California in Mexico where the crew of the M/V Seahorse partners with the Government of Mexico to push back on cartels and their poachers in defense of the most endangered marine mammal on earth, the Vaquita Porpoise. In the final days of 2023, we began negotiations around a brand new campaign to protect sea turtles, and Sea Shepherd staff prepared to head to Antarctica to help focus the world's attention on the industrial devastation that is depleting the Krill stock critical to whales' health and future.

Every day, our crews galvanize activism, determination, technology and collaboration into a unique, data-driven strategy for protecting marine wildlife on the water.

Hope is what inspires our optimistic, grassroots movement of people who care about animal welfare, but it's our data-driven impact that proves each of us has the capacity to protect the most vulnerable species on the planet.

That tangible urgency drives Sea Shepherd to prove, every day, that together we can push back against decades of environmental devastation in our oceans.

Our gratitude for yesterday is surpassed only by our enthusiasm for tomorrow, and it is an honor for us to present this compilation of our work together in 2023.

Thank you.

**The Captains, Crew, Volunteers and Staff of Sea Shepherd**



# DR. ROGER PAYNE

“As my time runs out, I am possessed with the hope that humans worldwide are smart enough and adaptable enough to put the saving of other species where it belongs: at the top of the list of our most important jobs.”

—Dr. Roger Payne  
Time Magazine, June 2023

Our dearly departed Board Member Dr Roger Payne was part of a pioneering generation that brought the world's attention to the oceans, and he used the song of the whales to do it. It was the “exuberant, uninterrupted rivers of sound” that he harnessed so a generation could learn the language of conservation and realize our shared, and individual, obligations to the sea.

In his honor we renew our commitment to protecting whales in 2024 and beyond.



# PROTECTING THE VAQUITA PORPOISE & TOTOABA



**T**he Vaquita Porpoise is the world's most endangered marine mammal. Sea Shepherd and the Mexican Government defend the Zero Tolerance Area (ZTA) of the UNESCO-recognized Vaquita Refuge by preventing poachers from dropping illegal fishing gear that ensnares the Vaquita Porpoise, and has brought it to the edge of extinction.

2023 saw huge leaps forward in the effectiveness of this campaign.

In January, we debuted a new ship M/V Seahorse which was designed to stay in place in the ZTA 24 hours a day. We outfitted it with cutting edge sonar, radar, infrared cameras and drones so we could monitor every square foot of the ZTA. The advanced capacity allowed us to scale from reacting to single episodes of illegal fishing to actually preventing hundreds of incidences.

This strategic shift was recognized in March by The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the global authority on the natural world,



who shared an encouraging report about the positive impact our collaboration was having on the Vaquita porpoise. In April, we announced a 90% Reduction in Illegal Fishing in ZTA in the 75 days since the M/V Seahorse was introduced.

The 2023 Vaquita Survey took place in May, engaging fourteen highly trained and experienced observers and led by Dr. Barbara Taylor. The independent scientific analysis found “Clear Signs of Progress in Protecting Endangered Vaquita” and up to 10-13 Vaquita exist, including a minimum of one newly born calf, who have now been sighted in two consecutive surveys.

**“ This survey revealed the greatest conservation success for Vaquitas in my 30 years working to conserve this species. ”**

**—Dr. Barbara Taylor**  
2023 Vaquita Survey Leader



Leonardo DiCaprio   
@LeoDiCaprio

The #Vaquita has avoided extinction thanks to 24/7 protection by @SeaShepherdSSCS & the Mexican Navy, & the local communities working toward Vaquita-safe seafood. @CetaceanAction @pescaabc  pronaturaNoroes @Rewild

The White House referenced Sea Shepherd in their Pelly Amendment notice, reflecting the fact that the Vaquita porpoise has become an important issue in the Mexico-US bilateral agenda, and the Seahorse entered the Zero Tolerance Area on September 16th, officially kicking-off Operation Milagro X. In October, Sea Shepherd and the Mexican government expanded the area of Operation Milagro's monitoring of the Vaquita by more than 60%. The agreement also expands Operation Milagro to provide protection for the threatened Totoaba across the entire Vaquita Refuge. October included the first steps of a new program to help release ensnared Sea Lions in the Upper Gulf, where they get caught in discarded fishing gear and often die as a result.

Our new responsibilities to help protect the Vaquita and Totoaba in January 2024 will stretch across the entire Vaquita Refuge in the Upper Gulf of California, which left us with a need for speed. Our answer was the purchase of this 27-foot North River Seahawk OS, an incredibly fast vessel that can bring teams to any corner of the Vaquita Refuge in minutes. This is true rapid response, and thanks to our supporters who made this possible, the cartels will soon know that trying to illegally capture the Totoaba results in a visit from the newest addition to the Sea Shepherd fleet! ■





# OPERATION REVILLAGIGEDO

As every year in January, our vessel, R/V Martin Sheen, sails to Revillagigedo Archipelago, a group of four volcanic islands in the Pacific Ocean known for their unique beauty and dynamic ecosystem. The archipelago was declared part of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 2016. SSCS collaborates with two renowned Mexican scientists (Dr. Jorge Urban and Dr. Hiram Rosales) and their teams to monitor the cetacean community of the islands, especially the Humpback whale population.

The campaign's goals are to determine the distribution of humpback whales in Socorro Island; describe the types of whale aggregations found on the

island; identify unique individuals by their tail flukes (caudal) and dorsal fins; and finally, obtain skin and blubber samples for future genetic, histology, stable isotope, and contaminant analysis. Our partner scientists carry out visual surveys and take photographic, acoustic, and genetic samples—all to better understand and protect this population.

Data on this population's status, distribution, health, genetics, and behavior are critical to effective conservation actions in Mexico and have repercussions worldwide. Sea Shepherd's support is crucial for the lasting monitoring and conservation of this precious natural treasure. ■

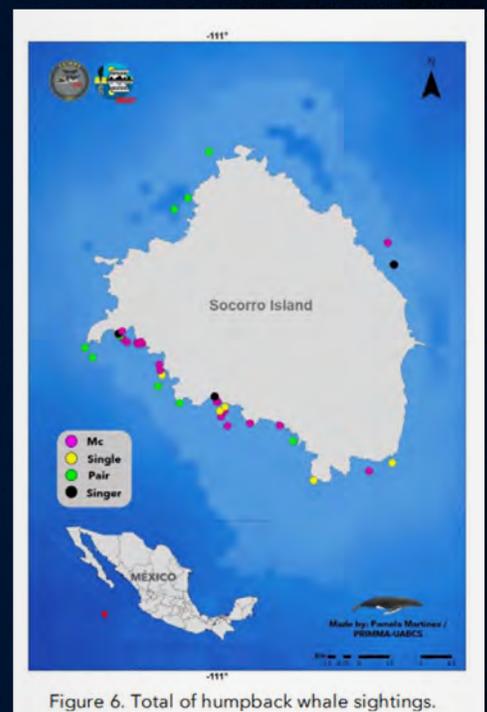
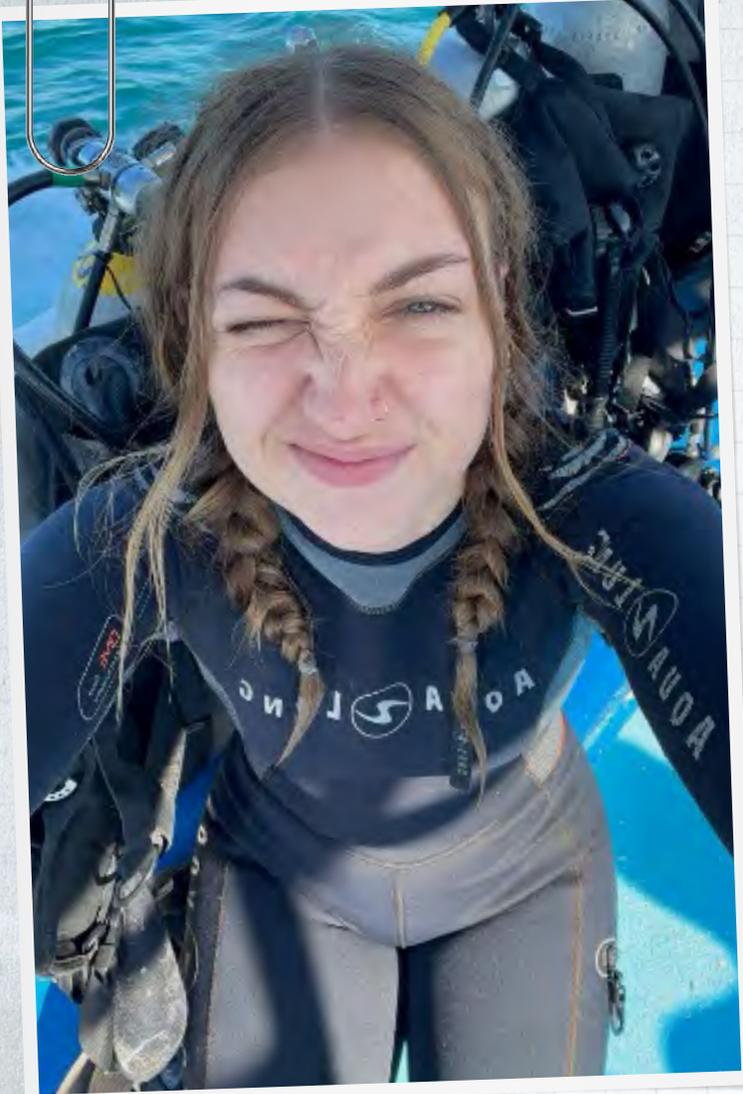


Figure 6. Total of humpback whale sightings.



# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## KATHERINE MARTIN

“I've always been drawn to protecting the environment, I remember being 8 years old and telling my teachers that one day they will see me chained to a tree in the Amazon. My dad was an active diver and brought me home chunks of bleached coral from his trips, which I was fascinated with. It wasn't until high school when I discovered Sylvia Earle and her documentary Mission Blue in which I fell in love with the water and all its creatures even more. Now I dive myself and am currently doing my masters in Ocean Science, hopefully falling in her footsteps and helping our beloved marine creatures. Watching many documentaries and continuously seeing Sea Shepherd made me realize how special and proactive this organization is. So, I joined Sea Shepherd Toronto in February of 2022 and made my way to be the head coordinator by November of that year.”

## INTRODUCING THE SEA HAWK

January 2024 kicks off with new responsibilities for the Totoaba across the Vaquita Refuge. The at-risk Totoaba is trapped and gutted by poachers so its swim bladders can be sold in the global black market. Our new responsibilities to help protect the Totoaba stretch across the entire Vaquita Refuge in the Upper Gulf of California, which leaves us with a need for speed.

Our answer is this 27-foot North River Seahawk OS, an incredibly fast vessel that can bring Mexican Navy and Sea Shepherd teams to any corner of the Vaquita Refuge in minutes. This is true rapid

response, and thanks to our supporters who made this possible, the poachers will soon know that trying to illegally capture the Totoaba results in a visit from the newest addition to the Sea Shepherd fleet!

The October 2023 agreement resulted in our area being increased almost five-fold, so multiple ships are required to extend our partnership with the Mexican Navy and protect these species that have been pushed to the brink by illegal fishing and deadly discarded ghost nets. ■



# #STOPTHEGRIND

## PROTECTING PILOT WHALES AND BOTTLENOSE DOLPHINS

On Friday September 22, the ocean turned red after a “grind” used boats and jet skis to herd cetaceans into coves in the Faroe Islands. Local residents slaughtered the corralled pilot whales, white-sided dolphins and bottlenose dolphins in numbers that wildly exceed any possible human consumption, and the death is a slow and excruciating one. Sea Shepherd Media Crew was on the ground in the Faroes

leading the fight in the 2023-2024 #STOPTHEGRIND campaign. The campaign’s coalition is “a global coalition of organizations and individuals working together towards a simple mission: To end the inhumane and unnecessary killing of cetaceans (dolphins and whales) in the Faroe Islands.”

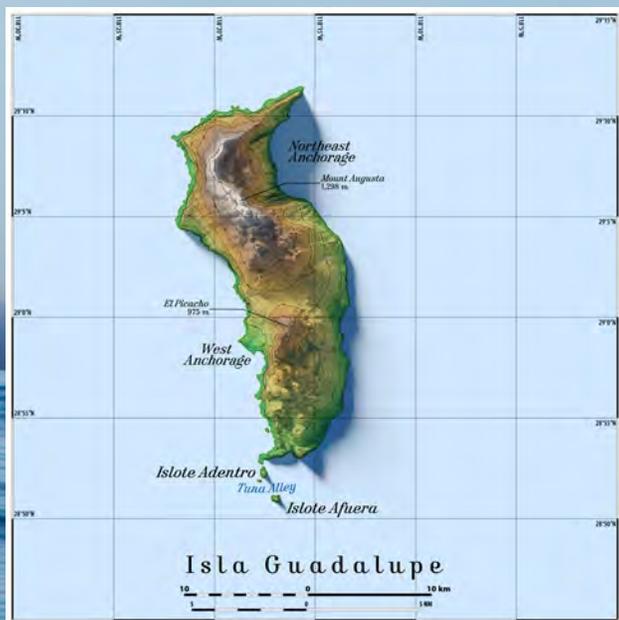
Our shared goal with Sea Shepherd Global, Shared Planet and the coalition is to bring an

end to this senseless slaughter in 2024. The coalition will have staff on the ground for the fishing season in 2024, documenting the bloodshed and using it to prod international pressure through economic, political and diplomatic channels and global grassroots activism. You can get more information and sign up to help at [stopthegrind.org](https://stopthegrind.org) and together we can **#STOPTHEGRIND.**

# OPERATION GUADALUPE

Worldwide beak whales are rarely seen or described yet they face numerous manmade threats. Global whale conservation groups are working to determine the detrimental effects of military sonar and seismic devices on the behavior and health of beaked whale populations. Guadalupe Island offers a unique opportunity to undertake long-term monitoring of whales in an environment that is virtually free of human interference. During 2023, Sea Shepherd's iconic vessel RV Martin Sheen returned for our seventh year to Guadalupe Island to support the long-term collaboration with the Mexican researcher Dr. Gustavo Cardenas to conduct long-term monitoring that guides conservation policies to protect the Cuvier's beaked whales. The first expedition took place from July 1st to July 16th, and the second took place from August 4th to August 16th. The RV Martin Sheen deployed a small boat specifically designed to approach beaked whales, and the search effort was randomized and concentrated in areas where beaked whales have previously been documented all along the island's east coast.

This campaign is essential for protecting the island and these incredibly rare and reclusive beaked whale species. Operation Guadalupe helps update and support the regulation and management of this biosphere reserve and contribute to our understanding of this rarely seen whale species so it can be better protected. ■



# CONSERVATION DIPLOMACY

With ships on the water and crews protecting species every day, Sea Shepherd has a unique role in the global ocean conservation movement.

In 2023, we began leveraging that role in the halls of diplomacy to help push governments to increase their commitment to species conservation and protecting the ocean.

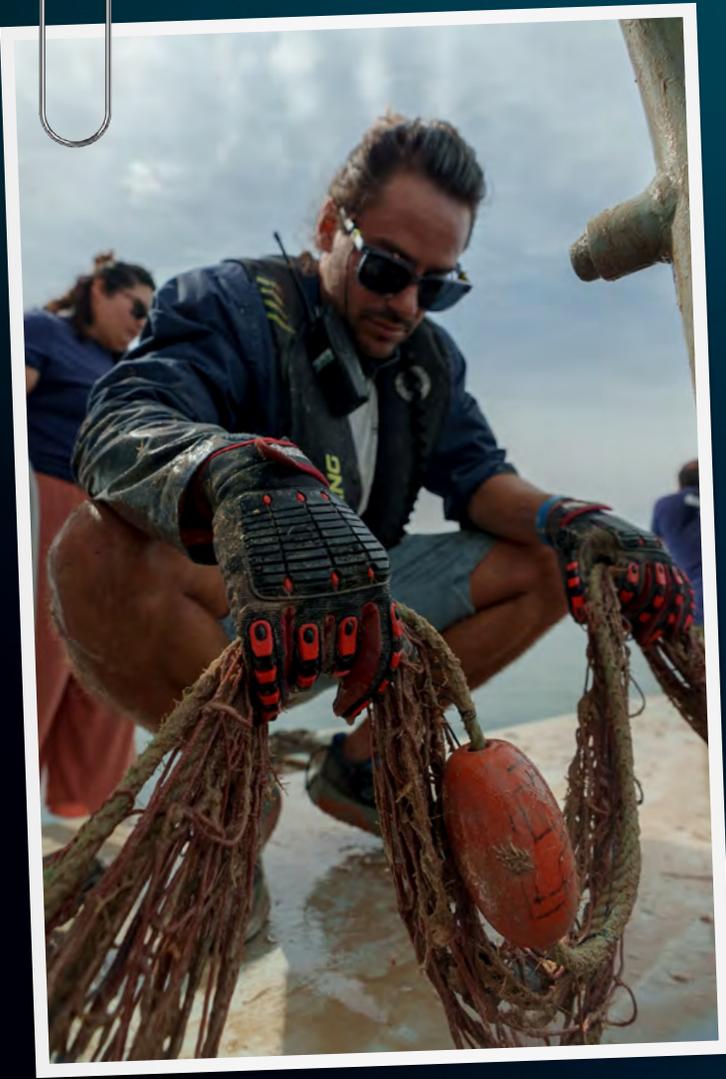
Sea Shepherd's Director of International Affairs Nina Young attended CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) in Geneva, Switzerland. The Convention tackled the issue of illegal trade in totoaba swim bladders. The illegal gillnet fishing for these swim bladders is driving Vaquita toward extinction and is the predominant reason for the precipitous decline of Vaquita in recent years. CITES recognized the progress made by the Government of Mexico to enforce the Zero Tolerance Area and to remove illegal, derelict, or ghost gillnets from Vaquita habitat. These advances have been achieved through the Government of Mexico's partnership with Sea Shepherd which was acknowledged at CITES. ■



Our CEO Pritam Singh drafted multiple op-eds with Ambassador of Mexico to the United States Esteban Moctezuma, sharing our shared vision of effective species conservation with readers across North America and beyond. May 5th op-ed with Mexican Ambassador to the US Esteban Moctezuma in Mexico's "Universal" newspaper [HERE](#).

In November and early December, Executive Director Roger Fisk joined with Sea Shepherd Global staff and Stop The Grind coalition staff in Brussels for strategy sessions at the European Union's Parliament. The meetings focused on economic, political and diplomatic ways forward in the 2024 Stop the Grind campaign strategy, with the anchor event being a stakeholder roundtable in Parliament hosted by two Members of Parliament and attended by multiple NGOs, other MEPs and staff, and personnel from the US Mission to the EU. These sessions helped build our growing coalition to end the senseless slaughter of whales and dolphins in the Faroe Islands. ■





# DONOR SPOTLIGHT



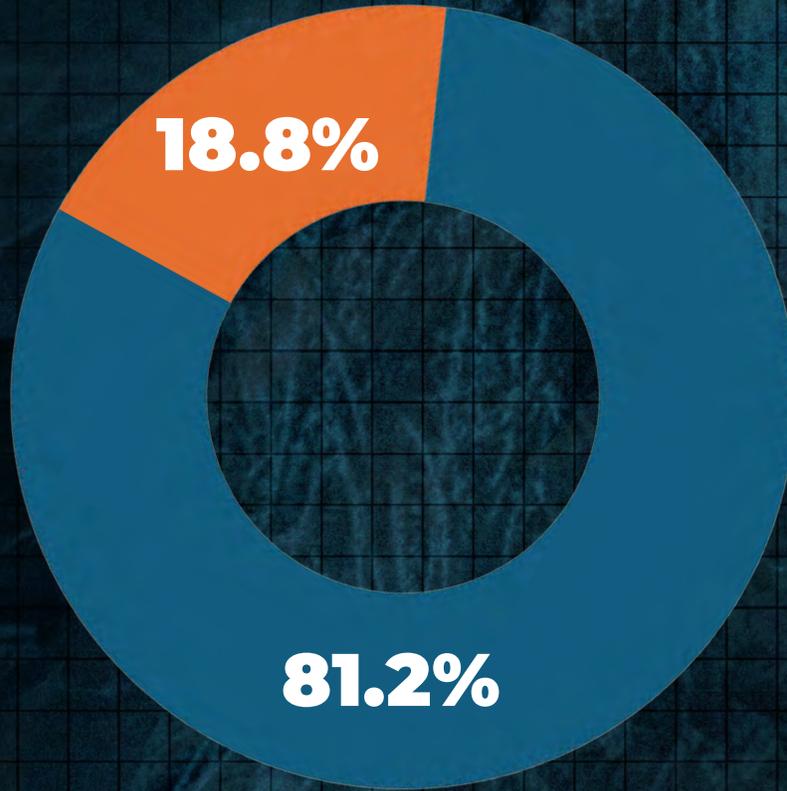
“ Re:wild refuses to accept extinction, which is why we partner with groups who directly protect and restore the wild. We proudly stand shoulder to shoulder with Sea Shepherd in their defense of the most endangered marine mammal on earth. For Re:wild, we believe the fight for the Vaquita porpoise is a fight for the oceans, and we applaud the direct impact Sea Shepherd has in the Upper Gulf of California every day in this urgent struggle for a species' survival.”

# Charity Navigator

2023 ended with Charity Navigator awarding Sea Shepherd a 100% rating! This is the highest possible rating on Charity Navigator, and this milestone achievement couldn't have happened without our contributors, funders, Direct Action Crew members and volunteers.



# 2023 FINANCIALS



■ Program Expenses ■ Gen Ops and Fundraising

# 16,074

Unique Donors in 2023

# SNAPSHOT OF 2024

Thanks to our supporters, 2024 is shaping up to be a historic year in ocean conservation.

In January, our campaign to protect the vaquita will grow to include protection of the totoaba, and that responsibility will expand our operations to cover the entirety of the Vaquita Refuge. This comes from the updated MOU our delegation signed with the Mexican Navy in October 2023. We will kick-off the year by heading to Antarctica, where we will target the super trawlers that are devastating the world's krill supply and posing a direct threat to whales not just in the Southern Ocean but all over the globe.



Our Stop The Grind campaign will ramp up its on-the-ground operations as well as our political pressure to end this cruel slaughter of pilot whales and bottlenose dolphins, and stay tuned for up to 2 new campaign announcements to protect endangered marine wildlife and new ships in 2024! ■

## DAC MEMBER



Become an ocean champion by signing up for monthly donations.

The need for action has never been more urgent. Saving the oceans is possible – but we need your help. As a member of the Direct Action Crew, your monthly donation goes directly to our campaigns, providing provisions, supplies, fuel and equipment for our ships and volunteer crews as they take on the biggest threats facing the oceans today. To learn more and sign up, please visit [seashepherd.org/dac](https://seashepherd.org/dac) or contact us at [dac@seashepherd.org](mailto:dac@seashepherd.org)

**YES! - MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM DONATION**  
 Sign me up for the Direct Action Crew. I understand that the amount indicated below will be electronically transferred every month from my bank or credit/debit card.

**MY DONATION EVERY MONTH:**

\$25     \$50     \$75     \$100     \$125  
 Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Minimum of \$10 per month.

**CHOOSE MY PAYMENT METHOD**

OR

from my checking account\*

from my credit card

Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

only if applicable:     Mastercard     Visa     Discover     AMEX

**CONTACT INFO (required)**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**T-SHIRT SIZE (circle one)**

S   M   L   XL   2XL   3XL   No Thanks!

\*Note: DAC t-shirts are only sent to new members of the program. Please fill out a check for your first donation. All recurring donations will be processed electronically thereafter. This option is available to US supporters only. Send to: Sea Shepherd Conservation Society P.O. Box 8628 Alexandria, VA 22306

# SEA SHEPHERD FOREVER SOCIETY

## Defending the Oceans for Future Generations.

The Shepherds Forever Society honors individuals who have made a provision for a gift to Sea Shepherd Conservation Society through a bequest in their will or other arrangement such as a retirement plan or life insurance beneficiary designation. There are many ways to make a planned gift that will offer tax benefits to you and enable you to leave a legacy to help Sea Shepherd protect, conserve, and defend the oceans for generations to come. To learn more, please visit [seashepherd.org/planned-estate-giving](https://seashepherd.org/planned-estate-giving) or contact us at [donations@seashepherd.org](mailto:donations@seashepherd.org)



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# GET INVOLVED

THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT SEA SHEPHERD AND ENSURE HEALTHY OCEANS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS:

## DONATE

Set up an automatic monthly donation as part of our Direct Action Crew: [HERE](#)

Start a fundraiser: [HERE](#)

Donate online with a debit card, credit card, or PayPal: [HERE](#)

Submit your donation to your employer for a matching gift: [HERE](#)

Remember Sea Shepherd in your will via the Shepherds Forever Society: [HERE](#)

Visit [HERE](#) to discover other ways you can help.

## VOLUNTEER

Onshore volunteers are always needed - see how you can help: [HERE](#)

Volunteer at sea and become a member of our ship crews: [HERE](#)

## SUPPORT

Shop in the Sea Shepherd online store for ethical merchandise: [HERE](#)

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JOIN US IN MAKING SURE OUR OCEANS ARE HEALTHY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

# AN OCEAN OF THANKS

The progress of 2023 could not have happened without you. Your exceptional dedication to protecting the ocean provided much-needed resources in support of our conservation efforts around the world. We appreciate you going above and beyond the call of duty, spreading awareness about the plight of the ocean and growing awareness of and support for our direct-action campaigns. You help us give a voice to our voiceless clients - the turtles, dolphins, sharks, and other marine species that we work every day protect.

From all of us at Sea Shepherd,

**THANK YOU**

