Contents

Projects .................................................................................................................. 4
  Underwater Noise ............................................................................................ 4
  Plastic Pollution ............................................................................................... 8
  Climate Change ............................................................................................... 15
  Protected Areas ............................................................................................... 16
  Fishing ............................................................................................................... 18
  Aquatic Wild Meat .......................................................................................... 20
  Animal Rescue ................................................................................................ 22
  Whales ............................................................................................................. 24
  Dolphins ........................................................................................................... 27
  Sea Turtles ....................................................................................................... 32
  Monk Seals ....................................................................................................... 34
  Sharks .............................................................................................................. 36

Environmental Education .................................................................................... 38

Publications ........................................................................................................ 42

Networks ............................................................................................................ 44

International Forums ......................................................................................... 46

Support ............................................................................................................... 48

Annual Report ................................................................................................... 50
Dear readers,

“We are no longer alone,” wrote a delighted Leonardo Sánchez, in an email that reached me at the start of the year. “Since we started working with OceanCare, we have been part of a global movement.” Leonardo is the head of an organisation that rescued 18 stranded whale sharks in Venezuela last year (see p.22).

Such emails are encouraging, especially at this time.

While humanity is busy protecting itself against the coronavirus, the tragedy in the ocean is in danger of being forgotten. Species extinction, plastic pollution, exploitation of resources – there is no end to it. More and more marine animals are fighting for survival.

The pandemic is giving the climate a break. People are staying home, meeting each other on screens and keeping their distance. This has consequences for our work. Ever since OceanCare has been participating in conferences, we have relied on the power of persuasion through in-person conversations. Of course, in the pandemic year 2020, international meetings could only be held virtually. But wherever pragmatic solutions to acute problems are needed, as is the case with ocean conservation, person-to-person exchange is important.

Virtual diplomacy cannot replace personal contact. Encounters often remain non-binding if they take place in different countries and time zones simultaneously. However, in order to meet the ambitious UN Sustainable Development Goals, binding and concrete measures are essential.

While the coronavirus is slowing down the diplomatic agenda, it is accelerating digitisation – for instance, to the benefit of sea turtles: A global animal-rescue network will soon have almost every coast covered. Wherever an injured animal is found, a vet can be contacted and will provide life-saving first aid online.

You can learn more about people who rescue whale sharks and turtles in this annual report, alongside other interesting facts and important figures. Worldwide cooperation with volunteers, scientists and politicians is just as important to us as your loyalty.

I thank you, dear supporter, for making our work possible – and I hope we can meet again in person soon.

Best regards,

Sigrid Lübèr
President and Founder
It is getting louder and louder under water. Noise is being generated, for example, by seismic exploration for fossil fuels in the seabed, by military sonar and shipping. To us humans, what happens acoustically below the water’s surface is barely perceptible. People generally only become aware of the extent of the danger when whales and dolphins get stranded after intense acoustic events. But in turn, this is only the tip of the iceberg. Underwater noise harms all marine life, right down to tiny invertebrate krill. OceanCare has been campaigning for silent oceans since 2002 and was granted UN Special Consultative Status on marine issues in 2011 as a result of this commitment.

**UN High Seas Treaty (BBNJ):** The high seas are defined as the 64 percent of the ocean’s surface that lies outside national jurisdiction. Until now, this marine area has been largely lawless and extensively exploited. With a new international, legally binding treaty, the United Nations is laying the foundation for better conservation of biodiversity on the high seas. OceanCare has been taking part in the negotiations on the agreement since 2007 and, for example, campaigning for transboundary pollution to be regulated in international waters. The last round of negotiations, planned for March, was postponed because of the pandemic. In online consultations, OceanCare advocated for environmental impact assessments to be made mandatory for noise-generating activities at sea. The agreement should also stipulate strategic assessments of the state of the environment and procedures for site-specific management, for example in the form of Marine Protected Areas. As member of the High Seas Alliance, OceanCare made clear to decision-makers what a unique opportunity an ambitious High Seas Treaty represents for ocean conservation.

**UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS):** Due to the pandemic, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea Informal-Consultative Process meetings were postponed until 2021. In 2020, UNDOALOS addressed underwater noise, as a form of transboundary marine pollution, in the second World Ocean Assessment (WOA II), partly as a result of OceanCare’s initiatives. The assessment will be published in 2021, with regard to the body’s work cycle up to 2025 and as a prelude to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

**UN Ocean Conference:** In February, a preparatory meeting was held in New York for the second UN Ocean Conference, which was scheduled to take place in Lisbon in June. OceanCare participated in online consultations on the conference’s topics and programme, took the floor regarding the conference declaration on governance, plastics (see p.8) and noise, and provided its submissions in writing for the UN delegates. One key demand is that underwater noise be addressed as a form of transboundary pollution in Sustainable Development Goal 14, Life Below Water.

**UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** Here too, conferences were postponed until 2021. In June, the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body of Scientific and Technological Advice gave online advice on the topic of ocean and climate change. OceanCare argued in favour of a ten-percent speed reduction of the global shipping fleet, which would make it possible to save fuel, decrease CO2 emissions by 13 percent and reduce underwater noise by 40 percent. OceanCare also demanded a ban on seismic exploration for oil and gas in...
the seabed, a binding strategy on the decommissioning of existing production sites, and an end to subsidies for any economic activities related to oil or gas. Noise-generating exploration and the extraction of fossil fuels should be stopped in protected and ecologically significant marine areas. Due to whales’ importance to the climate (see p. 15), OceanCare suggested that the UNFCCC cooperate with the International Whaling Commission (IWC), which is responsible for the protection and management of whale populations. As an indicator of the ocean’s health, the development of whale populations provides information on the effectiveness of the climate protection measures taken. The IWC contracting governments that signed the Paris Agreement in 2015 should report their progress on whale conservation to the UNFCCC.

- **International Whaling Commission (IWC):** The biennial IWC meeting was postponed until 2021. The IWC Conservation Committee met online in autumn and addressed underwater noise, as well as the oil spill in Mauritius (see p. 23). Through interventions and submissions, OceanCare campaigned for more importance to be placed on the threat that underwater noise poses to marine life. A group of experts decided that in 2021, OceanCare and other institutions should inform the Conservation Committee in greater depth about the dangers of oil and gas exploration.

- **General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM):** GFCM and OceanCare started to work on a socio-economic study on the impact of underwater noise on fish stocks. OceanCare has advocated for ten years at the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to provide such a study, because fish catches can drop by up to 80 percent after intense exposure to noise caused, for example, by seismic tests. In addition to the species-conservation problems thus created, this also has an impact on people who depend on the catching and consumption of fish from the sea. GFCM and OceanCare are studying how fish are affected by noise in the Jabuka/Pomo Pit Fisheries Restricted Area in the Central Adriatic Sea. The study is designed in such a way that it can be replicated by other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) for assessing the consequences of underwater noise. In the Ocean Resolution in December, the UN General Assembly called on its member states to address these socio-economic consequences of underwater noise.
Agreement for the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS): In 2016, OceanCare contributed to the first report showing that the Mediterranean Sea is a hotspot for underwater noise. That was the first time that, over a wide area, noise sources were pinpointed and the density of noisy activities was mapped. It revealed a significant increase in seismic surveys. Between 2005 and 2015, the portion of the Mediterranean’s area in which airguns were used for oil and gas exploration grew from 3.8 to 27 percent. In 2020, OceanCare was invited to contribute to an update of the report and began the corresponding research work.

EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD): The Marine Strategy Framework Directive, adopted in 2008, obliged EU states to achieve a “good environmental status” in European waters by 2020. One of its eleven descriptors is the reduction of noise-generating activities to a biologically acceptable level. Within various EU bodies, OceanCare has complained in recent years that the states are not acting with enough ambition. Despite reduction targets, noise levels continued to rise in many marine areas, including ecologically sensitive ones. OceanCare, BUND, IFAW, Seas at Risk and the German Environment Agency analysed how noise mitigation measures were being implemented. This showed a need for action on oil and gas exploration in the seabed, on military activities and on shipping. In November, the analysis was sent to European decision-makers and the European Commission. The latter announced that it would review the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. As part of the EU expert group tasked with developing technical recommendations for marine noise reduction, OceanCare participated in negotiations on thresholds for noise-generating activities.

OceanCare’s president Sigrid Lüber serves as a member of the Advisory Board to quietMED, a programme funded by the European Commission Directorate-General for Environment to implement the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in the Mediterranean. It aims to coordinate Mediterranean states’ efforts to keep the Mediterranean in good condition and reduce underwater noise. In 2020, OceanCare worked to help define common criteria for a “good environmental status”, among other things, noise limits, a regional register for impulsive noise events and methodological instructions on reviewing national environmental targets.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): In preparation for the Conference of the Parties in autumn 2021, the CBD Secretariat commissioned a report on findings and measures regarding underwater noise. After OceanCare commented on the draft extensively, the report was tendered out again and is now being rewritten.

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS): At the February CMS conference in Gandhinagar, India, OceanCare advocated for improvements regarding Aquatic Wildmeat, protection of Important Marine Mammal Areas (see pp. 16 and 20) and underwater noise, in addition to calling for structural reform of the convention. OceanCare submitted a scientific document summarising current best
available technologies and best environmental practices that enable reduction or prevention of noise emissions from shipping, seismic airgun surveys and pile driving. The parties decided to formally assess the document and adopted it at the COP.

■ **Roundtable:** The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) facilitates the informal exchange of information on marine issues in Switzerland. In 2020, OceanCare hosted this roundtable and dedicated it to underwater noise. Representatives from the Swiss Maritime Navigation Office, the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, the Swiss Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office, the Mediterranean Shipping Company, the Swiss Trading and Shipping Association, Seafood Advisory Ltd, the international inspection, testing and certification company Intertek, non-governmental organisations and foundations took part. OceanCare shed light on the problems surrounding noise and led the subsequent discussion. The Swiss Maritime Navigation Office then offered OceanCare to attend International Maritime Organization (IMO) meetings as an observer on the Swiss Delegation.

■ **Possible ban on oil and gas exploration in Spanish waters:** Spain's parliament has been debating a new climate change and energy transition law since 2020. In line with OceanCare's demands, the draft includes a ban on oil and gas exploration at sea. At the end of the year, it was still unclear how Spain intends to deal with concessions that have already been granted and what timetable will govern the expiry of permits for active oil production facilities. An OceanCare expert attended hearings on the new law. OceanCare also began work on an action plan to reduce noise in the protected area between the Balearic Islands and the Spanish mainland, as well as in the waters around the Balearic Islands (see p. 16).

■ **Noise reduction in the Hellenic Trench:** Since 1997, the Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute (PCRI), with the support of OceanCare, has been researching sperm whales in the Hellenic Trench. This elongated underwater canyon is the deepest region in the Mediterranean and home to a sperm whale population of only around 200 animals. Alongside collisions with ships (see p. 24), the animals here are also threatened by exploration for oil and gas in the seabed. Greece and Turkey have granted licences to the oil industry for such activity in the Hellenic Trench. Tensions regarding sovereignty over potentially resource-rich marine zones are growing in the region. Military manoeuvres involving sonar are also being conducted in the Hellenic Trench. OceanCare called on the governments of Greece and Turkey to immediately stop such high-intensity noise emissions in this marine zone, which is important for whales and dolphins.

■ **Ocean Action! conference in Brussels:** In February, OceanCare went to Brussels to provide information on the dangers of underwater noise. The conference also saw the presentation of the BLUE MANIFESTO, a schedule and action plan for measurable improvement of the situation in European waters, prepared by Seas at Risk in cooperation with OceanCare and other member organisations.
Every year, around nine million tonnes of plastic waste finds its way into the ocean. Marine animals die if they ingest this plastic waste or get entangled in nets and other debris. OceanCare is advocating for a legally binding global plastic treaty at UN level which would regulate plastic throughout its entire life cycle and how it can be prevented from reaching the environment. It is important that less plastic gets produced, that single-use plastics are avoided and that plastic litter is removed from nature to avoid deadly traps for animals. As described in the Animal Rescue section, OceanCare is also attending to the rescue and detanglement of marine animals from plastic waste.

**UN Ocean Conference:** In February, a preparatory meeting was held in New York for the second UN Ocean Conference, which was scheduled to take place in Lisbon in June. OceanCare supported the intervention from the Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research and Education (COARE) to tackle the plastics problem globally and to address it throughout the entire life cycle. In online consultations on the conference’s topics and programme, OceanCare took the floor regarding governance, plastic pollution and underwater noise (see p. 4), and provided its submissions in writing to the UN delegates. OceanCare also added its signature to an intervention on plastics by partner organisations GAIA, EIA and Sciaena, as well as the appeal RISE UP – A Blue Call to Action, in which representatives of civil society, fishers, indigenous peoples and philanthropic organisations called on decision-makers and representatives of the private sector to take strong ocean conservation measures at the UN Ocean Conference. Due to COVID-19, the conference was postponed until 2022.

**UN Environment Assembly (UNEA):** In online consultations regarding the 2021 and 2022 UN Environment Assembly 5.1 and 5.2, OceanCare raised concerns about plastics, underwater noise, aquatic wild meat and governance. As part of the Break Free from Plastic (BFFP) coalition, the organisation argued in favour of establishing a global plastic treaty. Since 2018, OceanCare has been attending meetings of the ad-hoc open ended expert group (AHEG) set up in the context of UNEA. The last meeting was held online in November. Its participants took stock of worldwide plastic-reduction activities, assessed additional technical and financial options, discussed global approaches and analysed the effectiveness of these against plastic pollution. For the first time, a majority of the experts, including representatives of the plastics industry, the consumer market and also Switzerland, were in favour of a global plastic treaty. The expert group’s conclusions will be discussed at the UNEA session in 2021 and prepare the ground for a mandate to develop the agreement, which OceanCare hopes to see in 2022. Until then, momentum must be maintained for a global solution to the plastics problem.

**UN Environment Programme (UNEP):** The UN Environment Programme and Norway’s Ministry of Climate and Environment invited representatives from politics, the private sector and civil society to speak at the UNEP Act #ForNature Forum. OceanCare presented an assessment of how to turn the tide against plastic waste in the ocean. The online event took place on World Oceans Day in June and was attended by 3,000 people. In the run-up, Norway organised consultations with representatives of the so-called Major Groups, into which UNEP categorises stakeholders. OceanCare raised its concerns as part of the Science and Technology Major Group, and stressed the relevance of a global plastic treaty, because the problem must be tackled at its roots.
OceanCare is also committed to curbing transboundary forms of marine pollution such as underwater noise (see p.4) and plastics within the framework of the new agreement on protection of the high seas. The last round of negotiations between UN member states, scheduled for March, was postponed until 2021 because of COVID-19. OceanCare used the postponement as an opportunity for an in-depth exchange with UN delegates. Within the High Seas Alliance, the strategy on how to anchor ecological management of international waters in the agreement was refined.

**Global Pact for the Environment:** In July, the United Nations continued the debate on a possible UN Global Pact for the Environment. This is intended to close loopholes in international environmental law and advance the implementation of existing resolutions. Only when principles of international environmental law are unified, and when rights and duties that interaction with nature entails are codified, will it be possible to assess legal requirements. OceanCare has been following the work on the Global Pact for the Environment since 2017 and contributed its expertise to the first online advisory meeting in July.

**International Whaling Commission (IWC):** The biennial IWC meeting was postponed until 2021. However, the IWC Conservation Committee met online in autumn and addressed plastic pollution, alongside other threats (see pp.5 and 25). OceanCare proposed setting up global modelling of aquatic zones where marine animals are at increased risk of ingesting plastic or becoming entangled in plastic waste. This possible measure was included in the final report for the attention of the International Whaling Commission.

**European Union:** As a member of the alliance Seas at Risk, OceanCare is monitoring implementation of the requirements from the EU’s Strategy for Plastics and Single-Use Plastics Directive. Seas at Risk raised EU states’ awareness of the relevance of this course correction on plastics. Due to COVID-19, the alliance cancelled all
face-to-face activities, but compiled basic information and set up a digital platform, where coalition members exchanged views on how best to support EU countries’ efforts to meet the requirements. Seas at Risk collected examples of best practice from the EU, which illustrate the benefits of reusable items. Thanks to submissions on microplastics, certain types of plastic were made subject to the European Union’s requirements, despite resistance from the plastics industry. With support from OceanCare, Seas at Risk was able to commission a study on microplastics’ impact on the ocean, which will be published in 2021. Recommendations on additional stipulations for the production of plastics have already been derived from it. The plastics expert from Seas at Risk attended an OSPAR (Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic) meeting of experts in 2020. In order to make use of synergies, she regularly exchanged information with OceanCare on work within international bodies.

■ **Initiatives in Switzerland**: OceanCare is calling for the Swiss government to introduce a regulation on plastics and particularly single-use plastics, following the example of the EU. Planned events at cantonal level had to be postponed until 2021 because of the pandemic. With regard to the Swiss parliament’s autumn session, OceanCare, the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), the Gallifrey Foundation and eight other organisations wrote an open letter to the Swiss National Council and the Swiss Council of States, arguing in favour of Switzerland taking a leading role in negotiations on a global plastics agreement. EVP National Councillor Niklaus-Samuel Gugger raised this demand in a parliamentary interpellation. The president of the Swiss Confederation, Simonetta Sommaruga, also confirmed the importance of international measures. Switzerland is already playing a constructive role in the UNEA expert group tasked with addressing a plastics agreement (see p. 8).

■ **Rendezvous Bundesplatz / Road to Bern**: In connection with a light show planned for October at the plaza Bundesplatz in Bern, OceanCare and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) organised a panel discussion on ways out of the plastics crisis, with high-level representatives from politics, science and industry. Due to the pandemic’s second wave, the event had to be postponed until 2021.

■ **Migration of harmful substances from food packaging**: The Food Packaging Forum investigates the chemical composition of food packaging. In 2020, it set up an online database for this purpose. Up to 12,000 different chemicals can be used in the production of food packaging. For 29 percent of these substances, there is a lack of data on their harmfulness to humans and the environment. As chemicals from packaging can migrate into food, a health risk cannot be ruled out. OceanCare also took the Food Packaging Forum data to the media and researched the nine most harmful chemicals found in plastic packaging. In a three-day online workshop organised by the Food Packaging Forum, 200 scientists, politicians and representatives of environmental organisations (including OceanCare) discussed how packaging’s harmfulness can be reduced.
Reusable plastics and COVID-19: At the start of the pandemic, there was uncertainty about the transmissibility of viruses via the touching of surfaces. The plastics industry reacted quickly and promoted single-use plastics as the hygienic materials of the hour. OceanCare and the Food Packaging Forum countered with detailed information. The packaging material is not the only decisive factor – the standard of hygiene of those who touch it is also important. Moreover, laboratory tests show that the coronavirus survives longer on plastic than, for instance, on glass or metal. Containers made of reusable plastic are quite safe if cleaned with soap or alcohol. In addition, when it comes to health, harmful substances in plastic that can migrate to food must also be addressed. As plastic waste is also increasing during the pandemic, reusable containers made of stainless steel, glass or ceramics, which can be cleaned easily and do not release chemicals into food, should continue to be preferred.

Break Free from Plastic (BFFP): Since 2016, OceanCare has been part of the coalition Break Free from Plastic, which comprises 1,988 organisations to date, takes action against plastic waste and promotes circular use of plastics. As a result of close cooperation towards a global plastics agreement, OceanCare became a core member of this coalition in 2019 and is part of the European advisory group. In 2020, BFFP called for the use of reusable masks and the avoidance of single-use plastics, despite propaganda from the plastics industry. The European Commission was urged to press ahead with the implementation of the Single-Use Plastics Directive. BFFP appealed to international decision-makers to prioritise the health risk posed by plastic packaging. The packaging industry should also have to declare the substances contained in plastics and minimise harmful ones.

APPOLL Forum: The APPOLL Forum brings together universities, research institutes, private companies and environmental organisations in Switzerland for an exchange on the subject of plastics. In 2020, OceanCare took part in a webinar on new approaches to recycling, attended by 30 participants. It also contributed to the discussion on life cycle assessments of plastics.

Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI): OceanCare is a member of this global cross stakeholder alliance of fishing industry, private sector, civil society, academia and governments focused on solving the problem of lost and abandoned fishing gear worldwide. Fishers should be obliged to mark their nets so that they can be traced if lost at sea, and ghost nets should be retrieved from the sea before marine animals become entangled in them. In August, GGGI, OceanCare and Save the Med Foundation reported to the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) on the alarming increase in ghost nets. They stressed the need to equip ports with infrastructure that allows fishers to dispose of nets on land. It is also important to quickly remove as many ghost nets as possible from the Mediterranean Sea. A total of 21 new members joined the Global Ghost Gear Initiative in 2020, including the USA and Mexico.
Rescue of a sea turtle entangled in a ghost net

■ Joanna Toole Internship: The Joanna Toole Internship is supported by OceanCare, Ocean Conservancy, the Center for Coastal Studies and the Joanna Toole Foundation. Every year, one young woman is given the opportunity to work on Global Ghost Gear Initiative members’ projects. In 2020, Jenna Schwerzmann worked as an intern on a digital campaign regarding ghost nets and investigated the extent to which ghost nets pollute beaches in the USA. The internship was established in memory of Joanna Toole, who lost her life in a 2019 plane crash in Ethiopia. Joanna was an OceanCare staff member and a passionate wildlife conservationist, as well as a champion in ocean conservation and environmental protection. Thanks to support from patron David McLellan, OceanCare was able to contribute a substantial sum to the Joanna Toole Internship.

■ Med Ghost FADs initiative: OceanCare supported the Spanish Save the Med Foundation in its efforts to combat and retrieve ghost nets around the Balearic Islands. In 2019, this organisation sounded the alarm about the increasing number of ghost FADs (fish aggregating devices lost or discarded at sea, often from illegal and unregulated fishing) in the Mediterranean. With Med Ghost FADs, it unites various forces in the fight against ghost gear. When the initiative was presented in Mallorca in June, the port authorities, the Balearic Federation of Fishermen Associations, a sport fishing association, the International Maritime Association of the Mediterranean, sea rescue and coast guard all agreed to actively collect ghost nets. Those who participate in the project can register their vessel online and receive guidelines on how to safely retrieve such nets at sea. From June to September, Save the Med conducted nine expeditions around the Balearic Islands with twelve staff members, eight scientists and 42 volunteers, together with 30 vessels from project partners. A total of 180 ghost FADs were retrieved from the water and 89 turtles that had become entangled in ghost FADs were rescued (see p. 33). At the end of September, an exhibition on ghost fishing was opened on a research vessel in the port of Palma de Mallorca. Various events, as well as an exchange with fisheries and environmental authorities, were held on board. Also in 2020, Save the Med worked to trace fishing gear retrieved in 2019 and 2020, so as to prevent further material entering the sea from its sources. The researchers looked into where ghost FADs accumulate (and can be efficiently extracted) in water currents. In cooperation with the Spanish Ministry of Fisheries, a protocol for reporting ghost FADs and illegal fishing was posted on the new website www.ghostfads.org. OceanCare and Save the Med campaigned for Spain to develop a national strategy on ghost FADs and motivated the country to join the Global Ghost Gear Initiative.
**Raising awareness on the Balearic Islands:** Save the Med Foundation raises the next generation’s awareness of the plastics problem in the school programme Dos Manos, supported by OceanCare. This was fully booked at the start of the year, but had to be suspended from March to June because of the pandemic. The programme was digitally reworked and is now also available online. A total of 1,095 children and youths were taught in 90 classes at schools. During 43 beach clean-ups, 155 kilos of waste (39,846 items) were collected. As part of the Changemakers at Sea initiative, 27 students developed four projects to reduce plastic consumption at schools. They were allowed to accompany Save the Med researchers working at sea. In February, the organisation held a coastal action day on the subject of plastics, attended by around 100 people.

**Raising awareness of the plastics problem in Greece:** Around Thessaloniki, the organisation iSea is raising awareness of the plastics problem and promoting a zero-waste lifestyle in the campaign #zeroplastic, supported by OceanCare. Twelve diving centres took part in the campaign. They committed to informing customers, to participating in clean-ups and to largely doing without single-use products at diving bases. The 2020 diving season was weak because of the pandemic, but the centres continued to reduce single-use plastics by offering more tap water. They were able to raise around 2,500 visitors’ awareness of the need for mindful handling of plastics. In November, iSea held an online #zeroplastic event with 40 participants.

**Clean-up operations worldwide:** OceanCare supported Trash Hero World in worldwide measures to counter marine plastic pollution. Due to the lockdown, this organisation had to temporarily suspend all official programmes. Individual clean-ups continued and online training sessions were developed. In 2020, a total of 362,411 adults and children collected 1,869,529 kilos of waste in 19 countries, despite difficult conditions. Only about five percent of it could be recycled. Trash Hero World developed a new data acquisition method that enables all local groups worldwide to enter the results of their clean-up operations into a central register, which simplifies quantitative evaluation of the collected waste. In 2020, Trash Hero also assisted the coalition Break Free from Plastic with a so-called ‘brand audits’, where the proportion of waste per consumer brand is registered so that those responsible for the most waste can be identified and called on to act.
■ **Clean-up in Zurich:** On the 19th of September, World Cleanup Day, clean-ups took place in 180 countries. OceanCare was active with partners around the Lake Zurich basin. Over half a tonne of waste was collected by 218 volunteers, 65 of them divers. A small electric car, 28 electric scooters, eight bicycles, four e-bikes, two plastic chairs, a barbecue and various mobile phones were retrieved from the water, while countless PET bottles, glass bottles, plastic cups, aluminium cans, plastic bags, fast-food packaging items and single-use masks were collected on land. Cigarette butts are a cause for concern: 52,000 were picked up, which is a gigantic amount, considering that one butt can contaminate up to 1,000 litres of water. The clean-up raised awareness of the plastics problem. This is important, because the production of waste in Switzerland is three times the European average.

■ **Pocket ashtrays:** Around 5.6 trillion cigarettes are smoked every year. A large proportion of these end up as butts in nature. In its online shop, OceanCare now offers a mini ashtray made from sustainably grown bamboo and used wine corks. It can be used for odour-free storage of butts until these are disposed of properly.

■ **I Care campaign:** With I Care, OceanCare has been raising awareness of the need to reduce plastic consumption since 2017. The campaign draws the public’s attention to the plastics problem, ensuring that more and more people rethink their consumption behaviour and dispose of plastic properly. In 2020, OceanCare re-freshed the campaign page on the internet, called for a plastic diet and provided tips to avoid single-use plastics that are as simple as they are effective.

■ **Free filler advertisements:** German-language print media make OceanCare’s work visible with filler advertisements. In 2020, four new advertisements were realised, two of them on single-use masks. As consumption of such masks increases, more and more are ending up in nature and the sea. Made of polypropylene, a plastic that is neither degradable nor recyclable, they are furthering the pollution of the planet with microfibres and harmful substances. OceanCare welcomes the World Health Organization’s recommendation that people who neither work in healthcare nor belong to a risk group should wear reusable masks. In 2020, media outlets generously printed the filler advertisements and gave OceanCare free advertising worth 1.4 million Swiss francs (see p. 40). OceanCare is very grateful for this important support!

■ **Cooperation with Sunsail / The Moorings:** At the boat show ‘boot Düsseldorf,’ OceanCare and Sunsail / The Moorings decided to jointly raise sailors’ awareness of the need for ocean conservation. This yacht charter company now hands out a guide to its customers together with their travel documents, showing them what to bear in mind on sailing trips, so as to protect marine life. On the Sunsail / The Moorings website, facts about marine mammals and marine habitat are presented, and sailors’ awareness of the need for ocean conservation is raised via a quiz. In December, the company offered webinars for its customers. OceanCare gave presentations on marine pollution caused by plastic and noise.
A healthy ocean stores around one third of the CO2 emissions from the atmosphere, produces half of the oxygen we breathe and absorbs a large share of the rising temperatures on the planet. Ocean conservation is always climate action at the same time. However, the ocean is reaching the limits of its capacity to compensate for our climate sins. In 2020, Arctic sea ice reached its second-lowest level in 42 years. The Arctic could be free of sea ice by 2035. The melting ice is generating desires: When the North-West Passage becomes accessible as a sea route, shipping volume will increase. Also, many countries are already securing Arctic fishing grounds, as well as oil and gas deposits in the Arctic seabed. The damage that this accelerated economic development will inflict on the Arctic is inestimable. For polar bears, the current climate-induced alteration of their habitat already represents an almost insurmountable challenge.

- **No oil or gas from the sea:** The energy sector’s transition to renewable energy sources is central to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. The increasing exploration of fossil resources in the seabed is at odds with this. In 2020, OceanCare continued to advocate intensively, within all relevant international bodies, for a ban on oil and gas exploration and exploitation at sea, while calling for sensitive marine areas to be given protected status. OceanCare is also reining in the oil and gas industry’s growth plans by campaigning for a plastic treaty to reduce virgin plastic production worldwide.

- **International Maritime Organization (IMO):** More than 80 percent of goods are transported by sea. By 2050, the IMO member states want to reduce CO2 emissions by at least 50 percent, compared to 2008 levels. However, it is predicted that maritime transport will increase by 3.4 percent in the next five years. In shipping, CO2 can be reduced immediately by taking one simple measure: If the global fleet reduced its speed by ten percent, there would be 13 percent less CO2 emitted. In 2020, OceanCare advocated for this at the IMO.

- **Whales as a nature-based solution to climate change:** Whales feed at depth and deposit their nutrient-rich excrement on the water’s surface. They thus fertilise phytoplankton, which stores CO2 in the sea and produces just as much oxygen as plants on land do. Whales also distribute nutrients when they migrate between Arctic and tropical waters. As the number of whales decreases, so does phytoplankton, because it receives fewer nutrients. Whale conservation is climate protection and of central importance to OceanCare (see pp. 24–26).

- **No polar bear hunting:** The ice that polar bears depend upon in order to hunt seals is melting so rapidly that these kings of the Arctic have little chance of being able to adapt to the changed circumstances. Their future is uncertain. Estimates of how many polar bears are left range from 15,000 to a maximum of 30,000. It must be assumed that, due to the climate alone, around a third of them will disappear by 2025. Against this backdrop, it is a travesty that polar bears are being shot as trophies. OceanCare is campaigning for this trophy hunting to be banned.
The ocean covers more than two thirds of the Earth and is the largest habitat on our planet. But only seven percent of its surface is protected. That is not enough. Even protected areas only offer protection to marine life if effective measures are defined, implemented, controlled and enforced, which is not the case everywhere.

UN High Seas Agreement (BBNJ): The high seas are defined as the 64 percent of the ocean's surface that lies outside national jurisdiction. Until now, this marine area has been largely lawless and extensively exploited. With a new international, legally binding treaty, the United Nations is laying the foundation for better conservation of biodiversity on the high seas. OceanCare has been taking part in the negotiations on the agreement since 2007 and, for example, advocating for noise and plastics to be regulated as transboundary forms of pollution in international waters. The last round of negotiations, scheduled for March, had to be postponed because of the pandemic. Throughout 2020 though, OceanCare remained in close contact with the negotiating parties, intensified the exchange with UN delegates and participated in online consultations (see pp. 4 and 9). As member of the High Seas Alliance, OceanCare made clear to decision-makers what a unique opportunity an ambitious High Seas Treaty represents for ocean conservation.

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS): At the CMS Conference of the Parties in February in Gandhinagar, India, OceanCare advocated for improvements regarding underwater noise and Aquatic Wildmeat (see pp. 6 and 20) and argued in favour of greater protection of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs). The CMS parties should designate protected areas based on scientific data from the IMMA working group and advance the identification of key marine mammal habitats in international waters with regard to the UN High Seas Agreement.

IMMAs in the Antarctic: The Southern Ocean around Antarctica is one of the most species-rich ecosystems in the world. More than a quarter of all marine mammal species live in it. In this part of the high seas, OceanCare has been promoting the identification of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) for years. In August, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) designated 13 new IMMAs around Antarctica, which are home to humpback whales, minke whales, blue whales, southern right whales, orcas and various seal species, for example. IMMAs are indicators of oceans' health and reveal the effects of climate change. They aid revision of maritime spatial planning, and regulation of both shipping and underwater noise. They also show where marine protected areas are particularly in need of monitoring or enlargement. They are the primary tool for understanding marine mammals’ sensitive habitats in the high seas.

End of oil exploration in a Spanish marine protected area: In the whale migration corridor between the Spanish mainland and the Balearic Islands, Spain's government has rejected four applications from a Dutch oil company after many years of intervention on the part of OceanCare. The company wanted to explore for oil and gas deposits in the Gulf of Lion's seabed off the coast of Catalonia, with seismic tests up to 260 decibels loud. The zone is in the marine area that was found to be particularly ecologically valuable and placed under protection in 2018, and also declared a Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI) by the
Barcelona Convention in 2019, for which OceanCare had also campaigned intensively. Termination of the four permit procedures means that oil exploration in the Gulf of Lion has been consigned to history.
Around 140 million tonnes of marine life is fished out of the ocean every year. A third of these animals are of no value to fishers and get discarded overboard, either dead or injured. If this depletion continues unabated, the stocks of all commercially exploited fish species will have disappeared in about 40 years. This is an ominous scenario for the marine ecosystem, but also for the food security of around three billion people, who depend on food from the sea.

- **World Trade Organization (WTO):** In the Stop Funding Overfishing campaign, and in cooperation with 173 organisations, OceanCare called on the World Trade Organization to ban subsidies for exploitation of the ocean. The WTO member states had committed to negotiating an accord by 2020, so as to end such subsidies. Final negotiations are still pending, but there are signs that an agreement is on the horizon.

- **General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM):** This commission’s conferences had to be postponed until 2021. GFCM and OceanCare used the time to work on a key socio-economic study on the impact of underwater noise on fish stocks (see p. 5).

- **European Union:** Together with 16 partner organisations, OceanCare demanded that the Fisheries Council provide complete documentation of all fish catches in the EU. The current combination of excessive catch quotas, by-catch dumped at sea and the lack of catch-volume monitoring is rapidly decimating fish stocks in the European Union. Full documentation of catches is easy to implement. This approach protects marine animals, creates an incentive for sustainable fishing and enables the EU to meet its sustainability targets.

Off the French Atlantic coast, in the Bay of Biscay, around 19,000 dolphins died as by-catch in the last two years. Scientists unsuccessfully pushed for fishing to be suspended there in winter 2020. OceanCare, together with the alliance Seas at Risk, appealed to the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries to take up the matter.

Bottom trawling destroys seabed habitats. It is practised worldwide, but particularly intensively in EU waters. To date, bottom trawls are only banned in the Mediterranean within three nautical miles of the coast and at depths of less than 50 metres, which is nowhere near enough. Together with Seas at Risk, OceanCare compiled an overview of the prevalence of this destructive fishing method in the EU and showed that it is even used in sensitive coastal areas and in around 60 percent of marine protected areas, contrary to the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

- **Marine Stewardship Council (MSC):** This council’s sustainability label for fish and seafood is also awarded to fisheries that fish for overfished and protected marine species, have large amounts of by-catch or destroy the seabed. The coalition Make Stewardship Count, named in reference to the promise inherent within MSC’s name, is calling for the label to be awarded in a sustainability-oriented manner. In various letters and online consultations in 2020, there were calls for improvement of standards, for more transparency in the awarding of
the label, and for a refusal to certify harmful fisheries. This coalition, which OceanCare has been a member of since 2018, also criticises MSC’s detrimental approach to sharks (see p. 36).

**Saving salmon in the state of Washington, USA:** In the Columbia River basin, salmon are heavily fished and dams block access to over 55 percent of spawning grounds. Accordingly, the number of salmon in the region is declining, which also threatens the local orca population. Instead of addressing the actual dangers, the US fisheries authority scapegoated predators of salmon and approved the culling of 540 California sea lions and 176 Steller sea lions. There is no evidence that salmon stocks recover when sea lions are decimated. OceanCare appealed to the US National Marine Fisheries Service to revoke approval of the cull and supported the Origami Whales Project’s demand that the Governor of Washington remove four dams.

**Senegal:** The Senegalese minister of fisheries planned to grant more than 50 new licences to Chinese and Turkish fishing vessels in spring 2020. OceanCare joined an open letter, in which the organisation fair-fish criticised the granting of these licences as an outrage that would ruin the country’s already overfished waters and the livelihoods of local fishers. Senegal’s fishers also fought against the government’s plans. In June, it became known that all applications had been rejected.
The poaching of marine animals is on the rise on the West African coast. Aquatic wild meat refers to products that come from threatened or protected dolphins, whales, manatees, turtles or sharks that have been killed illegally. The meat and bones serve as food and fish bait or are used in traditional medicine. One reason behind poaching is the industrial overfishing of West Africa’s coastal waters. More and more often, local fishers are left with empty nets and have neither income nor food for their families. In their distress, they turn to protected animals. OceanCare has been tackling the problem since 2017 and is cooperating closely with the Benin Environment and Education Society (BEES), which is well connected with the population and ministries in the region. Together, the organisations are also raising the issue within international bodies, because the overexploitation of West Africa’s marine resources by overseas large scale fishing fleets must be stopped comprehensively.

**Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS):** At the CMS conference of the parties (CoP) in February in Gandhinagar, India, OceanCare advocated for more protection of aquatic species. The CoP was made aware of the consequences of overfishing in West Africa and the resulting hunting of endangered marine animals. At the side event on aquatic wild meat, OceanCare and BEES presented initial results from a survey in Benin and Togo (see p.21). Government representatives from Senegal, Togo and the Ivory Coast were in attendance and described the situation in their respective countries. To solve the problem, international measures must be taken. However, a regional action plan that addresses the critical income situation in the region is also important, as is incorporation of the local population, for instance by means of strong partnerships between coastal communities for protection of threatened animals.
■ **Aquatic wild meat in Benin and Togo:** To understand the drivers of aquatic wild meat and to identify possible solutions, BEES analysed usage of threatened marine animals in Benin and Togo. Scientists interviewed fishermen, women and traditional healers along the coast of both countries. The results of the in-depth study are to be published and submitted to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) as a basis for an action plan in West Africa. Particular attention is being paid to the African manatee, which is critically endangered in Southern Benin. Here, BEES is in contact with the National University of Agriculture. OceanCare is also providing support for a doctoral thesis on manatee ecology in Benin.

■ **Sea turtle conservation in West Africa:** As turtle poaching is also on the rise, OceanCare supported the establishment of the West African Sea Turtle Conservation Network (WASTCON) and, in November, attended the first congress on sea turtles in West and Central Africa. Here, 60 specialists from 13 African countries spoke in favour of increased cooperation. They want to expedite the exchange of information, harmonise data acquisition methodology across the region for better comparability and push for sea turtle conservation.

■ **Venezuela:** In Lake Maracaibo, manatees and Guiana dolphins are hunted by locals or landed as by-catch. The extent of this poaching and the factors behind it are still unclear. OceanCare is supporting the Venezuelan organisation CIT in a corresponding study. In 2020, CIT interviewed 37 people in the region. More than half said they kill at least one Guiana dolphin per month and either eat its meat or use it as shark bait. Manatees are hunted less frequently, but also get consumed. Both species had featured on the menus of almost all interviewees. The meat seems to be used only locally and to have no commercial value. The decline of fish in the region, due to oil pollution in the seawater, is problematic. As measures against poaching, the population is being made more aware of Guiana dolphins’ ecological importance, and the mangroves and seagrass meadows in Lake Maracaibo are being protected and reforested, so that fish stocks can recover.
When whales, dolphins or whale sharks become stranded, they are in danger of drying out, suffocating or being crushed by their own weight. They only have a chance of survival if they are quickly returned to sea. Increasingly, marine animals are also getting entangled in fishing nets, which cut deeply into their bodies. Removing such nets from whales and dolphins at sea is enormously difficult. There is an advantage in the case of seals and sea turtles, as they can be treated in medical centres on land. OceanCare is supporting marine animal rescue in several countries, while ensuring that rescue workers can be professionally trained and equipped.

**UK:** Since 2012, OceanCare has been cooperating with British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR), one of the most competent rescue organisations for marine animals. In early 2020, a stranded dolphin was rescued, and a seal pup in distress was retrieved from a cliff by means of an abseil. BDMLR was called to rescue a nearly 20-metre-long stranded fin whale in February and the team also coordinated help for several stranded whales in the summer. Due to the lockdown, a seal rescue conference in Cornwall, scheduled for May, had to be postponed until 2021. In two lectures, BDMLR spoke to an audience of around 100 people about seal conservation, and at the University of Exeter, the organisation motivated students to contribute their knowledge to charitable work. For vets and veterinary nurses, BDMLR developed a workshop on the medical care and nursing of seal pups. OceanCare stepped in at short notice to help pay for a seal model, which is central to the training. Climate change is bringing fiercer winter storms around the British Isles, which are cause for concern, as they put young grey seals at risk. BDMLR trained 20 additional helpers and rescued 47 young seals from September to December. The existing rehabilitation facilities were pushed to their limits, due to COVID restrictions on staff numbers. A new seal hospital will be built in Cornwall in 2021.

**France:** OceanCare has been working with the LPA seal rescue centre in Calais since 2018. In 2020, LPA rescued 25 harbour seals and nine grey seals. This is 20 animals fewer than in the previous year, but still a considerable number, given the rigorous pandemic measures in France. All but one of the seals were less than a year old. Some young animals had been separated from their mothers too early by storms, whereas others had injuries from fights or fishing gear. Several seals were ill or infested with parasites. Two animals succumbed to their injuries, but the rest survived.

**Venezuela:** In 2020, partner organisation CIT was able to save another 18 whale sharks with the help of OceanCare. This already brings the number of stranded whale sharks that survived in the last three years to 60. Raising awareness among fishers and representatives of coastal communities, as well as sharing knowledge on how to rescue whale sharks, bore fruit during the lockdown: When CIT staff were unable to intervene, private individuals rescued whale sharks on their own and even collected scientifically relevant data. This represents a great success, because just a few years ago, the animals would have been killed for their meat. In the scientific
journal Oryx, CIT published an article on whale shark rescue in Venezuela (see p. 43). The organisation also uses its knowledge to help sea turtles, dolphins, seabirds and manatees.

**South Africa:** Since 2017, OceanCare has been supporting the efforts of the organisation Oceans Research to establish a stranding network for marine mammals in South Africa. A particularly harsh lockdown made rescue missions impossible there for months. Oceans Research responded nine times to bottlenose dolphin and sperm whale strandings, raised awareness of the need for marine wildlife conservation among more than 4,000 youths from disadvantaged communities and organised four clean-ups, during which, 258 kilos of waste, including 353 fishing nets, were collected.

**Worldwide sea turtle rescue:** OceanCare assists the Olive Ridley Project (ORP) with the rescue, care and release of sea turtles. Around the Balearic Islands, it helps the Save the Med Foundation to liberate turtles from ghost nets. The Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance (STRA) has now been founded to globally promote a medical exchange on treatment of sea turtles (see pp. 32 and 33).

**Mauritius:** On the 25th of July, a Japanese freighter ran aground off Mauritius. Around 1,200 tonnes of oil spilled, polluting mangrove forests and destroying one of the world’s most species-rich coral reefs. When the freighter broke apart in August, another 90 tonnes of oil spilled. The larger wreckage was towed into the open sea and sunk in a marine protected area, around 3,000 metres deep. Three days after this act, dozens of melon-headed whales, as well as other whale and dolphin species, stranded. Injured and dying animals were also sighted at sea. OceanCare was in constant contact with local wildlife conservationists and, as a result of what happened, is planning to help building capacity through training and equipment for a local organisation for marine animal rescue. For investigation into what caused the stranded animals’ deaths, OceanCare offered Mauritius assistance via a renowned veterinary surgeon experienced in necropsies.

OceanCare also wrote to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) several times, demanding that it immediately take long overdue and urgently necessary measures to prevent such environmental disasters. The IMO was urged to investigate the incident thoroughly, especially as freighters have already run aground on the coral reef near Mauritius in previous years. Captains should exercise utmost caution in the vicinity of the island. However, shifting the route away from the coral reef is the only way to eliminate the danger. OceanCare asked the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) to give its member state Mauritius scientific advice on how to minimise the environmental impact of the incident and urged the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to participate in the investigation into what caused the animals’ deaths.
Few people are aware that sperm whales live in the Mediterranean. They are superlative animals that grow up to 20 metres long and to weigh as much as 50 tonnes. They dive as far down as 3,000 metres and their brain, at 9.5 kilos, is the heaviest among all mammals. However, these whales are in trouble in the Mediterranean: For instance, they are having to avoid more and more ships, and human-made noise is increasing constantly.

**International Maritime Organization (IMO):** For fin whales and sperm whales, a collision with a freighter is usually fatal. Collisions are particularly frequent in important whale habitats, such as the Hellenic Trench, the Ligurian Sea, the Gulf of Lion, and between the Balearic Islands and the Spanish mainland. OceanCare called on the IMO to move shipping routes out of such sensitive marine areas and to reduce ships' speed. Reducing speed by just ten percent would make it possible to avoid about half of the collisions between ships and whales.

**SaveMoby whale warning system:** Since 1997, the Pelagos Cetacean Research Institute (PCRI) has been researching sperm whales in the Hellenic Trench. This elongated underwater canyon is the deepest region in the Mediterranean and home to a sperm whale population of around 200 individuals. Just since the research began, 40 sperm whales have been stranded here. More than half of them had been injured by freighters, about 30,000 of which pass through the whales' habitat every year. OceanCare and PCRI, together with European research institutes, are developing a system that locates sperm whales based on their clicking sounds and warns ship captains as soon as the animals are in their vicinity, so that they can change course and avoid a collision.

In 2019, the project’s first solar-powered high-tech buoy with an underwater microphone was deployed in the Bay of Sougia, south-west of Crete. In 2020, two more buoys were anchored there. They worked perfectly until the end of September, when a storm, unusual for that time of year, swept across the bay. Powerful currents tore the buoys from their moorings. One buoy was retrieved and two were lost. This incident means the test phase will take longer, but it does not jeopardise the project, as the loss was insured. The researchers are now developing a stronger mooring. In 2020, MarineTraffic, a company that monitors ship movements, provided programming for the buoys’ whale detection and for the transmission of data to a server, which will compare the data with ship movements and send a warning signal to any captains on a collision course.
PCRI also continued its research on sperm whales in the Hellenic Trench in 2020. During 308 hours, across 42 days, these whales appeared only three times in a 3,196-kilometre stretch of sea – the lowest number of sightings in 23 years. On one occasion, there were two sperm whales and on two occasions, there were groups (of nine and seven, respectively) that included newborns and juveniles. They were filmed by means of drones. On the positive side, there were a surprising eight sightings of extremely rare Cuvier’s beaked whales. Half of the research trips took place in the buoys’ data-acquisition area, where sighting data should have been compared with whale location data.

PCRI and OceanCare want to get the Hellenic Trench, especially south of Crete, placed under protection as a whale habitat. In 2020, PCRI was in contact with the Greek authorities in this regard. The Greek Ministry of the Environment subsequently entered into an exchange with the Ministry of Maritime Affairs on the dangers of collisions between ships and whales. Such liaison is essential, also because deployment of the SaveMoby whale warning system in strategic marine areas will be subject to authorisation.

**Whale Conservation Worldwide**

Many whale species are vulnerable. Whales die as by-catch, collide with ships, find too little food, starve to death with stomachs full of plastic, or get stranded after extreme acoustic events. Although a ban on commercial whaling (the greatest achievement in species conservation) has been in place since 1986, whales continue to be hunted. Some states have been consistently disregarding the international commercial whaling moratorium for years.

**International Whaling Commission (IWC):** The biennial IWC meeting was postponed until 2021. However, the IWC Conservation Committee met online in autumn. OceanCare insisted that the many measures and laws adopted to protect whales must finally be demonstrably implemented. The stranding of melon-headed whales in Mauritius and the long-term consequences of the oil spill there for whales and dolphins were also addressed (see p.23). OceanCare urged the Conservation Committee to dispatch stranding experts, who should provide on-site assistance, investigate what caused the animals’ deaths and assess the ecological damage. The IWC Secretariat confirmed that the Executive Secretary and the IWC Expert Advisory Panel on Strandings had offered
assistance to the government of Mauritius and that the IWC had advised local organisations on the collection of samples from stranded animals.

- **Norway:** Ignoring international conservation efforts, Norway approved the killing of 1,278 whales. This effectively resulted in 505 minke whales being killed. That is 76 animals more than in the previous year. Unlike Iceland, for example, Norway classified whaling as systemically important in the context of COVID-19, even though demand for whale meat is steadily declining and this loss-making business has to be subsidised. In 2020, the Norwegian authorities wanted to simplify the issuing of whaling permits. OceanCare and the Animal Welfare Institute, together with other international organisations, intervened against this.

The tourist season in Norway begins in April, at the same time as whaling. Minke whale meat will then be offered to tourists in many places. Together with partner organisations, OceanCare appealed for airlines to advise passengers on Norwegian flights to avoid whale-meat snacks and whale souvenirs. Encounters with whales should only take place on professionally guided whale-watching tours. As the pandemic brought air traffic to a standstill shortly afterwards, the organisations will relaunch the campaign at a later date.

- **Iceland:** This island nation allowed itself a catch quota of 209 fin whales and 217 minke whales. In April, however, the last company killing minke whales withdrew from whaling, which means that, at least in Iceland, minke whale hunting is history. The owner of the firm that hunts fin whales suspended whaling in 2020 because pandemic-related requirements made it difficult to process the meat and sales thereof to Japan stagnated. The resulting survival of 426 whales should not remain an exceptional case. Within the framework of the International Whaling Commission, OceanCare is campaigning for Iceland to stop whaling in general and is drawing attention to the fact that European countries kill the most whales worldwide.

- **Japan:** By November, Japan had killed 189 Bryde’s whales and 25 sei whales within its 200-mile zone. In addition, 95 minke whales were killed along the North-West Pacific coast. As minke whales were particularly difficult to find in 2020, the hunt for them was expanded to new regions, which could have a negative impact on whale populations in the North-West Pacific, some of which are endangered. OceanCare supported organisations in Japan campaigning for an end to whaling in their own country, and facilitated research into the sale of whale and dolphin meat along the Japanese coast.

- **Mexico:** Vaquitas are facing extinction, as only a dozen individual animals remain. These porpoises live in the Gulf of California, where fishers’ gillnets are deadly traps – not just for fish, but for the small porpoises as well. Since 1995, OceanCare has been backing the efforts of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Scientific Committee to protect these small cetaceans. But neither the IWC, nor numerous appeals to Mexico’s government, nor work within the International Committee for the Recovery of the Vaquita (CIRVA) have been able to stop the threat to vaquitas from human activities. In 2020, OceanCare again urgently drew the IWC’s attention to the critical situation that numerous cetacean species are in and demanded that they be protected consistently.
Dolphin Conservation in the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean Sea accounts for only 0.8 percent of the global ocean by area. But it is extremely rich in biodiversity. Dolphins are under threat here: Fishing nets, noise, plastic waste and the decline of fish stocks are affecting them badly. OceanCare is supporting studies on the status of dolphin populations in the Mediterranean and identifying the animals’ key habitats. This provides a basis on which to define marine protected areas and conservation measures.

Northern Adriatic: OceanCare substantially supports the work of Dolphin Biology and Conservation (DBC) who are studying bottlenose dolphins in the north of the Adriatic Sea. The study area in the region Veneto includes the Po Delta and encompasses a sea area of around 3,000 square kilometres. It is one of the marine zones in which bottom trawling is at its most intensive worldwide. DBC is investigating how fishing is affecting the dolphins. In 2020, the lockdown shortened the work at sea by two months. Nevertheless, the researchers were able to document 414 groups of between one and 120 dolphins, across 15,000 kilometres. That is 128 more groups than in the previous year. Between 100 and 500 animals were observed off Venice each month. Over an area of 830 square kilometres, the researchers registered that bottlenose dolphins appear more frequently when trawlers are present. This is an indication that fishing influences the animals’ behaviour. In addition to documenting the times when trawlers were in no-fishing zones, DBC removed large amounts of plastic from the sea. Also in 2020, the number and quality of professional articles and scientific publications by Dr Giovanni Bearzi and Silvia Bonizzoni was impressive (see pp. 42 and 43).

In 2020, OceanCare supported the Slovenian organisation Morigenos, which researches bottlenose dolphins in the Gulf of Trieste and the northern Adriatic Sea. These scientists identify marine zones that are important for the dolphins and map the position of the many gillnets in the area. This shows where the nets pose a particular danger to dolphins. The animals were photographed from land. At sea, the researchers documented 25 sightings of bottlenose dolphins across 3,325 kilometres on 62 days. They observed interactions between the dolphins, as well as between dolphins and trawlers. The data was fed into a geographical information system, where it adds to what is known about dolphins in the Mediterranean. In Slovenia, Morigenos conducted educational work and maintained contact with fishers.

Greece: For 19 years, OceanCare has been supporting the Ionian Dolphin Project (IDP) conducted by Italy’s Tethys Research Institute. IDP studies dolphins in the Ambracian Gulf and Central Ionian Sea. It also raises awareness among authorities, fishers and the local population of the threat to dolphins and the need for dolphin conservation. During three months at sea, the researchers sighted four groups of common dolphins and two groups of bottlenose dolphins in the Central Ionian Sea, on a total of 18 days. They took over 600 photographs that capture the animals. Bottlenose dolphins appeared 25 times in the Ambracian Gulf and were photographed 2,475 times. Loggerhead sea turtles were noted 30 times. IDP’s photo catalogue now contains 131,658 pictures of dolphins. The new photos were compared with pre-existing images to identify the animals. As the area studied by
IDP is of central importance to bottlenose dolphins, the Greek Ministry of the Environment invited the researchers to help draft a national action plan for conservation of this dolphin species. IDP also helped to update the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classification of the threat to whales and dolphins in the Mediterranean. The question of whether, on the basis of IDP’s data, the bottlenose dolphin in the Ambracian Gulf should be added to the IUCN Red List as vulnerable is being assessed. IDP also trained fellow researchers from iSea on data acquisition and photographic identification with regard to marine mammals.

**Dolphin Conservation in Peru**

In Peru’s waters, up to 20,000 dolphins die each year as by-catch in fishing nets. Despite a hunting ban, another approximately 15,000 dolphins are killed deliberately. These animals’ meat is used as shark bait or sold on local markets. In 2013, OceanCare and Peruvian organisation Mundo Azul documented this illegal hunting in undercover research. Based on the resulting film footage, dolphin hunters stood trial for the first time in 2016. The footage was sent to all Peruvian embassies around the world and one short film generated almost 218,000 views on YouTube. The documentary Dolphins in Danger was shown at international film festivals in 2019 and is now available online, as video on demand. Bringing wrongdoing to light is important. It is equally important that existing laws have an effect and that fishers understand why dolphins must be protected. OceanCare and WWF Peru raised fishers’ awareness of these animals’ importance in the marine ecosystem and explained the legal situation to them.

- **Tightening measures against dolphin hunting:** With help from OceanCare, WWF Peru spent three years investigating where dolphin meat is used as bait. The study showed that this is the case in eleven fishing communities. The situation is particularly worrying in the ports of Salaverry and Pucusana. The results were published in the renowned scientific journal Frontiers in Marine Science (see p. 43). In order to get on top of the problem, there is a need for stricter laws that actually get implemented, as well as better controls and more raising of fishers’ awareness regarding the consequences that illegal hunting entails for themselves and for the dolphins. In 2020, a total of 69 people, including government representatives, were interviewed about the use of dolphin meat as bait and how controls are put into practice. Together with a legal expert, WWF Peru formulated recommendations for the attention of relevant ministries, on how to improve dolphin conservation laws. For reduction of dolphin by-catch in fishing, technical solutions were suggested. All these measures keep the threat to dolphins on the Peruvian government’s agenda. The International Whaling Commission is also aware of the issue criticising the high number of dolphins killed.
Dolphin Conservation Worldwide

Dolphins are under threat worldwide. More and more species’ populations are collapsing. This is alarming for marine biodiversity and shows just how threatened underwater life is: Dolphins are apex predators, so their condition indicates the state of the marine ecosystem as a whole. Excessive hunting, overfishing, underwater noise, plastic pollution and climate change are having a cumulative and destructive effect on the marine environment.

■ **Black Sea**: Since 1988, Green Balkans has implemented over 110 conservation projects in Bulgaria. OceanCare has been supporting this organisation’s research on whales and dolphins in Bulgarian waters for four years. This is the first project to study the number and distribution of the animals in this part of the Black Sea. In the spring and summer of 2020, marine mammals were identified on 400-kilometre research trips, including Black Sea porpoises, Black Sea bottlenose dolphins and Black Sea common dolphins. In spring, 265 animals were documented in 148 sightings. In summer, it was 125 animals in 55 sightings. The occurrence of species seems to vary according to season and water temperature. For instance, Black Sea common dolphins appeared less frequently in summer. Green Balkans will submit its findings to the Agreement for the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS).

■ **Russia**: Since 2018, OceanCare has been supporting the organisation Far East Russia Orca Project (FEROP), which researches orcas (the largest dolphin species) around Russia’s Kamchatka Peninsula and helps to develop guidelines on touristic orca watching. In 2020, the research team conducted stationary observation of the animals in Avacha Gulf and Avacha Bay, as well as observation at sea from June to September, where orcas appeared on 28 out of 47 days. Photographic identification enabled solo individuals to be correlated with social units, allowing conclusions to be drawn about social behaviour and population structure. FEROP’s long-term study shows that the birth rate of orcas in the region is low and juvenile mortality is high, so the researchers were pleased that four families each had a juvenile with them. Worryingly though, four females that have been observed for ten years were again without a calf. In October, an ecological disaster occurred in Avacha Gulf. The seawater was contaminated with a toxic substance of unknown origin and strandings of marine animals occurred. FEROP will document how this fatal incident affects the orcas. Together with OceanCare, it called on the Russian authorities to investigate what caused the toxic discharge into the sea.

■ **Red Sea**: OceanCare supports the work of Dolphin Watch Alliance (DWA) on protection of the Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin in the Egyptian diving Mecca around Hurghada, where the animals are being severely
harassed. So far, around 300 dolphins have been identified in the region. DWA was able to observe the animals despite COVID-19. There were various juveniles, two of which could be attributed to known female dolphins. From September onwards, the DWA team tried to rescue a young dolphin whose fluke had become entangled in a rope that had already cut deeply into its flesh. At the end of the year, this had still not been achieved, but efforts are continuing. In December, two adult dolphins were found drowned, after becoming entangled in fishing nets. Illegal fishing is still a major problem around Hurghada. In an October workshop, DWA raised boat owners’ awareness of the code of conduct it had drafted for encounters with dolphins. In 2020, the dolphins benefited from the drastic downturn in tourism. They appeared regularly and in larger groups at their preferred reef sites, stayed longer, were more relaxed and often played with pieces of coral and seaweed, but unfortunately also with plastic waste. The fact that they were able to reproduce undisturbed gives reason to hope for a coming ‘baby boom’.

Measures Against Dolphin Hunting and Captivity

At sea, dolphins cover distances of up to 100 kilometres a day and dive around 500 metres deep. Their underwater world is extremely diverse. These animals’ habitat cannot be recreated on land. For them, every pool is too small, too bare, too unattractive – simply too alien. In captivity, dolphins lose their freedom, their close family ties and their natural behaviour. However, a lot of money can be made with dolphinaria. The industry is booming. As captive dolphins usually die early, there is a constant need for new animals, which are taken from the sea most brutally.

Dolphinaria-Free Europe (DFE): This coalition, co-founded by OceanCare, wants to get dolphinaria phased out in Europe. DFE publishes studies, advises government representatives and carefully monitors the dolphinarium industry and the tourism sector. In 2020, it was active as follows:

• **Belgium:** DFE supported the Belgian government’s draft law to ban the keeping of whales and dolphins in captivity.
• **France:** The coalition went to the French Ministry of the Environment to intervene against the transport of four orcas from Marineland in Antibes to China.
• **Greece:** Meeting a long-standing demand from DFE, the Greek authorities withdrew the operating permit for the marine mammal compound at Attica Park near Athens in March – only to reissue it when dolphins were to be transferred from Barcelona Zoo to Athens shortly afterwards. Dolphinaria-Free Europe is investigating how this U-turn came about and continuing to campaign for closure of the compound.
• **Kazakhstan:** Dolphins are exhibited at two establishments in Kazakhstan. DFE is supporting local animal welfare activists in their work with school children and in a campaign to draw attention to the problems of dolphin captivity. The Kazakh government was called on to ban new dolphinaria by law and to improve the conditions under which dolphins are kept in existing compounds.
• **Wildlife tourism:** What consequences do crises like the pandemic have for captive whales and dolphins? DFE warns that wildlife tourism encourages commercial exploitation of animals at the best of times, and when tourists
(and therefore income) are absent, care of the animals remains costly regardless. There is a question mark over whether they are then adequately cared for and kept alive in all cases. DFE is promoting the establishment of sanctuaries, where whales and dolphins can be released from captivity in a controlled manner.

**Travel company Expedia Group:** DFE called on the Expedia Group to finally stop advertising and selling tickets for shows with whales and dolphins.

**Dolphinaria in Europe:** In the EU, there are 33 dolphinaria, in which 280 whales and dolphins are held captive. A study by Whale and Dolphin Conservation shows that none of these dolphinaria meets EU requirements. They do not take into account the animals’ biological needs, nor do they provide an environment that is enriched to suit the specific species. In March, a member of the European Parliament put a parliamentary question to the European Commission, asking whether there is a plan to phase out dolphinaria, which would ban captive breeding, imports of whales and dolphins, the construction of new dolphinaria, and the expansion of existing ones. OceanCare put him in contact with Dolphinaria-Free Europe and provided information on the course of action that successfully led to a ban on dolphin imports in Switzerland.

**Japan:** In the Japanese coastal village Taiji, 505 dolphins were killed and 134 captured alive between September 2020 and February 2021. Bottlenose dolphins, striped dolphins, Risso’s dolphins and melon-headed whales get driven into the village’s bay. After some animals are separated out for dolphinaria, the remaining dolphins are either killed or released in a traumatised state. Although fewer dolphins are dying in Taiji now, live captures are increasing. With premiums of up to 150,000 Swiss francs per dolphin, a growing number of Chinese, Japanese and Arab dolphinaria are making such hunting a lucrative business. Experience has shown that foreign criticism fuels hunting, so in 2020, OceanCare supported a Japanese lawyer, who observed events in Taiji for 50 days and began working on a book that is intended to raise the Japanese public’s awareness in the interests of dolphin conservation. It is encouraging that more and more Japanese people are speaking out against dolphin hunting. A petition to this effect was signed by 2,300 people. The fact that Japanese media reported on such domestic protests was also a new development.

**World Tourism Organization (UNWTO):** Together with OceanCare, World Animal Protection called on the UNWTO Global Tourism Crisis Committee to integrate wildlife conservation into its catalogue of recommendations for the travel industry’s recovery.
Turtles have lived in the sea for around 225 million years. Today, the populations of all seven sea turtle species that still exist are in sharp decline. These animals are facing many threats: To lay eggs, females gather on the same beach they were born on. However, many of these nesting sites are now used for tourism and, due to rising sea levels, some are already under water. In places where clutches are able to mature, thousands of young turtles hatch and immediately scramble for their lives, as they have to reach the sea before they get eaten by predators. If artificial light disorients them, they already fail here. Those that do make it to the sea can get entangled in ghost nets, die as fisheries’ by-catch or be deliberately hunted. When sea turtles mistake plastic waste for food, they starve to death with full stomachs. Climate change is also a factor: The animals’ gender is determined by the temperature of the sand when they hatch. With increasing warmth, the gender ratio is shifting and there are more females than males. Due to all these dangers, only about one in every 1,000 hatchlings reaches reproductive age. Accordingly, the survival of every individual sea turtle is important.

**Maldives:** Since 2018, OceanCare has been supporting the rescue centre run by the Olive Ridley Project (ORP). This organisation is a world leader in the rescue, care and release of sea turtles. At the start of 2020, the centre in the Maldives received new medical equipment. Shortly afterwards, it had to make do without an in-house vet or any volunteers for months, due to the pandemic. Despite the difficult conditions, 23 injured turtles were fixed up and cared for. A total of 14 animals were released, five required further care and four succumbed to their injuries. ORP compiled a guide on how to care for injured sea turtles, for veterinary clinics and rescue centres. A free online course gives interested members of the public a better understanding of these primaeval animals and shows what can be done to protect them: www.oliveridleyproject.org/courses/e-turtle-school. Two international conferences on sea turtle rescue had to be postponed because of the pandemic.

**Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance:** Medical care for sea turtles requires a lot of specialised knowledge. Although the challenges faced by rescue centres around the world are similar, there is little exchange among turtle specialists. OceanCare and Dr Claire Petros, the Olive Ridley Project’s lead veterinary surgeon, are interconnecting these experts within the Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance (STRA), founded in 2020. Their expertise will be available to international rescue centres via an online platform. This will also promote an exchange of
experiences. Under-equipped rescue centres will receive support and advice on how they can best treat sea turtles, within their means. The STRA steering committee consists of Fabienne McLellan from OceanCare, Dr Claire Petros, two vets from the USA and the Philippines who specialise in sea turtles, and a data specialist. In 2020, the online platform was developed and the concept of the alliance was drawn up. International rescue centres were introduced to STRA in a letter and the alliance was also presented at the virtual Australian Marine Turtle Symposium. The response was extremely positive and shows that the project meets an existing need. The STRA steering committee is already in close contact with vets in Abu Dhabi, Kenya and the Maldives. In 2020, these vets provided first aid online for the emergency care of an injured sea turtle in the Gambia. STRA will be officially launched in spring 2021. Rescue centres that officially join the alliance will then be given medical protocols and veterinary advice, and be able to store patient data on the online platform, which will also contribute to a better understanding of the global threat to sea turtles and provide guidance on necessary conservation measures.

■ Balearic Islands: OceanCare supports the Spanish Save the Med Foundation in its efforts to retrieve ghost nets and to rescue sea turtles (see p. 12). In the Mediterranean, the number of so-called ghost FADs (fish aggregating devices lost or discarded at sea, often from illegal and unregulated fishing) is increasing exponentially. Many loggerhead sea turtles get entangled in them. From June to September, Save the Med conducted nine expeditions around the Balearic Islands and (with the support of vessels belonging to sea rescue, sailors and fishers) collected 180 ghost FADs, from which they liberated 89 injured turtles. In 2020, the Palma de Mallorca, Ceuta, Almería and Malta rescue centres had more than twice as many sea turtles to care for as in previous years. They urgently need to be able to expand their capacities.

■ Indian Ocean and South East Asia: The Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) addresses transnational conservation of sea turtles and their habitats in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia in the memorandum of understanding IOSEA Marine Turtles MOU. OceanCare assisted the CMS IOSEA Secretariat with the implementation of planned measures: A questionnaire for states in the relevant area was optimised, so that compliance with set targets can be monitored. OceanCare helped to define a course of action against the illegal trade in sea turtles. Due to the pandemic, it was also important to develop a guide on fundraising for sea turtle conservation in the region.
Europe’s most threatened mammal species lives in the sea: the Mediterranean monk seal, which is also the rarest seal species in the world. These animals were once common in the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and along the northern Atlantic coast of Africa, but there are only around 750 animals left today. The Mediterranean monk seal is critically endangered. For the survival of this species, every single animal is important.

**Mauritania**: Around 400 monk seals live on Mauritania’s Atlantic coast. For these animals’ last remaining large colony, a 6.2-kilometre stretch of coast on Cap Blanc has been placed under protection. Since 2006, OceanCare has been helping the Spanish organisation CBD-Habitat to monitor the area and ward off danger to the animals. As long as this colony is preserved, there is hope for the Mediterranean monk seal. CBD-Habitat makes sure of this, in cooperation with the local population. In 2020, rangers spent 3,533 hours monitoring the animals from 14 observatories. While ensuring that the seals were not disturbed, they collected scientific data on the development of the population. From February to November, an impressive 77 pups were born. Fishing gear is particularly dangerous for monk seals. In 2020, there were 227 fishing boats around Cap Blanc, flying the flags of 28 countries. By means of the Automatic Identification System (AIS) for shipping, CBD-Habitat monitors where fishing grounds and the seals’ feeding grounds overlap, and reports any illegal fishing in conservation zones to the authorities.

**Greece**: There are thought to be around 350 Mediterranean monk seals in Greek and Turkish waters. OceanCare supports the organisation Archipelagos – Environment and Development in its research on the seals around the islands of Kefalonia, Ithaca, Atokos, Meganisi and Formicula in the Central Ionian Sea. Photographic identification is used to determine how many monk seals are in the region and how they live. The researchers locate caves that are important for the animals and monitor them with infrared cameras. In March, a scheduled camera replacement could not take place, due to the pandemic. It was not possible to work in the field until June. In Southern Kefalonia, cameras were newly installed in caves in the Gulf of Argostoli. This area is evidently important for the seals. Another cave in the south was used for the first time by the animals for giving birth to their pups. This already brings the number of known birth caves in the study area to six. In some caves, replacing the cameras and securing the data was not possible until July. In September, the strongest storm ever recorded in the Mediterranean devastated settlements and infrastructure on Kefalonia and Ithaca. Unfortunately, it is possible that young seals died in the waves, which were up to seven metres high. It is still unclear whether some cameras were destroyed or lost. In November, there were renewed restrictions due to COVID-19, preventing camera replacement in caves in the northern study area. In total, 20 infrared cameras were installed in 14 caves in 2020: four more than in the previous year. Nine pups were born, which is the highest number since 1985. To date, Archipelagos – Environment and Development has identified 20 animals. This leads the researchers to believe that the monk seal population in the Central Ionian Sea is larger than previously assumed. Worryingly, people are approaching the caves from the water. Such disturbances must be stopped urgently. This is one of the conservation measures being called for in a report to the Greek Ministry of the Environment.
With OceanCare’s support, the Ionian Dolphin Project (IDP) conducts dolphin research in the Central Ionian Sea (see p. 27) and is also using its presence there to monitor the Mediterranean monk seal. It has been cooperating with Archipelagos – Environment and Development in this regard since 2020. IDP primarily documents monk seal sightings at sea. Around the island Formicula, monk seals were sighted 16 times during almost nine hours. Since the project began, this organisation has identified 21 monk seals. The photo-ID catalogue is published on the IDP website. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the extreme weather conditions in September, IDP focused its activities on the months of July and August.

Albania: Monk seals once also lived on the Albanian coast. However, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), they may be extinct there. With the help of OceanCare, Archipelagos – Ambiente e Sviluppo Italia is investigating whether the seals still appear in Albania. In so doing, it is concentrating on the Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park area. Seal sightings were verified there in 2019 and the park’s administrative authority created an information network for observations, which 18 fishers have joined. Two possible birthing caves were equipped with infrared cameras. Analysed faecal samples were found to have come from monk seals, proving that the animals do appear in Albania. In one sample, nylon fibres were discovered, which may have come from a fishing net or from aquaculture. The results obtained so far will be summarised in a scientific publication that will go to local authorities and be presented at a 2021 international conference. Archipelagos – Ambiente e Sviluppo Italia assumes that Albania is a migration corridor for monk seals, but that the animals are not stationary there.
There are now 71 percent fewer sharks and rays in the high seas than in 1970. Three quarters of species are now under threat and more than 100 million sharks still die every year worldwide. They perish as fishing fleets’ by-catch, but are also deliberately hunted. The rapid decimation of these elegant predatory fish has grave consequences for the marine ecosystem, as sharks are essential for balance in the ocean. They eat ill and weak animals, for instance, and in coral reefs, they reduce the enemies of herbivorous species that keep coral free of algae. Thus, reefs with high shark abundance, for example, are healthier, more resilient and richer in species.

**Marine Stewardship Council (MSC):** This council’s well-known sustainability label is being awarded to more and more fisheries that also fish for overfished and protected marine species, have large amounts of by-catch or destroy the seabed. MSC even awards its label to fisheries that engage in shark finning, which involves cutting the fins off living creatures, then throwing them back into the sea severely injured and unable to move. As part of the alliance Make Stewardship Count (see p. 18), OceanCare criticises this certification practice and the fact that it misleads consumers. In consultations, the alliance drew MSC representatives’ attention to the practice of shark finning, which is at odds with species conservation, and demanded a review of how the label is awarded. A stipulation that only intact sharks (meaning animals with fins) are allowed to be landed could save thousands of sharks’ lives: Shark fin soup is considered a delicacy in Asia, but shark meat has little commercial value. One positive development is that MSC is now making information more transparent and allowing discourse with stakeholders. Worryingly though, the extent to which criticised practices are being changed is negligible. The credibility of the MSC label has been tarnished and the alliance Make Stewardship Count still sees considerable need for action.

**Greece:** Of the approximately 60 shark and ray species living in Greek waters, 25 are protected. Supported by OceanCare, the organisation iSea has built up trusting relationships with fishers in the north of the Aegean Sea over many years and examines their catches. It documents which sharks and rays become by-catch and wants to find ways to prevent this. As the pandemic also brought periods of lockdown to Greece, the scientists were only able to sail with the fishers for three months. In 38 catches, they found mainly small-spotted catsharks, rough rays, marbled electric rays, blackmouth catsharks and pelagic stingrays. iSea raised fishers’ awareness of the importance of sharks and rays in the marine ecosystem, and helped to release threatened or protected animals. iSea also contributed to species conservation by identifying shark nurseries. North of the Aegean Sea, an important area for small-spotted catsharks and marbled electric rays was found. Young common smooth-hounds grow up near the port of Alexandroupoli. Here, of all places, the threatened animals are being caught. iSea also checks the declaration of origin and species on shark meat at markets, so as to assess the extent of false information and of trade in protected or threatened shark and ray species. The organisation used the lockdown as an opportunity to release scientific publications about previous investigations into fishing vessels and markets.
■ **Tunisia:** The great white shark is critically endangered in the Mediterranean Sea. It is protected – for instance by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). In November, according to information leaked to the Greek organisation iSea, dead great white sharks were repeatedly landed in Tunisia. iSea and OceanCare, together with 33 other organisations, called for rigorous implementation of adopted conservation measures.

■ **Venezuela:** In Venezuela, more and more incidents are resulting in marine oil pollution. In the Los Roques nature reserve, which encompasses more than 300 islands and reefs, this has caused the loss of two square kilometres of mangrove forest in recent years. OceanCare is assisting Venezuelan partner organisation CIT with reforestation of these plants, which are important for climate protection and serve as shark nurseries. As urged by CIT, the Venezuelan government has approved two mangrove tree nurseries in the nature reserve for the reforestation programme. Under the organisation’s guidance, locals are collecting seeds, planting mangrove seedlings and monitoring their growth. In 2020, a total of 2,700 mangroves were planted in an area of 1.2 square kilometres. This is a remarkable achievement, especially as mobility was limited by a fuel shortage, and fresh water for plant production was scarce. CIT is incorporating the local population into this mangrove project and raising their awareness of the need for ocean conservation. In 2020, with the help of OceanCare, CIT also managed to save 18 whale sharks, despite difficult conditions caused by COVID-19 and the collapse of the national oil industry (see p. 22).

Available information about illegal shark catches prompted OceanCare to intervene by going to the Venezuelan Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture. The government was urged to sanction this.

■ **Ecuador:** In Ecuador, 26 tonnes of shark fins were confiscated in spring 2020. Together with international conservation and animal welfare organisations, OceanCare called on the Ecuadorian government to solve this environmental crime and to protect sharks from illegal hunting more effectively.

■ **Germany:** Together with partner organisations, OceanCare turned to Deutsche Lufthansa and asked for a public declaration that all airlines affiliated with the Lufthansa Group would refrain from transporting shark fins. Lufthansa provided confirmation to this effect by email. OceanCare was also involved in an appeal to the German government, signed by 19 organisations, calling on it to lobby in the European Parliament for the scientifically recommended protection of the shortfin mako shark in the Atlantic.

■ **Japan:** In February, when it became known that Japan's Ibaraki Prefectural Oarai Aquarium was planning to capture a whale shark in the wild, OceanCare made a stand. The project was ultimately dropped, due to the cost of building a new tank.
Environmental Education

Raising Awareness

Environmental education is an important pillar in ocean conservation. Those who understand interrelationships are more willing to get actively involved. Due to COVID-19, many events shifted to the digital domain in 2020.

■ Lectures: OceanCare spoke in person or online at 24 events on ocean conservation, plastics, underwater noise or climate protection, for instance at Ocean Week in Brussels, the University of Vienna’s Department of Political Science, the University of St. Gallen, the community college Volkshochschule Zofingen, the Rotary symposium Mare Nostrum, the Rotary Sailing Academy in Berlin, the Solothurn Natural History Museum, UBS Aarau, the Susy Utzinger Foundation Animal Welfare Market and the Sunsail / The Moorings VIP event.

■ Travel industry: At the St. Gallen holiday fair Grenzenlos, OceanCare gave a presentation on tourism-oriented aspects of ocean conservation. For Globetrotter Travel Service, light was shed on the pros and cons of tourists’ encounters with marine mammals in a webinar, and tips for environmentally friendly travel were provided in a blog post.

■ Students: OceanCare assisted 54 students with their federal academic baccalaureate papers, diploma theses, bachelor’s theses, master’s theses, practical aptitude papers and other theses, on topics such as ocean conservation, plastics, underwater noise, climate protection, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and wildlife tourism. One such bachelor thesis can be found at www.plastikkompass.ch.

■ School visits: Many school visits were cancelled because of COVID-19. OceanCare spoke about ocean conservation at four schools.

■ Lesson material: OceanCare updated the whale box, which provides teachers with material for lessons on marine life. In 2020, it was in use at Swiss primary schools for four months. The whale box is now presented at three online portals for the lending of teaching material. OceanCare’s advertisements on plastics were included in the textbook Geografie Begleitband by Hans-Rudolf Egli, Matthias Probst and Martin Hasler, which was published in 2020 by Hep Verlag.

■ Joanna Toole Internship: In 2020, marine biologist Jenna Schwerzmann was awarded the Joanna Toole Internship. She participated in a project to reduce the dangers caused by ghost nets (see p. 12).

■ Participation in research: In two projects supported by OceanCare, participants were able to experience everyday research at sea. A total of 42 people accompanied the Save the Med Foundation on the Balearic Islands and 19 people took part in Ionian Dolphin Project research work in North-Western Greece (see pp. 12 and 27). They assisted the scientists, e.g. with documentation of animal sightings, and experienced ocean conservation up close.
**Awareness-raising and clean-up activities:** At a clean-up in Zurich, 218 volunteers collected over half a tonne of waste. With Trash Hero World, supported by OceanCare, 362,411 adults and children worldwide removed 1,869,529 kilos of waste from nature. Save the Med taught 1,095 children and youths, and collected 155 kilos of rubbish in 43 clean-ups. In addition, 27 students developed four projects to reduce plastic consumption at schools. As part of iSea’s #zeroplastic campaign, twelve diving centres in Greece raised around 2,500 visitors’ awareness of the need for mindful handling of plastics (see pp. 13–14).

**Events for supporters:** In January, around 150 OceanCare supporters enjoyed a Sunday matinee screening of the film Océans by Jacques Perrin at Zurich’s Kosmos Cinema. In a Zoom event on World Oceans Day in June, Dr Alexandros Frantzis presented the SaveMoby whale warning system and answered questions about it (see p. 24).

**Media Reports**

In 2020, OceanCare’s work was mentioned in over 120 articles in international media. The focus was on oil exploration in the Mediterranean, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) conference, the tenth anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, marine pollution caused by plastic and noise, ocean conservation during COVID-19, and clean-up operations on World Cleanup Day.

Portraits of OceanCare’s president Sigrid Lüber in the publications Zürichsee-Zeitung and Migros Magazine were highlights of the coverage. On the main Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) news channel Ö1, Nicolas Entrup, who runs OceanCare’s underwater noise programme, was interviewed about mass strandings of cetaceans in Sri Lanka and Tasmania. On the TV programme ARD Brisant, he provided information on the threat posed to whales by fishing nets. Ocean policy expert Carlos Bravo was interviewed by various Spanish media outlets, including El País, about oil exploration in Spanish waters.

**Print media:** In Switzerland, 15 articles appeared, e.g. in the publications Migros Magazine, Zürichsee-Zeitung, Blick Green, travel inside, the EGK health magazine Vivere, and Taucher Revue. In Germany, there were articles in Tauchen Magazin and the magazine published by water and wind sports association VDWS International. In Austria, Die Presse, Die Presse am Sonntag and Krone Zeitung reported on OceanCare’s work.

**Online:** A total of 30 articles appeared in Switzerland, e.g. on blick.ch, derbund.ch and tagesanzeiger.ch, 22 in Spain, e.g. on lavanguardia.com, elpais.com and efeverde.com, 18 in Germany, e.g. on spiegel.de, rnd.de and swr.de, and 14 in Austria, e.g. on krone.at and diepresse.at. Articles on OceanCare were also published on news portals in Canada, Italy, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, South America and Malta, e.g. at cbc.ca, timesofmalta.com and stol.it.
Radio: In addition to the aforementioned piece on Ö1, Nicolas Entrup was interviewed during the CMS conference by German broadcaster SWR. He spoke about whale conservation on ORF’s station FM4 and about the SaveMoby whale warning system on Bern’s Radio Rabe. Fabienne McLellan, who runs OceanCare’s plastics programme, spoke on FM4 about plastics and coronaviruses, and on Radio Rabe about the global plastics agreement that OceanCare is calling for. Sigrid Lüber was a guest on Swiss radio stations Kanal K and Radio X, where she talked about OceanCare’s work and ocean conservation in the corona era.

TV: In addition to the aforementioned Nicolas Entrup interview on ARD Brisant, Fabienne McLellan was interviewed in connection with the Zurich clean-up operation on World Cleanup Day by local broadcaster TeleZüri.

Filler advertisements: OceanCare’s advertisements on the problem of plastic in the sea (see p. 14) were printed free of charge in the following media publications: 20 Minuten, Aargauer Zeitung, Beobachter, Berner Oberländer, Berner Zeitung, Bündner Tagblatt, BZ Langenthaler Tagblatt, bz Zeitung für die Region Basel, Coopzeitung, Der Bund, FACES, Der Landbote, Globetrotter Magazin, Grenchner Tagblatt, g’plus Magazin für die grüne Branche, Limmattaler Zeitung, Linth-Zeitung, Migros Magazine, myHEALTH Magazin, Natürlich, Neue Fricktaler Zeitung, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Obersee Nachrichten, Oltner Tagblatt, Sarganserländer, Schweiz am Wochenende, Solothurner Zeitung, Strom Magazin, Südostschweiz Bündner Zeitung, Südostschweiz Glarner Nachrichten, Thunersee Boote, Thuner Tagblatt, Transshelvetica, Wave Magazin, Wir Eltern, WOZ Wochenzeitung, Zofinger Tagblatt and Zürcher Oberländer. OceanCare is sincerely grateful for this important and valuable support!

Means of Communication

OceanCare uses a variety of communication channels to raise awareness of threats to the oceans and to make clear how each and every one of us can help to keep the underwater world alive. The broader the support for ocean conservation concerns in society, the sooner it becomes possible to start making necessary changes.

Wissen magazine: The June edition of OceanCare’s magazine Wissen had ‘whale conservation is climate protection’ as its theme (Wissen 1/20, 18,679 copies) and the October edition concentrated on the new marine protected area off Spain’s Mediterranean coast (Wissen 2/20, 18,519 copies).
■ **Fokus:** In 2020, four issues of Fokus were released, with the following themes: Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance (19,637 copies), Norwegian whaling (18,679 copies), ghost nets (18,404 copies) and animal rescue in Mauritius (19,181 copies).

■ **E-newsletter:** In 14 newsletters (in German and English), OceanCare provided information on ocean conservation projects, while also drawing attention to events and possible ways to provide support. At the end of 2020, the e-newsletter had 29,000 subscribers.

■ **Social media:** At the end of 2020, there were 20,844 people following OceanCare on Facebook and 4,621 on Instagram. The frequency of reports was increased to between four and six messages a week. OceanCare also reported regularly on Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.

■ **Video blog:** In the video blog ‘Es geht um Welt’ (It’s About World), Nicolas Entrup, Co-Director of International Relations and Director of the Underwater Noise Programme at OceanCare, vividly sheds light on marine issues. In 2020, six episodes appeared, covering COVID-19’s impact on the ocean, oil exploration in the Mediterranean and whaling.

■ **www.oceancare.org:** OceanCare’s website recorded around 270,000 page views. The home page, information on plastics and on underwater noise, the shop, and the donation page were accessed most frequently.

■ **Google AdWords:** Via the Google Ad Grants programme, which is free for non-profit organisations, OceanCare generated 123,000 ad impressions and 16,000 connections with the website.

■ **Filler advertisements:** Four new versions of filler advertisements on the problem of plastic in the ocean were sent electronically to around 300 different media outlets. The advertisements were printed free of charge in numerous publications (see pp. 14 and 40).
Professional Articles, Policy Briefings, Book Chapters and Expert Reports
by OceanCare and cooperating partners


Seas at Risk, OceanCare and more than 100 NGOs: Blue Manifesto – The Roadmap to a Healthy Ocean in 2030. Briefing, 2020.


Scientific Publications

Articles, abstracts, poster presentations and lectures by OceanCare and cooperating partners


Other Publications and Works
by cooperating partners


Networks

- **Aliança Mar Blava**: Since 2014, OceanCare has been part of this Spanish alliance, which has more than 90 members from administrative bodies, tourism, agriculture, fishing, shipping, trade unions and non-governmental organisations, and aims to stop oil and gas exploration and production in the Mediterranean Sea. [www.marblava.org](http://www.marblava.org)

- **APPOLL Forum**: Founded in 2017 by UsitawiNetwork Club Basel, the APPOLL Forum is an informal network of organisations operating on various levels to understand and manage plastic pollution in Switzerland. [www.appollforum.ch](http://www.appollforum.ch)

- **Asia for Animals Coalition**: Since 2018, OceanCare has been a member of this network, which works to secure better living conditions for pets and for wildlife in captivity. [www.asiaforanimals.com](http://www.asiaforanimals.com)

- **Beat the Microbead**: OceanCare is part of this campaign, driven by over 90 international organisations, to ban microplastics from cosmetic products. [www.beatthemicrobead.org](http://www.beatthemicrobead.org)

- **Break Free From Plastic**: In 2016, OceanCare joined this coalition of over 1,900 international organisations working to reduce plastic pollution and to promote the circular use of plastics. Since 2019, OceanCare has been a core member of the coalition, contributing to its European policy strategy. [www.breakfreefromplastic.org](http://www.breakfreefromplastic.org)

- **Dolphinaria-Free Europe**: This European coalition of NGOs campaigns for an end to dolphin captivity in Europe. OceanCare is part of its organising committee. [www.endcap.eu, www.dfe.ngo](http://www.endcap.eu, www.dfe.ngo)

- **Global Ghost Gear Initiative**: In the summer of 2019, OceanCare became a member of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative and is thus involved in campaigning for retrieval of lost fishing gear and for compulsory tagging of fishing nets, so that these can be traced back to their owners, with the intention of reducing the deadly danger that ghost nets pose to marine animals. [www.ghostgear.org](http://www.ghostgear.org)

- **High Seas Alliance**: Since 2011, OceanCare has been part of the High Seas Alliance, whose members campaign for ecological management of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction. [www.highseasalliance.org](http://www.highseasalliance.org)

- **International Ocean Noise Coalition**: OceanCare is a co-founder of this international coalition against underwater noise and one of its leading organisations. Since the coalition was established in 2003, a total of 150 international organisations have joined. [www.oceanoisecoalition.org](http://www.oceanoisecoalition.org)

- **Make Stewardship Count**: In 2018, OceanCare joined this alliance, which campaigns for MSC standards that actually deliver on the label’s sustainability promise. [www.make-stewardship-count.org](http://www.make-stewardship-count.org)
- **Mission Blue**: OceanCare joined this global coalition, led by Dr Sylvia Earle, in 2017. It campaigns for the establishment of a worldwide network of marine protected areas and raises public awareness of the importance of such zones. www.mission-blue.org

- **Ocean Clean Wash**: In 2016, OceanCare joined this international campaign, which aims to end water pollution caused by plastic fibres from synthetic clothing. www.oceancleanwash.org

- **Plastic Pollution Coalition**: In 2017, OceanCare became part of this global coalition working to free the environment of plastic pollution, especially that caused by single-use plastics. www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org

- **Sea Turtle Rescue Alliance**: Rescue centres support each other in this worldwide alliance, co-founded by OceanCare in 2020 for the rescue and medical care of injured sea turtles. www.oceancare.org/meeresschildkroeten

- **Seas at Risk**: Since 2014, OceanCare has been a member of this alliance of 32 organisations working towards an effective maritime policy in European waters, so as to improve the protection of marine animals and living conditions in the oceans. www.seas-at-risk.org

- **Silent Oceans Coalition**: This international coalition was founded in 2002 by OceanCare, so as to inform the general public about underwater noise and to stir it into action against it. Together, its 27 organisations call for online protest against critical industrial and military activities at sea, and attract worldwide media attention. www.silentoceans.org, www.silentoceans.com

- **Species Survival Network**: OceanCare has been a member of the SSN since 1997, campaigning to ensure that endangered animal and plant species are protected by the CITES trade convention. OceanCare is in the SSN working groups focused on protection of polar bears, whales, dolphins and fish. www.ssn.org

- **STOPPP**: OceanCare is a member of the interest group Stop Plastic Pollution (STOPPP), which is socially, economically and politically active in Switzerland against environmental pollution caused by plastics and microplastics. www.stopppp.org

- **Wildlife Migration Network**: As part of this network since 2013, OceanCare has been promoting the protection of migratory animal species via international bodies. www.wildmigration.org
International Forums

**UN Special Consultative Status:** Since 2011, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has recognised OceanCare as an organisation with Special Consultative Status on marine issues. This status gives OceanCare the right to speak on important aspects of maritime law within UN bodies. [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

**UNCLOS:** OceanCare has been attending the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) consultative meetings since 2004, where it has been raising awareness of the dangers of underwater noise in particular. [www.un.org/depts/los](http://www.un.org/depts/los)

**UNEP/UNEA:** In December 2015, OceanCare received accreditation for both the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and its governing body (United Nations Environment Assembly, UNEA), and was assigned to a Major Group. At the end of 2018, OceanCare switched from the NGO Major Group to the Science and Technology Major Group, due to its consistently scientific approach. The UN Environment Programme plays a leading role in global environmental protection and is the only United Nations body that deals exclusively with the environment. [www.unep.org](http://www.unep.org)

**UNEP/GPML:** Since 2014, OceanCare has been part of the UN Environment Programme’s Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML). This worldwide network of government agencies, NGOs, scientific experts, and representatives of both the private sector and civil society develops solutions with which to reduce marine plastic pollution. [web.unep.org/gpa/what-we-do/global-partnership-marine-litter](http://web.unep.org/gpa/what-we-do/global-partnership-marine-litter)

**UNEP/MAP:** In 2019, OceanCare was accredited as a UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan partner organisation. UNEP/MAP is a framework agreement that addresses marine environmental hazards and coordinates the Barcelona Convention as the legal basis for protecting the Mediterranean Sea against pollution. [web.unep.org/unepmap](http://web.unep.org/unepmap)

**ACCOBAMS:** Since 2004, OceanCare has been a partner of the Agreement for the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS). In this role, OceanCare contributes expertise in the fields of species conservation, underwater noise, plastic pollution and by-catch. OceanCare’s president Sigrid Lüber serves as Co-Chair of the CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Joint Noise Working Group. [www.accobams.org](http://www.accobams.org)

**ASCOBANS:** The regional Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North-East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS) addresses all toothed whale species in these areas, except for the sperm whale. OceanCare’s president Sigrid Lüber serves as Co-Chair of the CMS/ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Joint Noise Working Group. [www.ascobans.org](http://www.ascobans.org)

**CMS/Bonn Convention:** CMS is part of the United Nations Environment Programme and devoted to the conservation of migratory animal species. OceanCare has been an official partner of the convention since 2016,
working to protect marine animals and their habitat. OceanCare’s president Sigrid Lüber serves as Co-Chair of the CMS/ACCObAMS/ASCObANS Joint Noise Working Group. www.cms.int

- **European Commission:** Since 2014, OceanCare has been a member of the working group for implementation of the new Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), which obliged European countries bordering the sea to improve the state of the marine environment in their territorial waters by 2020. Since 2017, in her private capacity, OceanCare’s president Sigrid Lüber has been part of the Advisory Board for quietMED, a consortium working on noise reduction in the Mediterranean. Dr Lindy Weilgart and Nicolas Entrup work on behalf of OceanCare in the technical working group on underwater noise. ec.europa.eu

- **FAO/COFI:** As part of the International Ocean Noise Coalition, OceanCare has been working since 2009 in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Committee on Fisheries (COFI) towards an investigation of the socio-economic impact of marine noise pollution on fish stocks and fishing. www.fao.org/cofi

- **FAO/GFCM:** Since 2016, OceanCare has been a partner of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), contributing expertise in the fields of underwater noise, by-catch, plastic pollution and illegal fishing activities. www.fao.org/gfcm

- **IWC:** Since 1992, OceanCare has been campaigning for the protection of whales as an observer at International Whaling Commission (IWC) meetings. www.iwc.int
Support

OceanCare thanks the following foundations, companies and private individuals for their valuable support of ocean conservation:

Foundations
Aptenia Stiftung
Béatrice Ederer-Weber Stiftung
Erlenmeyer-Stiftung
Gallifrey Foundation
Heidi Demetriades Foundation
Int. Foundation for Sustainable and Ethical Evolution
Marianne und René Lang-Stiftung
Pfoten & Meer Foundation
Foundation for the Third Millennium
Stiftung Ormella
Stiftung Temperatio
Our Earth Foundation
Walter und Inka Ehrbar Stiftung
Willy und Margherit Wölfli-Stiftung

Companies and Private Initiatives

- **Apotheke-Drogerie am Marktplatz**: This pharmacy asked customers who bought plastic bags to make a voluntary donation to OceanCare. This raised 1,752 Swiss francs for the plastics programme.

- **cinefile**: The cinema/streaming portal cinefile supported OceanCare by providing online advertising, as well as various instances of film and editing work, worth 1,500 Swiss francs.

- **Designarmada**: Once again in 2020, Jens Kramer generously assisted OceanCare with the production of images and video material.

- **feelhome**: As in previous years, this Swiss company granted OceanCare generous discounts on the sale of veggie bags made from 100-percent-recycled PET.

- **Gabi Schenkel**: In the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, this Swiss woman rowed solo across the Atlantic in 74 days, 23 hours and 56 minutes. She raised awareness of the need for ocean conservation and donated 21,150 Swiss francs to OceanCare from the sale of her boat.

- **Gebr. Heinemann**: By cutting down on single-use plastics and by financially supporting projects to reduce plastic waste in the oceans, this company has made valuable contributions to ocean conservation. Since January 2017, this globally active company has been charging 30 cents for all single-use bags in its duty-free shops at many locations and, together with OceanCare, raising travellers’ awareness of plastic pollution in the oceans. Already in the first year of this collaboration, the number of plastic bags in the shops fell by around 70 percent. The proceeds from those sold were donated to OceanCare. In total, almost 500,000 euros have been raised in this way since the start of the collaboration.

- **Globetrotter Travel Service**: This expert on individual travel supported stranded rescue in South Africa once again to the tune of 5,000 Swiss francs, referred to OceanCare in its travel planner and shared information about projects with the online community.

- **Google**: In the context of the Google Ad Grants programme, OceanCare received 16,000 US dollars’ worth of sponsored advertising on the Google search network.

- **help alliance**: Under the motto “change for change”, passengers on board Edelweiss aircraft can donate their change to charity. In 2020, OceanCare was again one of the beneficiary organisations. help alliance, the Lufthansa Group’s and staff’s aid organisation, ensures that the donated change and foreign money from the aircraft is converted into ‘real’ money and has transferred 36,543.76 euros to OceanCare. The entirety of this donation will be invested in environmental education to aid ocean
conservation. Many thanks to all those involved in this campaign!

**Kontiki Reisen:** Travel company Kontiki Reisen supported OceanCare with another donation of 4,000 Swiss francs, consulted the organisation on issues relating to whale-watching tours, whaling and plastic pollution of seas and coastlines, and also shared information on OceanCare campaigns.

**Kuoni Cruises:** This cruise specialist informed its customers about the SaveMoby whale warning system. For this innovative project, it raised 1,000 Swiss francs by enabling travellers to voluntarily donate ten Swiss francs per booking.

**Lidl Switzerland:** Those who bought fruit and vegetables in a reusable GreenBag at Lidl in Switzerland had the option of paying a small surcharge. The company rounded up the amount thus raised to 2,000 Swiss francs and transferred it to OceanCare for projects to reduce plastic pollution.

**Luigi and Valérie Tanieli:** At this married couple’s joint birthday party, the Tanielis did without presents and asked their guests to donate to OceanCare instead. This raised 2,520 Swiss francs for ocean conservation projects.

**Manta Reisen:** Travel company Manta Reisen integrated ocean conservation messages into its publications and shared information on OceanCare campaigns with the online community. In addition, this diving holiday specialist continued its Foiftliber camp­aign, in which travellers could voluntarily donate five Swiss francs to OceanCare with each booking. This raised 3,120 Swiss francs.

**Marinepool:** This German manufacturer of sailing clothing and life jackets was a partner and sponsor of the Rose of Charity sailing regatta in 2019, where OceanCare played a central role in environmental education. In 2020, the company supported ocean conservation work to the tune of 2,000 euros.

**Polar Latitudes:** On a cruise, this travel company organised an auction in aid of OceanCare and donated 4,000 US dollars for ocean conservation.

**School pupils’ campaigns:** A secondary school graduate from Liestal organised a charity run in aid of OceanCare as part of her federal academic baccalaureate paper and collected 5,840 Swiss francs for ocean conservation. A school class from Thalwil donated 1,500 Swiss francs from the sale of self-made waxcloths and veggie bags. A schoolgirl and schoolboy from Silvaplana raised awareness of the global plastics crisis with two campaign stands in the summer and handed OceanCare 1,000 Swiss francs, raised by selling cakes that they had baked themselves. Also, a group of pupils from Sirnach School raised awareness of the plastics problem and sold self-made products, raising 3,168 Swiss francs for OceanCare projects.

**Stiftung NF Footstep foundation:** In 2020, the centre for dogs and people supported OceanCare with articles in its monthly newsletter, a free advertisement in its annual programme booklet and a donation of 1,000 Swiss francs.

**Teradata:** This technology provider in the fields of cloud data warehousing and big data analytics gave OceanCare 2,500 US dollars for ocean conservation, from a Christmas campaign that was part of the Teradata Cares charity programme.
## Income Statement

### REVENUE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>CHF 2020</th>
<th>% 2020</th>
<th>CHF 2019</th>
<th>% 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership fees</td>
<td>385,731</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>219,546</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship</td>
<td>377,892</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>279,349</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>216,887</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>234,750</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from bequests</td>
<td>1,384,749</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>39,431</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from projects</td>
<td>595,015</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>834,363</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from public relations work</td>
<td>1,090,123</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>1,027,757</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from online shop</td>
<td>23,224</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>50,669</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous revenue</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,073,621</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,686,465</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### EXPENDITURE

**Project expenditure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>CHF 2020</th>
<th>% 2020</th>
<th>CHF 2019</th>
<th>% 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ocean conservation</td>
<td>186,944</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>178,649</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic pollution</td>
<td>288,902</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>376,153</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underwater noise</td>
<td>240,004</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>236,476</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species conservation</td>
<td>692,737</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>794,890</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal rescue</td>
<td>179,072</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>129,231</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental education and mobilisation</td>
<td>726,727</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>624,485</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total project expenditure</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,314,386</strong></td>
<td><strong>79.7%</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,339,884</strong></td>
<td><strong>78.6%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fundraising**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHF 2020</th>
<th>% 2020</th>
<th>CHF 2019</th>
<th>% 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>400,930</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>416,697</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Administrative expenditure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHF 2020</th>
<th>% 2020</th>
<th>CHF 2019</th>
<th>% 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>189,240</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>221,158</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total expenditure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHF 2020</th>
<th>% 2020</th>
<th>CHF 2019</th>
<th>% 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,904,556</td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td>2,977,739</td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### OPERATING PROFIT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHF 2020</th>
<th>CHF 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,169,065</td>
<td>-291,274</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Withdrawal from funds: -292,000
Allocation to funds: -1,169,065
Profit before allocation to project reserves: 726
Allocation to project reserves: -726

At the OceanCare office, the audit report and complete annual report can be requested and viewed.
Balance Sheet as of 31 December

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHF</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>3,104,712</td>
<td>98.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous current receivables</td>
<td>5,170</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventories</td>
<td>14,572</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid expenses and deferred charges</td>
<td>4,941</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total current assets</strong></td>
<td>3,129,395</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed assets</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent deposit</td>
<td>20,012</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangible and intangible assets</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total fixed assets</strong></td>
<td>37,012</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total assets</strong></td>
<td>3,166,407</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| LIABILITIES |      |      |      |      |
| Short-term borrowing |      |      |      |      |
| Miscellaneous current liabilities | 37,066 | 1.2% | 115,997 | 1.6% |
| Accrued expenses and deferred income | 70,000 | 2.2% | - | 0.0% |
| **Total borrowing** | 107,066 | 3.4% | 115,997 | 1.6% |

| ORGANISATION CAPITAL |      |      |      |      |
| Tied-up capital |      |      |      |      |
| Project reserves | 263,919 | 8.3% | 258,918 | 11.7% |
| Bequest funds | 2,556,662 | 80.7% | 1,387,597 | 75.9% |
| **Total tied-up capital** | 2,820,581 | 89.0% | 1,646,515 | 87.6% |
| Nominal capital |      |      |      |      |
| Association funds | 238,760 | 7.6% | 238,760 | 10.8% |
| **Total nominal capital** | 3,059,341 | 96.6% | 1,885,276 | 98.4% |
| **Total organisation capital** | 3,166,407 | 100.0% | 2,001,272 | 100.0% |
OceanCare wishes to thank the following partner organisations and institutions for the successful cooperation: