

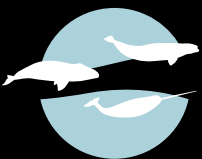


ARCTIC BLUE

CORRIDORS

SAFEGUARDING MIGRATING WHALES FROM PRESSURES FOR A CONNECTED ARCTIC OCEAN

Whales in the Arctic travel over vast distances, migrating hundreds to thousands of kilometres between summer and winter habitats on routes known as “blue corridors”.



For Arctic whales, migration is an essential part of life

Migrations enable whales to access everything they need throughout the year, including food, safety from predators and sheltered places to raise young.

Blue corridors are important not just because they connect destinations. As they migrate, Arctic whales carry out essential life activities such as mating, giving birth, feeding and socializing. Arctic blue corridors help to keep ocean life connected.



VISUALIZING WHALE MIGRATIONS



These whales are uniquely adapted to the Arctic's icy waters and are found nowhere else on the planet. Like other migratory species, they follow environmental cues that signal a change in season, and their migration appears to be closely associated with sea ice.

This map shows blue corridors for migration of Arctic whales in Autumn (September to November). At this time of year, much of the Arctic Ocean begins to freeze, and the whales generally stay close to the ice as it advances south.

For the first time, WWF has mapped blue corridors across the Arctic Ocean for the three Arctic whale species: **narwhals, beluga whales and bowhead whales.**



LEGEND

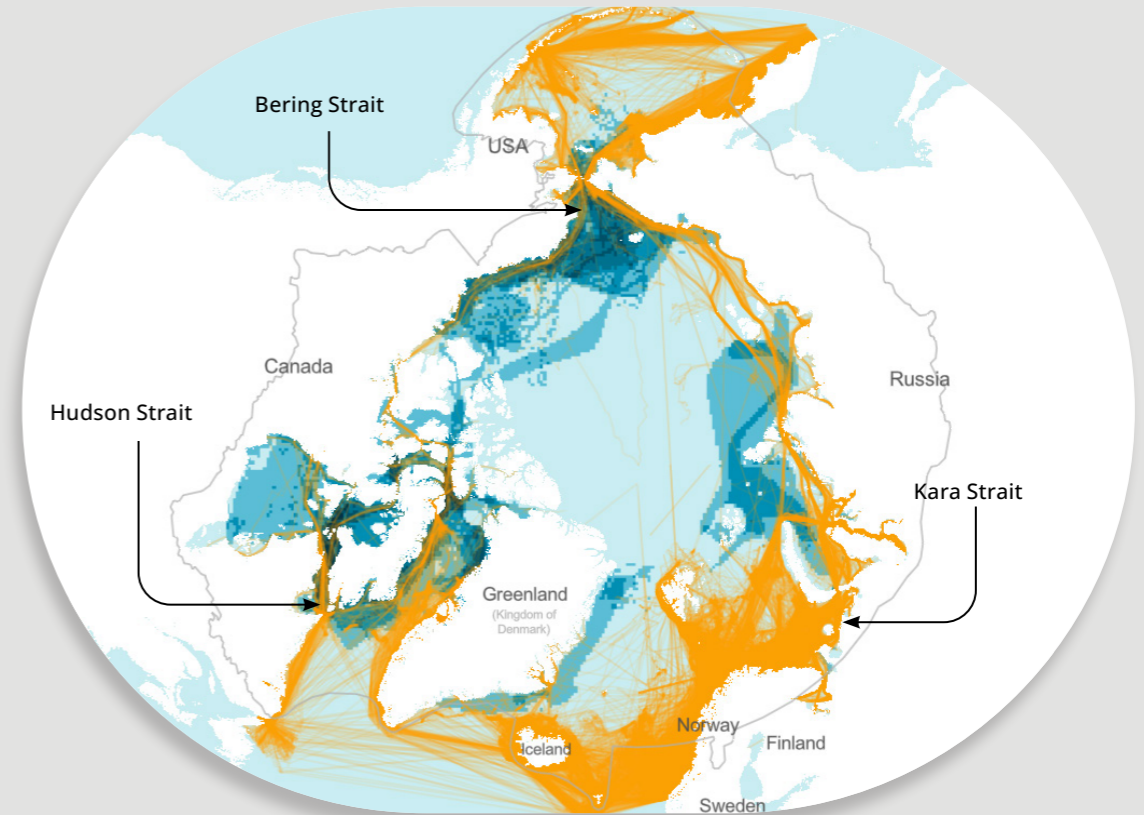


The darkest blue areas on the maps represent the corridors with the most whale species and most information to support their presence. Based on our current knowledge, these areas could be 'superhighways' for Arctic whales.



To view single species and spring corridor maps, go to online report.

SHIPPING OVERLAPS WITH MANY BLUE CORRIDORS IN THE ARCTIC

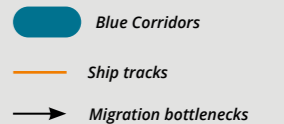


The orange lines on the map above show tracks from all ships within the Arctic that transmitted their location via the Automated Identification System (AIS) from September 2022 to February 2023.

The overlap between shipping routes and blue corridors is especially problematic within narrow passages or 'migration bottlenecks', where ships and migrating whales both travel.

Several migration bottlenecks have been identified in the Arctic Ocean. They are typically the best or only route available to ships and animals and must therefore be used by both, often at the same time, leading to a high chance of overlap.

LEGEND



INCREASING PRESSURES ON THEIR JOURNEYS

The survival of Arctic whales depends on their ability to safely migrate within blue corridors between destination habitats.



The climate crisis is causing the Arctic to warm up to four times faster than the rest of the planet. This is reducing the thickness and extent of sea ice. In many parts of the Arctic, sea ice is retreating earlier in spring and returning later in autumn.

This not only affects migration cues for whales, but also their shelter from predators and food abundance.



Sea ice loss is extending the open water season and opening up new areas for industrial activities, including shipping, in the Arctic Ocean.

Shipping activity in the Arctic, particularly that of large industrial vessels, has increased over the last decade by a remarkable 37 per cent rate.



More shipping puts Arctic whales at a greater risk of being struck by ships and exposes them to higher levels of underwater noise pollution. This can result in death, severe injuries, disorientation and disturbance.

FROM 2013 TO 2023:

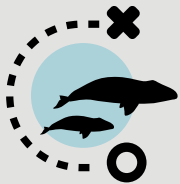


37%
more ships entering the Arctic

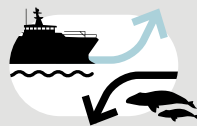
ACTION IS NEEDED TO SAFEGUARD WHALES IN BLUE CORRIDORS

To fulfill global and regional commitments to protect and conserve vital ocean habitats, secure connectivity, and reduce threats to marine life, we call for the following actions to be implemented:

For the shipping industry and shipping companies:



▶▶ Consider blue corridors in ships' voyage planning.



▶▶ Move shipping routes away from blue corridors wherever possible.



▶▶ Slow ships down to 10 knots or less, where ships must take the same routes as migrating whales.



▶▶ Innovate and invest in underwater noise reduction from ships through maintenance, design and technology.

[Click here to view the online report](#)



Working to sustain the natural world for the benefit of people and wildlife.

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For Arctic States:



▶▶ Incorporate Arctic blue corridors into planning and implementation of the United Nations Global Biodiversity Framework to protect at least 30 per cent of oceans and sustainably manage the remaining 70 per cent by 2030.



▶▶ Ensure policies and management decisions are flexible and adaptive to the changing migration patterns of Arctic whales.

For the Arctic Council:



▶▶ Recognize Arctic blue corridors as important elements of ecological connectivity that must be secured through area-based conservation and marine spatial planning at the whole-ocean scale.



▶▶ Support Arctic states in implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework by 2030, including by establishing an ocean-scale spatial database for monitoring marine biodiversity and informing conservation planning and implementation at all levels.

For the International Maritime Organization:



▶▶ Recognize that the Arctic region requires special management of underwater noise from shipping and develop special guidance to achieve this.



▶▶ Mandate ships operating in Arctic waters to implement measures that protect marine mammals, as per Chapter 11, section 11.3.6 of the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code).

For the research community:



▶▶ Lead collaborative and large-scale efforts to fill knowledge gaps and ensure monitoring of whale migrations in the Arctic through science, Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge.



▶▶ Make data on Arctic whale migrations publicly available to inform decision-making.