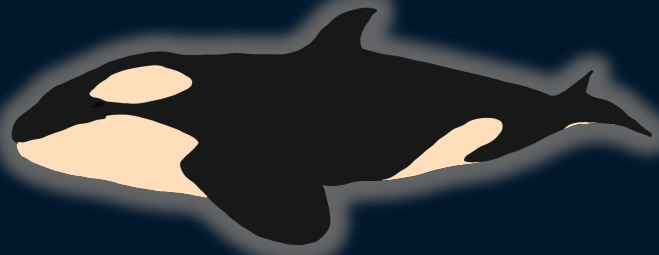


Baby killer whales face many challenges in their first year



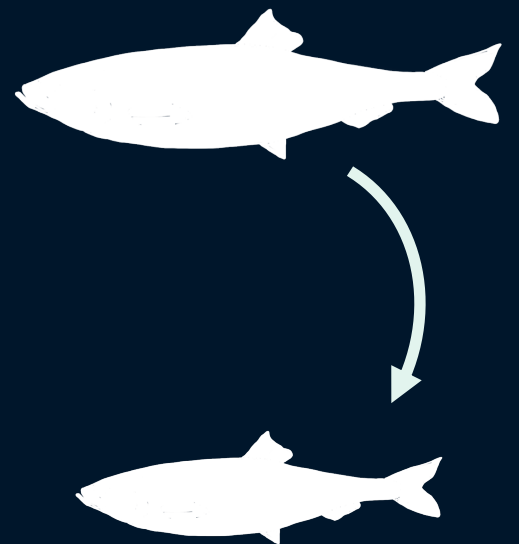
1 - Separation from their mothers



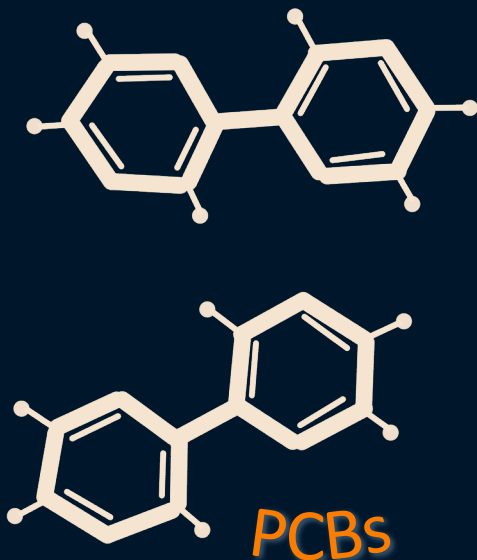
Young killer whales depend on their mothers for survival and well-being. Separation from their mothers, whether due to natural causes or human activities, has a significant decrease on their chances of survival.

2 - Prey availability for their mom

If prey availability/quality is limited or declines, the mother may struggle to find sufficient food, which leads to malnutrition and inadequate milk production. As a result, the calf may suffer from nutritional deficiencies, weakened immune system, and stunted growth and development.



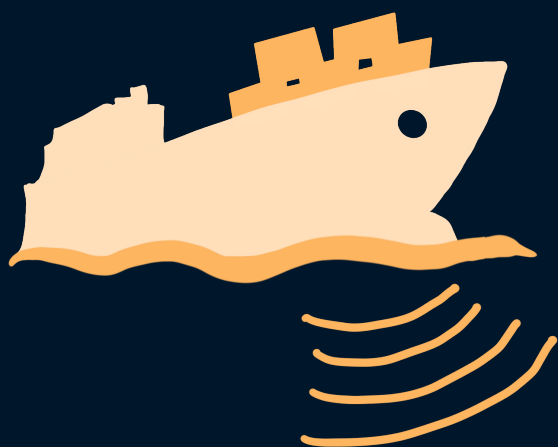
3 - Environmental contaminants



Exposure to pollutants through their mother's milk can impair calves' immune system, reproductive health, and overall development. This can lead to increased vulnerability to diseases, reproductive issues, and cognitive abilities.



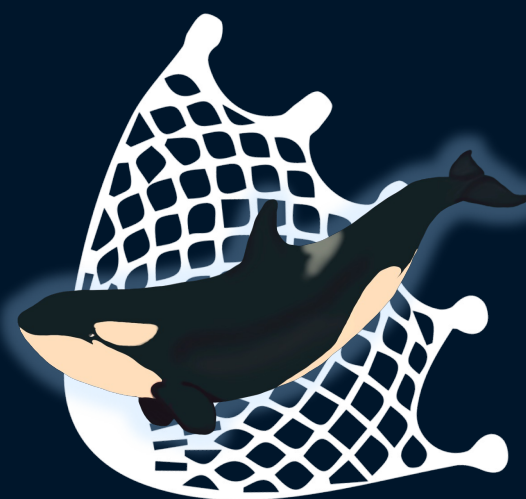
4 – Underwater noise



Underwater noise pollution from human activities, such as shipping and recreational boating, disrupts the communication and echolocation abilities of killer whale calves, which can affect their ability to communicate, grow or find members of their pod.

5 – Entanglement / Collision

Entanglement in fishing gear and collisions with boats can happen anytime. Calves could suffer injuries, reduced mobility, or even death from entanglement, while collisions with vessels can cause severe harm or fatalities. The inexperience of young killer whales makes them more vulnerable to these hazards.



6 – Threats from conspecifics

Towers et al. 2018 reported a case of infanticide, where an adult male killer whale and his own mother targeted and killed a newborn calf from their population (Transient killer whales). This event is very rare.

