



BLUE MARINE  
FOUNDATION

# INTO THE

WORKING TO PROTECT OUR OCEANS

ISSUE 02 | JAN / FEB 2024

UNCOVERING  
TRAWLING IMPACTS

PROTECTING SHARED  
FISH STOCKS

BE GENTLE TO  
GIANTS

# BLUE

**Cover Photo:**  
Maldives from above  
*Roberto Nickson*



# WELCOME

Welcome to ‘Into the Blue’.

Each month we share with you some of our most recent success stories, give you an exclusive look at some of our ongoing fieldwork and spotlight achievements from our team and partners around the world as we embark on another year of protecting and restoring our oceans.

This month, we invite you to dive into pioneering research on the climate impacts of trawling, a new campaign to protect the biggest fish in the ocean and a celebration of some oyster-ly great news for one of our rewilding projects. We hope you enjoy it and thank you for your continued support of our work.



A strong population of top predators represent a healthy ocean

Photo: Masayuki Agawa



# Wild Oysters Project wins BIAZA Great British Wildlife Restoration award

We start the year off with oyster-ly good news for The Wild Oysters Project as they scoop a top prize at the new BIAZA Awards (British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums). The Wild Oyster Project was voted for by over 60 members of Parliament and the House of Lords and were up against 21 other native species projects.

International conservation charity and project partner, ZSL (Zoological Society of London) along with Blue Marine and British Marine are celebrating this momentous win for wildlife. Oysters have declined by 95% due to habitat loss, disease, over-harvesting, and pollution.

The Wild Oysters Project aims to restore Britain's seas to health through the restoration of these native oysters.

*"Despite their unassuming appearance, native oysters are superheroes of the ocean. Oysters filter huge amounts of water and provide shelter for other species. They increase biodiversity, and help stabilise marine sediments and reduce coastal erosion. It is a great honour to receive this award and provides the humble native oyster with a much-needed spotlight."* - Matt Uttley, Restoration Project Manager, Blue Marine Foundation.

Read the full article [here](#).



Despite their unassuming appearance, native oysters are superheroes of the ocean.

MATT UTTLEY, RESTORATION PROJECT MANAGER



Native oysters being cleaned prior to being released into the ocean

Photo: ZSL

Accepting BIAZA Great British Wildlife Restoration award

Photo: Matt Uttley



# New scientific paper finds shark mortality to be on the rise



A landmark new paper led by Boris Worm of Dalhousie University reveals between 80 and 101 million sharks were killed in global fisheries in 2019. Although there has been a tenfold increase in regulations on shark fishing and finning, shark mortality has nonetheless increased.

The research, co-funded by Blue Marine and published in Science, highlights that many of the regulations were introduced to prohibit shark finning, but rather than suppressing shark catches, these regulations may have led to markets being created for shark meat. Only shark fishing prohibitions and accountable governance were associated with reduced mortality of sharks, pointing to the way forward for shark conservation.

Small island nations have been leading the way in successful shark conservation; shark sanctuaries in the Bahamas and the Maldives have led to healthy shark populations where there are now shark-related tourist economies.

*"This important piece of work highlights the fact that shark fishing regulations have been insufficient over the past decade. National governments and RFMOs need to move quickly to introduce meaningful protections through wider fishing prohibitions and marine protected areas, so that these critical species are given the opportunity they need to recover from intolerably high fishing pressure."* Jess Rattle, Head of Investigations at Blue Marine Foundation.

Read more about this landmark paper [here](#).

Sharks are one of the oldest living species on Earth

Photo: Kimberly Jeffries

# Carbon released by bottom trawling 'too big to ignore', says study

A new paper, published in Frontiers in Marine Science by Attwood et al, estimated that 50-60% of the carbon will eventually be released into the atmosphere as fishing nets churn up carbon from the sea floor. The results suggest that the management of bottom-trawling efforts could be an important climate solution.

Blue Marine Foundation is supporting parallel studies, through the Convex Seascape Survey project. Survey scientists

intend to further quantify how much carbon the coastal ocean is storing, how much is being lost due to disturbance and how to help preserve and optimise the ocean's role as the world's largest carbon sink – producing reliable data to complement and extend the trailblazing research of Attwood, Sala and their colleagues.

Frontiers: [www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2023.1125137/full](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2023.1125137/full)

The ocean is our biggest ally in combatting climate change

Photo: Nasa, Unsplash

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of the carbon will eventually be released into the atmosphere as fishing nets churn up carbon from the sea floor.





# Blue Marine to take UK government to court

Blue Marine Foundation is taking the UK to court for 'illegally squandering' fish stocks. The UK government continues to set catch limits for fish populations above those recommended by scientific advice. For the third year in a row, UK ministers have agreed to set at least half of the catch limit for shared fish stocks above what scientists have advised.

Charles Clover, co-founder of Blue Marine, said: "How long is the British public, the fishing industry or the Treasury meant to tolerate Defra ministers routinely, blithely and disingenuously breaking their own post-Brexit laws? Who is going to challenge them? Someone should and we are prepared to do so in the national interest."

Read more about the court case [here](#).

Herrings caught in fishing net

Photo: Paolo Cipriani

## Exemplary Fisher



Did you know that Laamaseelu Masveriyaa translates to 'exemplary fisher' in the local Maldivian language of Dhivehi?

Blue Marine and Maldives Resilient Reefs have been working with local fishers in the Maldives to ensure that the local seafood sourced by resorts has been caught in a sustainable and equitable way. The team established the Laamaseelu Masveriyaa sustainable fisheries programme in partnership with Six Senses Laamu in 2020. After being successfully trialled at Six Senses Laamu, the team has recently expanded the programme to three new resorts on three new atolls.

During the month-long trip, the team visited 13 local islands, conducted over 40 resort and community workshops and recruited over 110 sustainable fishers. By bringing together

tourism operators and local fishing communities, the programme is able to create a market for sustainably caught local seafood, where fishers are not seen as the issue to overfishing but central to the solution. The team aim to build upon this initial roll-out and expand the programme to more resorts across the country, to create a national tourism market interested in sustainable local seafood.

Learn more about sustainable fisheries and test your knowledge using MRR's innovative 'MasMahaa-Veshi' education platform [here](#).

Watch a video from the field [here](#).

Exemplary fishers in the Maldives

Photo: Matt Porteous of Ocean Culture Life

*"How long is the British public, the fishing industry or the Treasury meant to tolerate Defra ministers routinely, blithely and disingenuously breaking their own post-Brexit laws?"*

CHARLES CLOVER, CO-FOUNDER OF BLUE MARINE



# BE GENTLE TO GIANTS

Protecting the biggest fish in the ocean

In partnership with the St. Helena National Trust, we have launched the #BeGentleToGiants Campaign in St. Helena. The campaign is to inform whale shark tourists about how to swim with whale sharks and support responsible tour operators. By following a responsible code of conduct, we can mitigate our impact on the whale sharks.

St. Helena is one of the only known locations in the world where equal numbers of mature male and female whale sharks aggregate. As whale sharks are endangered, safeguarding these magnificent creatures in St. Helena could help support the whale sharks to repopulate. If you have a trip to

St. Helena, choose a responsible tour operator following the whale shark code of conduct and flying the #BeGentleToGiants flag. Find out how to have a positive encounter with whale sharks St. Helena and beyond here.

“Beautiful, enigmatic, and enormous. The whale shark is one of our ocean’s most iconic creatures and to swim with one is a dream experience for many.”  
- Be Gentle to Giants Website.

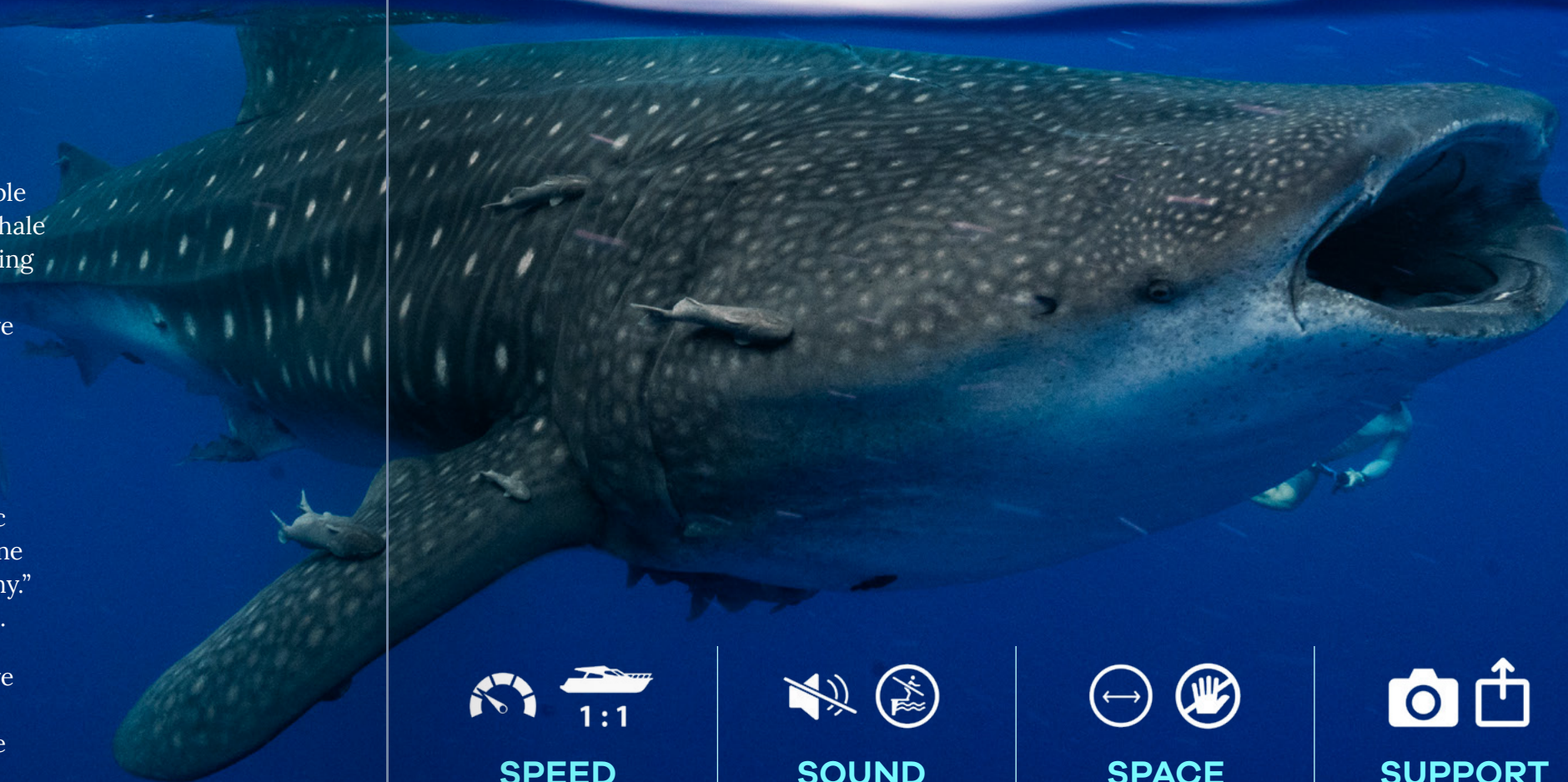
Find out how to have a positive encounter with whale sharks by learning and abiding by the interaction guidelines.

*“Beautiful, enigmatic, and enormous. The whale shark is one of our ocean’s most iconic creatures and to swim with one is a dream experience for many.”*

BE GENTLE TO GIANTS WEBSITE

St. Helena whale shark

Photo: Danny Copeland



**SPEED**



**SOUND**



**SPACE**



**SUPPORT**

Four principles of the whale shark code of conduct



# Inspiration

## From The Blue

Our 'Convex Seascape Survey' artist in residence, Naomi Hart illustrates benthic marine species. These are marine animals that live on the seafloor – some common examples include sea urchins, worms, corals, crabs, sponges, and anemones. SeaBed is a bedspread about the bed of the sea. It is a collaboration between scientists, refugees and artists and was made in Exeter entirely from salvaged and donated fabric.

SeaBed, salvaged and donated fabric

Photo: Naomi Hart



# Introducing

## Jess Rattle

Head of Investigations

**Q If you were a marine animal, what would you be?**

**A** I think I'd like to be an African Penguin. I grew up right next door to them in Cape Town and visit them every time I go home. I love how they're so clumsy on the rocks but so graceful in the water.

**Q Where is your favourite place?**

**A** I'd probably have to say the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, despite how quickly and how badly I get sunburnt every single time I visit. I spent six months in the park during my master's and there's just something incredibly special about how vast and arid it is.

**Q Why do you care about the ocean?**

**A** I care as much about terrestrial environments and ecosystems as I do about the ocean. I didn't study marine science and don't even particularly enjoy getting into the water. What motivates me to work in this field is the fact that so little attention is given to the degradation of marine environments and

to overfishing. If the kind of unsustainable slaughter of wild animals taking place in the Indian Ocean were taking place on land, there would be mass outcry. Harmful activities affecting the ocean are often undertaken out of sight and are therefore out of mind, and that's why I think this work is especially important.

**Q What's one fact you wish everyone knew about the ocean?**

**A** "Responsibly sourced" seafood is not the same as "sustainably sourced" seafood. This kind of greenwashing makes it all the more important to look into where your seafood comes from and how it is caught before deciding whether or not you want to support it.

**Q What is your favourite quote?**

**A** "Ecology without class struggle is just gardening" – Chico Mendez

**Q What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

**A** I finished 10th in South Africa and 636th overall in the

2014/2015 Fantasy Premier League standings. Still pretty happy about that.

**Q Why Blue Marine?**

**A** Blue Marine as an organisation is both small enough to be nimble and reactive when threats or opportunities present themselves, and also well enough established to be brave and fearless and to have a real, tangible conservation impact.

**Q What are you reading at the moment?**

**A** "This Changes Everything" by Naomi Klein and "How to Break Up with Your Phone" by Catherine Price, in parallel.

**Q What is your favourite thing about your job?**

**A** Other than the amazing team that I work with, I think my favourite part of the job is being able to visit the places in which we work. Hearing from the people on the ground, who are impacted by, and working to resolve some of the most pressing issues facing the marine environment is invaluable.



**OCEAN**  
OBSERVATORY  
BERWICKSHIRE

**Have you checked out our Ocean Observatory?**

Ocean Observatories are an interactive online resource for use by parents, teachers and the general public where you can learn about the Berwickshire marine environment. Designed to support the next generation of ocean leaders and advocates and strengthen ocean literacy globally.

Dive into our discovery packs and educational materials through the link!



Your portal to Berwickshire's underwater world

Photo: Lawson Wood





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# THANK YOU

for your  
support!

To learn more about marine  
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To stay up to date with the latest  
news and events follow the Blue  
Marine on social media.

[@bluemarinefoundation](https://www.instagram.com/bluemarinefoundation)

St. Helena whale shark

**Photo:** Danny Copeland

