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Effects of Anthropogenic Sound on Marine Mammals

Human generated sound in the oceans has increased in the past decades. This sound can alter behavior, reduce an animal's acoustic space through masking, temporarily shift hearing thresholds, initiate stress-induced physiological responses, or lead to permanent loss of hearing. In most cases the population level effects of anthropogenic sound are unknown. However there is good evidence linking mid-frequency antisubmarine naval sonar to strandings of beaked whales affecting at least local populations. A number of causal hypotheses have been suggested and colleagues are conducting experiments to determine plausible pathways.