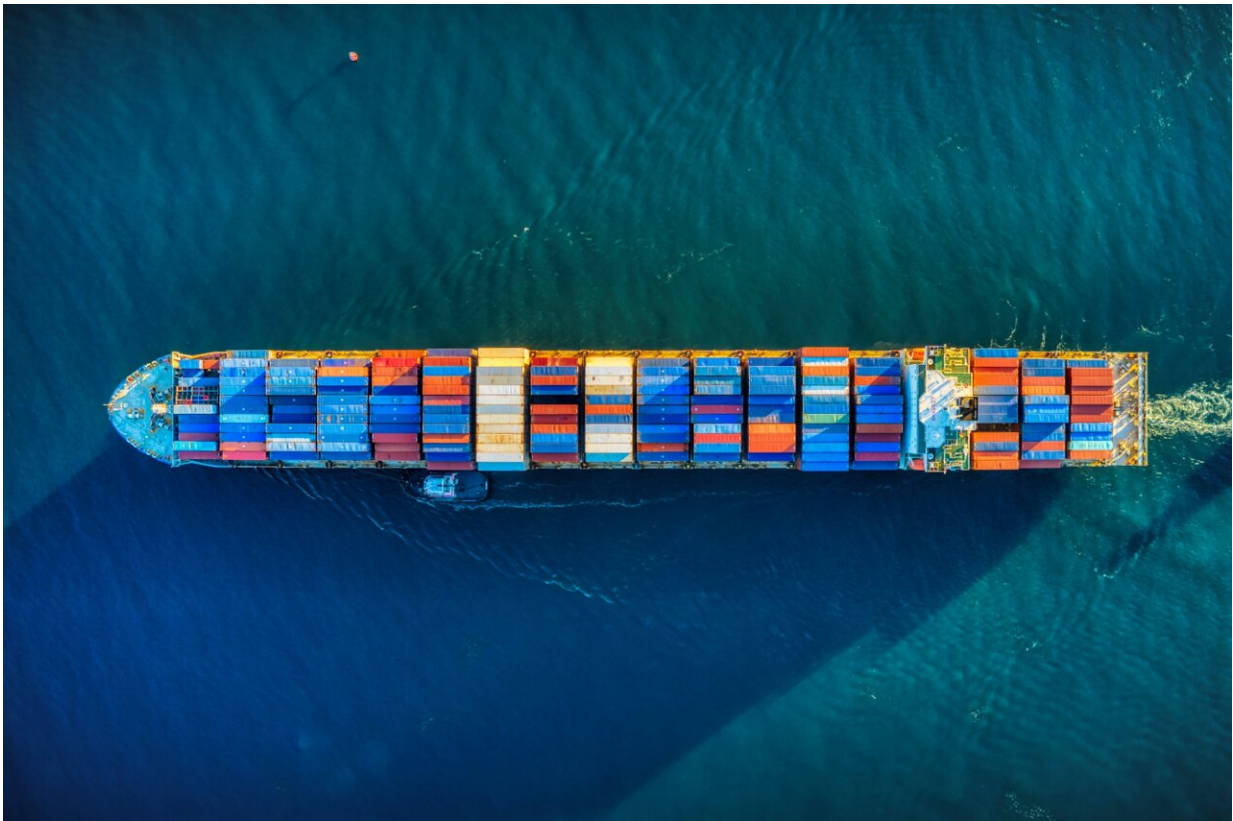


Simple actions can prevent ships from hitting marine animals in their path

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Simple actions can be taken to prevent the deaths of whales, sharks and other ocean giants caused by collisions with ships, argue David Sims and colleagues in a [Comment](#) published in this week's *Nature*. "Humanity

and some of the world's most charismatic wildlife are on a collision course in the oceans," they write.

The world's merchant fleet—from [oil tankers](#) to bulk cargo carriers and [container ships](#)—has doubled in size in just 16 years. Between 2014 and 2050, shipping traffic is expected to rise by up to 1,200%.

These numbers, combined with data on where shipping networks overlap with the movements and aggregations of marine animals, together with assessments of the effects of ship strikes on certain species, present an alarming picture, explain the authors. The data suggest that "ship strikes could be helping to drive the population decline of many animals, leading to profound effects throughout their ecosystems."

More hopefully, Sims and co-authors argue that, compared with other threats to marine biodiversity such as pollution and [climate change](#), the problem of ship strikes harming wildlife is tractable. In their Comment, they lay out what is needed to address this problem on a global scale: better data on where, when, how often and for which species strikes are occurring; greater engagement with the problem, both from the [shipping industry](#) and the public; regulations that either reroute [ships](#) or reduce their speed when they travel through certain areas; and the monitoring of adherence to such restrictions.

"Making ship strikes a higher priority globally is one immediately achievable way to help conserve the world's most vulnerable and iconic marine species," they conclude.

More information: Freya C. Womersley et al, Four steps to curb 'ocean roadkill,' *Nature* (2023). [DOI: 10.1038/d41586-023-02729-9](https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-023-02729-9)

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