

Press Release: Founding of the Iberian Orca Guardians Foundation

Sarah Connor and Janek Andre Unite to Protect the Endangered Iberian Orcas

Berlin/Cádiz: November 14, 2024 – Sarah Connor and Janek Andre are delighted to announce the establishment of the Iberian Orca Guardians Foundation (IOGF), dedicated to the protection and conservation of the critically endangered Iberian orcas. The foundation aims to safeguard these majestic marine mammals, which inhabit the Strait of Gibraltar from April to September, from numerous human-related threats.

"Our young friendship, forged through a shared passion for the ocean and its inhabitants, has finally borne fruit," say Sarah Connor, dedicated marine conservationist, and Janek Andre, founder of WeWhale.

"The Iberian Orca Guardians Foundation is a crucial step toward ensuring the survival of this unique orca population and bridging the gap between humans and animals," Andre comments. "The Iberian orcas are the only orcas in Europe, with only about 35 individuals remaining. They are critically endangered; it's time to take action!" adds Connor.

Iberian orcas are the only orcas in European waters, with a population now below 35 individuals, classified as "critically endangered" by the IUCN*. Threats such as human retaliation, illegal fishing, and noise pollution endanger their survival in one of the world's busiest marine areas. The foundation is built on three core pillars: **patrolling, education, and conflict resolution** to foster peaceful coexistence between humans and orcas. A particular focus is on **accurate media representation** of orcas. Since 2020, increased interactions between orcas and boats along the coasts of Spain, Morocco, and Portugal have made headlines, often mistakenly labeled as "attacks." This has instilled fear among sailors and seafarers, leading to negative repercussions for the orcas, including documented instances of explosive attacks by humans on the orcas.

"Our mission is to bring the reality of these encounters closer to people and support sailors in orca-frequented areas to prevent conflicts," emphasize the founders. Starting next year, foundation-supported patrols will regularly operate in areas such as Barbate, Tarifa, and Tangier to actively protect the orcas and ensure sustainable coexistence. The Iberian Orca Guardians Foundation invites all supporters to join this vital mission and contribute to the protection of Iberian orcas.

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*<https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/132948040/132949669>