



Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation

130 Severn Ave • Suite 100 • Annapolis, MD 21403
443.221.6844 • LivingOceansFoundation.org

How Close Are We to a Global Crash in Fish Populations?

A new film chronicles a scientist's investigation to find out how much fish we have taken from the sea and determine how close we are to a global food catastrophe.

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Annapolis, MD –The Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation is celebrating Earth Day with the launch of its film, *An Ocean Mystery: The Missing Catch*. The award-winning film will screen as part of the Earth Optimism summit in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution. *An Ocean Mystery: The Missing Catch* will have its broadcast premiere on the Smithsonian Channel on Saturday, April 22 at 8pm ET/PT.

This film investigates one of the most important stories of our time: how close are we to a global crash in fish populations? As government and industry regulators track the quantity of fish we catch, and claim the oceans can handle the huge catches, fish numbers keep dropping. This may be because of inaccurate figures about how many tons of fish we catch. The film follows the research of Dr. Daniel Pauly and his team of international experts at the *Sea Around Us* project, headquartered at the University of British Columbia, as they work to calculate the true amount of fish we catch.

Sea Around Us

Trying to determine the quantity of fish we have caught has taken almost fifteen years. It has required the Sea Around Us team to track down fishing data from highly unlikely sources such as historical colonial records, imported export documents, satellite imaging, household surveys and even gender study documents. It's a big-data study on a massive scale.

The research involved hundreds of people and took more than a decade to complete. Dr. Daniel Pauly said "*The job of documenting what is caught in the world and the state of fisheries is a big one*" he continued "*we did this largely to help the community, the fishery scientists, and civil society to know more about what is really caught*". That's where the film comes in.

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Communicating science to the public is a driving principal of the Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation, who co-produced the film with the Smithsonian Channel. Executive Director of the Foundation, Philip Renaud said '*finding ways to effectively communicate science helps to close the gap between science and policy*' he continued '*big data studies that look at global trends can be of particular importance because they tell us a lot about our future.*' The US-based Living

Oceans Foundation is involved in a big data study of their own. The Global Reef Expedition, it's a six-year circumnavigation of the globe to study the state of world's coral reefs.

Results from the Global Reef Expedition are still being put together but scientists involved in the research travelled to some of the most remote reefs on earth to collect data, and they found disturbing similarities on almost all of them. They virtually all had fewer fish than the science team were expecting. Full results from that study, accompanied by a film, will be published in the next two years but here's a preview, it's not good news.

The results of Dr. Pauly's research show that we have drastically underestimated the true number of fish caught globally and that we are running out of fish much faster than we thought. Since Dr. Pauly's study was published last year he has been working to make sure that their results are continuously updated and get included in international fishing statistics, particularly when it comes to protecting the livelihood of small-scale fishermen. Dr. Pauly said, *'Officials in every country have difficulty keeping track of the catch of small scale fishermen, or people who fish to feed their families.'* Dr. Pauly continued *'these are the fishermen that contribute to the food security of people but their catch is ignored.'*

Rare

The film featured a pilot study of the Ourfish app in Honduras. It may make it possible to collect this kind of data as the fish are caught, and would allow even the most remote fishermen to send information about how much fish they catch to their national government. The project was led by Dr. Steve Box, VP of Global Fisheries Solutions at Rare, formerly of the Smithsonian Marine Station. This is good news for reefs and for accurate accounting of the world's fish catch.

Dr. Pauly's research proves that without accurate data on how many tons of fish we remove from the ocean, it is virtually impossible to manage our fish for the future. *An Ocean Mystery: The Missing Catch* is a call to arms to governments around the world to take a better accounting of their fish stocks before we have a global food disaster.

About the Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation

The Khaled bin Sultan Living Oceans Foundation is a non-profit environmental organization that provides science-based solutions to protect and restore ocean health. The Foundation was established in 2000 by His Royal Highness Prince Khaled bin Sultan of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to help preserve the world's oceans and aquatic resources through research, education, and outreach.

<https://www.livingoceansfoundation.org/an-ocean-mystery-premiere/>

Contact

Alison Barrat

Barrat@lof.org

443 221 6844

Reserve free tickets to the screening at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History:

http://go.si.edu/site/Calendar?id=101681&view=Detail&src=nmnh_email_nmnh_er&subsrc=midmo_1703_text

About the Sea Around Us

The *Sea Around Us* is a research initiative at the University of British Columbia's Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries. The project is led by Daniel Pauly, Dirk Zeller and Deng Palomares and it focuses on assessing the impact of fisheries on the marine ecosystems of the world.

The *Sea Around Us* provides data and analyses through View Data and articles in peer-reviewed journals. The project regularly updates its products at the scale of countries' Exclusive Economic Zones, Large Marine Ecosystems, the High Seas and other spatial scales, and as global maps and summaries.

Contact

Valentina Ruiz Leotaud

v.ruizleotaud@oceans.ubc.ca

+1.604.827.3164

Tools and data <http://www.seaaroundus.org/data/#/eez>

New research <http://www.seaaroundus.org/category/new-notable/new-research/>

About the Smithsonian

Smithsonian Channel™, owned by Smithsonian Networks™, a joint venture between Showtime Networks Inc. and the Smithsonian Institution, is where curiosity lives, inspiration strikes and wonders never cease. This is the place for awe-inspiring stories, powerful documentaries and amazing entertainment across multiple platforms. Smithsonian Channel combines the storytelling prowess of SHOWTIME® with the unmatched resources and rich traditions of the Smithsonian, to create award-winning programming that shines new light on popular genres such as air and space, history, science, nature, and pop culture. Among the network's offerings are series including *Aerial America*, *Million Dollar American Princesses*, *Polar Bear Town*, *The Weapon Hunter*, *The Lost Tapes*, *Mighty Ships*, *Mighty Planes* and *Air Disasters*, as well as critically-acclaimed specials that include *Building Star Trek*, *The Unknown Flag Raiser of Iwo Jima*, *MLK: The Assassination Tapes* and *The Day Kennedy Died*. Smithsonian Networks also operates Smithsonian Earth™, through SN Digital LLC., a new subscription video streaming service delivering spectacular original nature and wildlife content. To learn more, go to www.smithsonianchannel.com, or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

About Rare

Ranked in the top 25 NGOs in the world by NGO Advisor, Rare is an innovative conservation organization that implements proven conservation solutions and trains local leaders in communities worldwide. Through its signature social marketing campaigns (called Pride campaigns), Rare inspires people to take pride in the species and habitats that make their community unique, while also introducing practical alternatives to environmentally destructive practices. Employees of local governments or non-profit organizations receive extensive training on fisheries management, campaign planning and social marketing to communities. They are equipped to deliver community-based solutions based on natural and social science, while leveraging policy and market forces to accelerate positive environmental change through programs in clean water, sustainable agriculture, and coastal fisheries. To learn more about Rare, please visit www.rare.org.