Design a safe fishing net

Thousands of whales and dolphins die every year because they get trapped in fishing nets. They can't get to the surface to breathe, so they suffocate and drown. How can we design nets that can catch fish, but won't accidentally catch whales and dolphins?

1 Each child will need some paper, a pencil and some colouring supplies. Their challenge is to design a net that will successfully catch fish, but won't catch whales and dolphins.

2 Encourage children to think about what they've learnt about whales and dolphins that might help them with their designs, for example:
- How do dolphins find their food?
- How big are whales and dolphins?

Scan or take photos of the best net designs and send them to **education@whales.org** – we'd love to see them!

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Notes for teachers

Ask the children questions to encourage them to think about their designs. Their solutions might involve stopping whales and dolphins from swimming into the net in the first place, or ways to escape if they do get trapped.

Some great ideas from other children have included:
*   Brightly coloured nets that are easily seen;
*   Nets that make noise to scare whales and dolphins away;
*   Sensors that detect if a whale or dolphin is nearby, then retract the net;
*   Monitored cameras so fishermen can see and release a trapped whale or dolphin;
*   Nets that do not close if a whale or dolphin, or the weight of a whale or dolphin, is detected.

Real technologies to make nets safer include:
*   Pingers: the net makes a sound so the dolphins hear it and swim away;
*   Flexible "lids" that can be pushed open by an animal with sufficient strength.

You could take this activity further as a design and technology project, for example by giving children a net to modify, with access to resources such as buzzers, lights, wood or cardboard and different coloured materials.

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