



DOMINICA AND THE WHALES

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With a massive decline in the global Sperm whale population caused by a combination of hunting, pollution and climate change, the species is in grave danger. But things are set to change thanks to an ambitious plan by an unlikely ally

Since ancient times, Sperm whales have been pursued by humans for their oil, blubber and meat. But more recently, whalers have begun hunting them at an even more monstrous scale. Over a course of 400-odd years, these mythical sea serpents of the deep have been decimated. Some scientists estimate declines of up to 90 per cent. But what these hunters didn't know – couldn't have known – is that these whales have always been far more valuable to the world alive than captured, commodified and sold for parts.

carbon with them to the depths of the ocean, where it stays for a long time. But they also stimulate the production of plankton which use carbon dioxide for photosynthesis, locking up an estimated 20 to 40 per cent of the carbon in their microscopic bodies when they too die – by transporting nutrients to the surface of the waters in which they roam. In this way, these tiny plankton are estimated to sequester approximately 200,000 tonnes of carbon, the equivalent of more than 110,000 hectares of forest.

The whales have such a massive impact on our world that even the International Monetary Fund is involved in efforts to conserve the species, estimating their value at more than \$2 million each, and over \$1 trillion for the entire current