

PRESS RELEASE

Toñi, the Oldest Iberian Orca, Found with Shotgun Pellet Wounds

WeWhale and Iberian Orca Guardians document multiple new projectile wounds on the critically endangered orca during field observations

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The Association WeWhale and Iberian Orca Guardians have documented multiple new wounds across the dorsal fin of **Toñi, the oldest known Iberian orca**, during their current field operations.

Based on the appearance, number and distribution of the wounds, **they believe that Toñi has been shot with a shotgun and that the visible injuries are shotgun pellet wounds.**

The team knows Toñi well and has documented her repeatedly as part of the ongoing work within the **Save The Iberian Orca campaign**. The team also observed and photographed her only a few weeks ago, when **these injuries were not present.**

The sudden appearance of these injuries within a matter of weeks, together with their number, size and distribution, clearly leads to believe that they are the result of a **shotgun discharge.**

This is an extremely serious development involving one of the few remaining members of the critically endangered Iberian orca population.

“We know Toñi. We were with her a few weeks ago and these wounds were not there. Now we are seeing multiple impact wounds across her dorsal fin and back which, in our assessment, are consistent with her having been shot with a shotgun.

For us, these aren't anonymous animals. We know them individually, we know their families. Seeing Toñi, “La Abuela” like this is devastating.

If someone has deliberately fired a shotgun at her, this is not only an act of extreme cruelty against an individual animal. It is an attack on one of the last remaining members of a critically endangered population.”

Janek Andre, Founder & President of WeWhale and the Iberian Orca Guardians Foundation

Toñi was documented without these wounds only weeks ago

The photographic record is particularly important.

WeWhale and Iberian Orca Guardians have extensive documentation of individual Iberian orcas gathered through repeated observations at sea. Recent photographs of Toñi from a few weeks ago show her dorsal fin **without the injuries that are visible today.**

The current photographs therefore establish that these wounds appeared during the intervening period.

The organisations are preserving the original photographic and observational material and will continue documenting Toñi closely, including her physical condition and behaviour.

One individual matters to the survival of this population

The Iberian orca population is critically endangered and consists of only a very small number of surviving individuals.

Toñi is the **oldest known individual within this population** and has been identified and followed for many years. Losing or seriously harming even one animal has significance far beyond the individual when dealing with a population this small.

“There has been enormous public discussion about Iberian orcas and their interactions with vessels. Whatever someone's opinion about those interactions may be, **shooting at these animals can never be an acceptable response**. These orcas need protection, not retaliation.” adds Janek Andre, Founder & President of WeWhale and the Iberian Orca Guardians Foundation

WeWhale and Iberian Orca Guardians will continue documenting Toñi and the other members of the population and will provide further information as it becomes available.

The footage was collected under permit from the **Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico**. Permit reference: **SGBTM/BDM/AUTSPP/41/2026**

About WeWhale Association

WeWhale Association is a marine conservation organisation dedicated to the protection of whales, dolphins and their habitats. Its work focuses on field-based conservation, public education, non-invasive research and awareness campaigns, with a special focus on the critically endangered Iberian orca population.

About Iberian Orca Guardians

Iberian Orca Guardians is a conservation foundation dedicated to the protection and long-term survival of the critically endangered Iberian orca population. Its work focuses on direct protection at sea, field-based conservation, non-invasive research, public awareness and promoting peaceful coexistence between Iberian orcas and people across their natural range.

Media contact

Janek Andre

Founder & President, WeWhale Association, Iberian Orca Guardians

Email: media@wewhale.org ; Web: www.wewhale.org / www.iberian-orca-guardians.org ;

Instagram: [@wewhale_org](https://www.instagram.com/wewhale_org) / [@iberian_orca_guardians](https://www.instagram.com/iberian_orca_guardians)