

Nigel South

Statement on the 2023 Article of the Year:

Underwater Noise Pollution as an Ecological Crime: A Global Problem in the Anthropocene

by Esteban Morelle-Hungría, Eva S. Fonfría, John Y. Dobson, Cesar Bordehore

This is a comprehensive, timely and fascinating study. It is also incredibly important. As the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has noted in their policy and action paper on Tackling Crimes that Affect our Ocean (UNODC, nd.), we are now facing questions about how we ensure the survival of life in the ocean. And - given our dependence on life in the seas - this is also a question about how to ensure the survival and sustainability of *all life* on the planet. As the UNODC paper suggests, “Today, more than ever the crucial relationship between a thriving ocean and the well-being of both current and future generations prompts these urgent questions”.

It is therefore appropriate and valuable that the authors of this paper have brought together a wealth of evidence and analysis about one of the most neglected but significant threats to marine life – the problem of anthropogenic noise as a significant stressor within marine environments. As the authors note, although “Numerous studies have examined the effects of acoustic pollution on marine fauna ..., the long-term consequences of chronic exposure to the cumulative effects on individuals and population stability are still unknown”. There is much to be done in this emerging field of ‘Blue Criminology’ and this paper is a significant contribution to an exciting new area where international law, customary practice, green criminology, sensory criminology and maritime history all converge! As Garcia Ruiz et al (2020: 2) have suggested “Adopting an interdisciplinary approach to findings from marine science opens a window of opportunity for the study of criminal law, and for a criminology concerned with environmental harms to consider the meaning of “blue crime” and possible interventions (Bueger and Edmunds, 2020).” The authors - Esteban Morelle-Hungría, Eva S. Fonfría, John Y. Dobson and Cesar Bordehore - address this task admirably in this paper and absolutely deserve this prestigious recognition as authors of the ‘Article of the year 2023.’

References

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