Over 20 species of **whales** and **dolphins**, 5 species of **sea turtles**, dozens of **fish** species, and hundreds of species of **birds** live and breed in the Lease Sale 181 area in the Gulf of Mexico.
**OCS Drilling: Effects on Wildlife**

### Marine Mammals

- Deep-divers, like the endangered sperm whale, spend large amounts of time resting at the surface of the ocean, increasing the risk of collision with vessels.
- Oil can affect survival or the reproductive success of marine mammals through exposure to hydrocarbons and by affecting distribution, abundance, or availability of prey.

### Sea Turtles

- Government studies suggest that vessel traffic around platforms may increase collisions with sea turtles. Sea turtles are difficult to sight from moving vessels and often rest on or just below the surface of the ocean.
- All five species found in the Gulf are either endangered or threatened, making any adverse effects very significant to the overall populations.

### Birds

- The Gulf of Mexico is the heart of one of the most important migration corridors in the world, traveled by hundreds of species of birds.
- Government studies demonstrate that development of this area may result in a large increase in collision mortality in migrant species.
- Studies also show that birds are attracted to the lighted platforms during nocturnal migration; they circle the platforms out of confusion and die of exhaustion.

### Fisheries

- An MMS report cited a study showing that acute histologic lesions were observed in fish collected near drilling platforms.
- Offshore rigs affect commercial fishing by making large sections of the offshore area unavailable, interfering with migratory routes, spawning, and feeding areas for target species, generating pollution that destroys crucial nursery habitat for larval and juvenile stages, and resulting in oil spills that reduce catches.
- Scientific reports cast significant doubt about any supposed habitat benefits of rigs, and, instead, point to potentially significant damage to fish around rigs.

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*All information provided was gathered from the following publications of the Minerals Management Service, Department of Interior:
