

MERCURY AND BIODIVERSITY

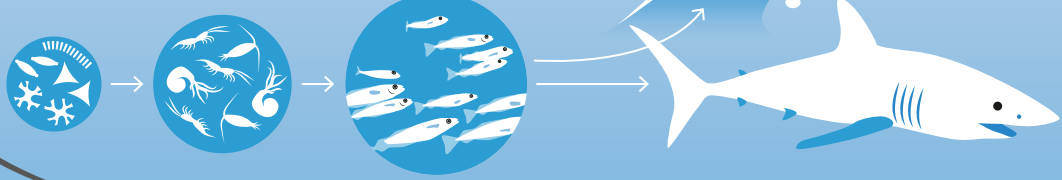
Mercury is a highly hazardous chemical that impacts human health and the environment. From human-made sources, mercury accumulates in many ecosystems, such as tropical forests, mangroves, oceans and the Arctic, leading to detrimental impacts on biodiversity.

Mercury is primarily released into the air, land, and water through human activities, with artisanal and small scale gold mining (ASGM), along with stationary combustion of coal, together accounting for **60% of all human-made mercury pollution**.

ASGM activities are the single biggest source of mercury pollution and often take place in biodiverse and sensitive ecosystems around the world, directly or indirectly affecting up to **100 million people** worldwide.

Inorganic **mercury** can be transformed by bacteria into a highly toxic form called methylmercury, which is taken up by microorganisms and plants and accumulates in the food web.

Because of their reliance on natural resources, **Indigenous Peoples** and local communities are disproportionately impacted by mercury pollution. In addition to serious and significant effects on their health, their food security, economic livelihoods, spirituality and culture are also highly impacted.



In aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, mercury **bioaccumulates** and **biomagnifies** throughout the food chain, meaning that organisms, especially the bigger ones, contain higher concentrations than do the surroundings, ultimately harming species and human consumers with large quantities of mercury being ingested.



Birds and migratory species, such as marine mammals, carry mercury across long distances, as far as the Arctic where many species are already under threat from **climate change** and other drivers of **biodiversity loss**. Due to emissions and releases from human activities, mercury can now be found in the most remote areas, including at the bottom of the Mariana Trench — the deepest oceanic point on the planet.

