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Dolphins Inspired Scientists to Create New Kind of Underwater Sonar Device !!!

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A group of scientists at the University of Southampton have developed a new kind of underwater sonar device inspired by dolphins. The sonar can detect objects through bubble clouds, caused by breaking waves, that would blind standard sonar.



Standard sonar uses differences between emitted sound pulses and their echoes to identify targets such as reefs, wrecks, fish and submarines. When it comes to bubble clouds, created from breaking waves, the conventional sonar devices' sound becomes scattered and the sonar image is blurred.

"Cold war sonar was developed mainly for use in deep water where bubbles are not much of a problem, but many of today's applications involve shallow waters. Better detection and classification of targets in bubbly waters are key goals of shallow-water sonar," said Professor Timothy Leighton, study leader from the University of Southampton's Institute of Sound and Vibration Research (ISVR).

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Leighton knows dolphins hunt fish with “bubble nets,” and he said that that has occurred to him “that either dolphins were blinding their sonar when making such nets, or else they have a better sonar system.”

Leighton and his team created twin inverted pulse sonar (TWIPS), a new sonar concept, that dissects the way bubbles pulsate in sound fields. This kind of sonar emits two pulses, one right after the other and one the inverted form of the other. TWIPS concept was first tasted in a tank and then in the Southampton waters, where marine traffic generates many bubbles.

“TWIPS outperformed standard sonar in the wake of large vessels such as passenger ferries,” said co-author Dr Justin Dix of the University of Southampton’s School of Ocean and Earth Science.

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