

WHALE SPOTTING GUIDE



- **SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Megaptera novaeangliae*

- **How do I know if it is a Humpback?**
 - Round body that narrows towards the tail.
 - Black on top with black and white patches on the underside and tail.
 - Flippers are very long and usually white underneath.
 - Their flukes have pointed tips.
 - The shape and colour pattern on the humpback whale's dorsal fin and flukes are unique to each whale as fingerprints are to each human.
 - Has 20 to 50 ventral grooves, which extend slightly beyond the navel.

- **FUN FIN FACTS**
 - Humpbacks are found in all the world's oceans.
 - Humpbacks use a very interesting and unique way to feed. They sometimes construct bubble nets around a school of fish and then swim up through the bubble net to get their prey.
 - The humpback is one of the most popular whales for whale watching because of its acrobatics.
 - Humpbacks are often seen breaching, swimming on their backs with both flippers in the air, slapping their flukes on the surface, and slapping the water with their flippers. It is thought that this behaviour is used for communication.
 - The humpback is also called the "singing whale." A male's song may be as long as a half an hour and changes every year.

- At least 3 different species of barnacles are commonly found on both the flippers and the body of the humpback whale.

- **STATUS: LEAST CONCERN**



- **SCIENTIFIC NAME: Balaenoptera physalus**

- **How do I know if it is a Fin whale?**

- Long and slender with a V-shaped head.
- Light gray to brownish-black on its back and white on its underside including its flippers and flukes.
- The body also has swirls of lighter colourings and one side of its jaw is black (left) while the other side is white (right).
- Has a slightly curved fin located far back in its body, a wide tail and small flippers.

- **FUN FIN FACTS**

- Fin whales can be found in all oceans but prefer temperate (mild) and polar waters.
- The fin whale is the second largest whale in size and weight.
- The fin whale is among the fastest swimming whales
- They eat small species like krill and have been seen circling schools of their prey and rolling them into balls.
- They can consume up to 1.8 tonnes of food a day.
- Because fin whales have powerful sounds that can carry long distances, they may stay in touch with each other from very far away.

- **STATUS: ENDANGERED**



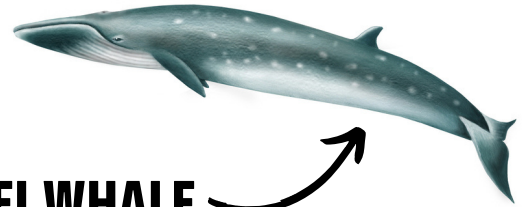
- **SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Balaenoptera borealis***
- **How do I know if it is a Sei whale?**
 - Slim and streamlined.
 - Has a ridge that runs from its snout to its blowhole.
 - Has 32-60 throat grooves.
 - Bluish-gray body with a white underside.
 - Side fins are short and pointed and the dorsal fin is tall and curved.
- **FUN FIN FACTS**
 - Sei whales are found in all oceans and adjoining seas, except polar and tropical regions.
 - These whales are found far from shore.
 - Sei whales are the third largest baleen whales and females are larger than males
 - The sei whale is one of the fastest swimming cetaceans
 - Sei whales largely feed on small marine species such as krill and plankton, and often spend a lot of time at the surface skimming for food. They swim on their sides through swarms of prey.
 - Females typically give birth to only one calf every other year.
 - Sei whales do not reach full adult size until they are about 25 years old.
 - Sei whales can live to be 74 years old.

- **STATUS: ENDANGERED**

EXTRA TIP (because we know telling Sei whales and Fin whales apart can be tricky):



FIN WHALE



SEI WHALE



PYGMY BLUE WHALE

- **SCIENTIFIC NAME: Balaenoptera musculus**
- **How do I know if it is a Pygmy Blue Whale and how will I not confuse it with a Blue whale?**

Besides the obvious size difference, what else makes this sets this subspecies apart from the real deal?

- Pygmy Blue whales have shorter and broader baleen plates than Blue whales
- Shorter tail and, therefore, a proportionately longer body in front of the dorsal fin
- Larger head relative to body size
- Heavier body weight compared to other blue whales of the same length
- Pygmy blue whales tend to be a bit darker than the other subspecies of blue whales and the shape of the blowhole is also different

○ **FUN FIN FACTS**

- Pygmy blue whales are believed to sing in a different language or “song” than other species of blue whale, avoiding inbreeding.
- A Pygmy blue whale can reach up to lengths of 24 metres and weigh up to 90 tonnes (‘true’ blue whales can reach lengths of up to 30 metres and 200 tonnes).
- Similar to other baleen whales, Pygmy blue whales meet their nutritional requirements to sustain their heavy bodies by feeding on small crustaceans (aka krill).
- Scientists believe that some Pygmy blue whale populations may inhabit a particular area throughout the year, whilst others undertake an annual migration to Antarctica.
- The estimated life cycle of a Pygmy blue whale is thought to be similar to human beings, around 70 to 90 years.
- Sightings are extremely rare. And ongoing threats from boat strikes, unsustainable fishing practices, oil spills, plastic, and noise pollution, plus others, means their recovery rates remain largely a mystery to scientists.

○ **STATUS: ENDANGERED**



○ **SCIENTIFIC NAME: Balaenoptera brydei**

○ **How do I know if it is a Sei whale?**

- It has twin blowholes with a low splashguard to the front.
- It has no teeth, but has two rows of baleen plates.
- Bryde's whales closely resemble their close relative the sei whale. They are remarkably elongated (even more so than fin whales)
- Bryde's are dark smoky grey dorsally and usually white ventrally
- Bryde's usually have dark grey lower jaws

- The broad, centrally notched tail flukes rarely break the surface.
- The flippers are small and slender
- We can tell Bryde's whales apart from other similar looking whale species thanks to the three long ridges on the top of their heads, which is unique to only the Bryde's whale.

○ **FUN FIN FACTS**

- The Bryde's whale is named after a Norwegian man called Johan Bryde who discovered the species when he helped to set up one of the first whaling stations in South Africa.
- The correct way to pronounce the name of the Bryde's whale is 'brooders'.
- They can grow up to 15 metres in length and weigh up to 40 tonnes.
- They have the nickname 'the tropical whale' as they are not usually seen in cooler waters.
- Researchers believe Bryde's whales are one of only a few species of whale that do not migrate long distances.
- Bryde's whales are able to feed on three different types of food – fish, krill and plankton.
- They are very shallow divers, spending the majority of their time in the top 10 metres of the water column. When they go for a 'long dive' this usually only lasts up to five minutes before they resurface. This is great for whale watching!

○ **STATUS: LEAST CONCERN**