



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*)

Description

Fin whales are the second largest whale species (blue whales are the largest). They have a sleek, streamlined body, a v-shaped head, and a tall curved dorsal fin. Fin whales are white underneath with dark gray sides and back.

Habitat and Distribution

Fin whales are found in deep, offshore waters of all major oceans primarily in the temperate to polar latitudes.

Sounds

Fin whales make some of the loudest vocalizations in the ocean (up to 186 dB!). Researchers have recently discovered that these sounds are produced only by males, and may function as a breeding display. Most vocalizations are frequency-modulated (FM) down-swept pulses that are repeated in a sequence.

Feeding

In the summer, fin whales feed by lunging into schools of krill, small fish, or squid and gulping large amounts of prey and water which they filter out using their baleen plates. In the winter, fin whales tend to migrate to warmer waters..

Threats

Fin whales are occasionally killed by aboriginal subsistence whalers in Greenland. Other threats include collisions with vessels, entanglement in fishing gear, reduced prey availability due to overfishing, and habitat degradation.

Fun Fact

Fin whales have unique asymmetrical coloration on their head – the left side is dark gray and the right side is white with a chevron pattern. Individual whales can be identified by this chevron pattern.



Peter Duley / NEFSC



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Family: Balaenopteridae
Population: around 50,000
Status: Endangered
Length: 75 — 85 feet
Weight: 40 — 80 tons