



Marine Species Identification Guide

Common to the Bay of Fundy and the Scotian Shelf

Table of Contents

Large Mammals

[Blue Whale \(*Balaenoptera musculus*\)](#)

[Finback Whale \(*Balaenoptera physalus*\)](#)

[Sei Whale \(*Balaenoptera borealis*\)](#)

[Minke Whale \(*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*\)](#)

[North Atlantic Right Whale \(*Eubalaena glacialis*\)](#)

[Humpback Whale \(*Megaptera novaeangliae*\)](#)

[Sperm Whale \(*Physeter macrocephalus*\)](#)

[Northern Bottlenose Whale \(*Hyperoodon ampullatus*\)](#)

[Long-Finned Pilot Whale \(*Globicephala melas*\)](#)

[Killer Whale \(*Orcinus orca*\)](#)

[Harbour Porpoise \(*Phocoena phocoena*\)](#)

[Common Dolphin \(*Delphinus delphis*\)](#)

[Atlantic White-Sided Dolphin \(*Lagenorhynchus acutus*\)](#)

[White-Beaked Dolphin \(*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*\)](#)

Other Large Species

[Leatherback Turtle \(*Dermochelys coriacea*\)](#)

[Loggerhead Turtle \(*Caretta caretta*\)](#)

[Basking Shark \(*Cetorhinus maximus*\)](#)

[Ocean Sunfish \(*Mola Mola*\)](#)



Large Mammals

Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*)



Up to 10 m high column-shaped
blow

HUGE

Maximum 32 m in length

Mottled blue-grey colouration

Usually solitary or in small
groups

Flat U-shaped head with large
splashguard in front of
blowholes



Small dorsal fin far back on body



Often raises flukes when diving

For more information, please visit: [Blue Whale](#)

Finback Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*)



Up to 6 m high column-shaped
blow

Maximum 23 m in length

Only the right side lower jaw is
white

Occasionally leaps clear of water



Blowholes surface briefly before
dorsal fin emerges

Rarely raises fluke when diving

For more information, please visit: [Finback Whale](#)

Sei Whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*)



Up to 4.5 m high column-shaped
blow

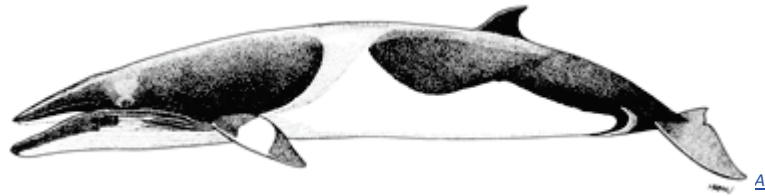
Maximum 19 m in length
Usually solitary or in small
groups
White oval-shaped scars often
visible



Dorsal fin and blowholes appear
simultaneously
Rarely arches back or raises flukes
when diving
May blow several times and then
dive for a short period

For more information, please visit: [Sei Whale](#)

Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)



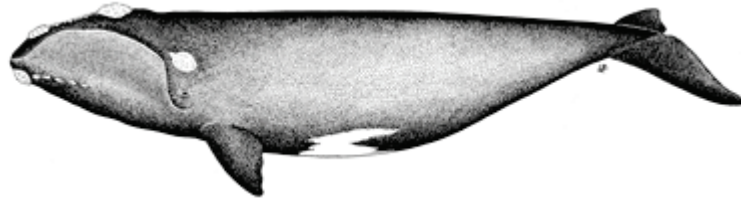
Up to 2.5 m bushy blow, visible only in cold air

Maximum 9 m in length
Usually solitary or in small groups
Sharply pointed snout
White band on pectoral fin



Dorsal fin is tall, very pointed and slightly hooked backward
Rarely raises flukes when diving
Rarely breaches

North Atlantic Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*)



A



B

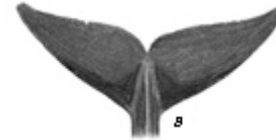
Up to 3-5 m V-shaped blow

Maximum 17 m in length

Often at surface resting or socializing

Mostly black with white callosities (rough patches) on head

Broad back with no dorsal fin



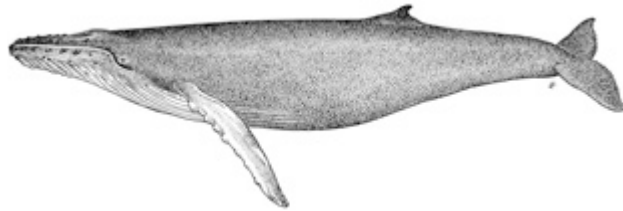
B

Wide triangular flukes

Raises flukes when diving

For more information, please visit: [North Atlantic Right Whale](#)

Humpback Whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*)



Up to 3 m high blow, rounded and bushy

Maximum 18 m in length
Often solitary or in small social groups
White tubercles on head and lower jaw
Very long pectoral fins with variable white pattern



Flukes serrated along trailing edge with variable white pattern on underside
Often raises flukes when diving
Can be acrobatic: breaching, lob-tailing, spy-hopping

For more information, please visit [Humpback Whale](#)

Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*)



Up to 2.4 m blow angled forward and to the left from front of head

Maximum 18 m in length
Usually offshore, solitary or in small groups

Large square head

No dorsal fin, instead low hump and knobby ridges on back



Raises flukes before a deep dive that can last 30-60 minutes

Flukes commonly serrated along trailing edge

Northern Bottlenose Whale (*Hyperoodon ampullatus*)



Low bushy blow

Maximum 9 m in length
Usually found offshore in small groups

Distinct beak

Females have a bulbous forehead

Males have a white, flattened forehead

Light yellowish-brown to grey in colour



Sickle-shaped dorsal fin



Flukes high in air on deep dive
Flukes dark, large, rarely notched

For more information, please visit: [Northern Bottlenose Whale](#)

Long-Finned Pilot Whale (*Globicephala melas*)



Strong blast up to 1.5 m high but difficult to see

Maximum 6 m in length
Often seen in groups of 20-50
Bulbous head
Pectoral fins long and sickle-shaped
Dark brown to black in colour



Dorsal fin strongly curved, far forward on body
Often spy-hop
Young are playful at surface

Killer Whale (*Orcinus orca*)



Maximum 9 m in length

Seen in groups of 4-10 with groups tending to surface together

Sometimes spy-hop, lob-tail, and breach

Striking black and white pattern

Paddle-shaped flippers



Males have very tall, triangular dorsal fin



Females have a tall, curved dorsal fin

For more information, please visit: [Killer Whale](#)

Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)



Maximum 1.5 m in length

Triangular dorsal fin in centre of body

Dark grey back, lighter sides and belly

Small chunky body

Commonly seen inshore as single animal or in small groups

Only brief glimpses possible, dives for 3-6 minutes

For more information, please visit: [Harbour Porpoise](#)

Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*)



Maximum 2.7 m in length

Dark, sickle-shaped dorsal fin with light area in centre

Dark 'saddle' below dorsal fin

Distinct dark beak

Often seen breaching or bow-riding

More common offshore, in large groups

Atlantic White-Sided Dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*)



Maximum 2.7 m in length

Sickle-shaped dorsal fin

Small black beak

Solid white patch on sides, tan streak extending almost to flukes

Groups of 20-50 inshore and offshore during summer

White-Beaked Dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*)



Maximum 3.1 m in length

Tall, sickle-shaped dorsal fin

Dark with diffuse light patches on sides

Distinctive white beak

Groups of 5-25 animals inshore during summer

Splashy, noisy swimmer

Other Large Species

Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*)



[B](#)

Maximum 2.5 m in length

Pinkish patch on top of head

Leathery carapace

Prominent Ridging on back

For more information, please visit: [Leatherback Turtle](#)

Loggerhead Turtle (*Caretta caretta*)



B

Maximum 1 m in length

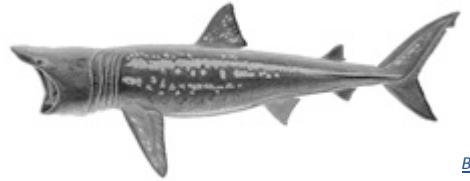
Large Head

Thick, heart-shaped carapace

Reddish-brown in colour

For more information, please visit: [Loggerhead Sea Turtle](#)

Basking Shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*)



Maximum 10 m in length

Breaches

Large gill slits

Very large shark

Swims with dorsal fin above surface

For more information, please visit: [Basking Shark](#)

Ocean Sunfish (*Mola Mola*)



B

Maximum 3 m in length

Often basks at surface on its side

Disk-like shape with no apparent tail

Brownish-grey in colour with white belly

PLEASE REPORT SIGHTINGS INFORMATION: date, location coordinates, species and numbers, identification features and certainty, and photographs.

To report sightings of live and healthy animals:

- Marine Mammals and Whales
XMARWhaleSightings@dfo-mpo.gc.ca
1-844-800-8568
Whale Alert mobile application: <http://www.whalealert.org/>
- Sea Turtles
Canadian Sea Turtle Network
info@seaturtle.ca
1-888-729-4667

To report sightings of entangled, injured and dead animals:

- Marine Animal Response Society
1-866-567-6277
marineanimalresponse@gmail.com
VHF Channel 16

To report illegal activities:

- Crime Stoppers
1-800-222-TIPS (8477)
- DFO (via Canadian Coast Guard Regional Operations Centre)
1-800-565-1633

A. *Illustration Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2012, FAO Original Illustration Archive*

B. *Illustration Source: Paul Vecsei*