



Fin Whale

Balaenoptera physalus

Quick facts

Order Cetartiodactyla

Conservation status
Global *Vulnerable*



Global trend *Increasing*

Size 18.5 - 24 m, females larger.

Weight 20,000 - 80,000 kg

Life span 85 - 90 years

The fin whale is the second-largest mammal. The body is slender, like all rorquals, and it has characteristic white markings on the right side of the front baleen plates, mouth, and lower lip. Recorded in UK and Irish waters in all months of the year.

Habitat

Worldwide distribution. Most commonly recorded in deep waters of 400 - 2,000 m off edge of continental shelf, but also uses shallow waters over continental shelf. Favours areas with high topographic variation.

Behaviour

Migrates towards the poles in summer but are present to some degree throughout their range year round, including in British waters.

Diet & Feeding

A generalist feeder, mostly taking crustaceans but sometimes feeds heavily on fish or cephalopods.

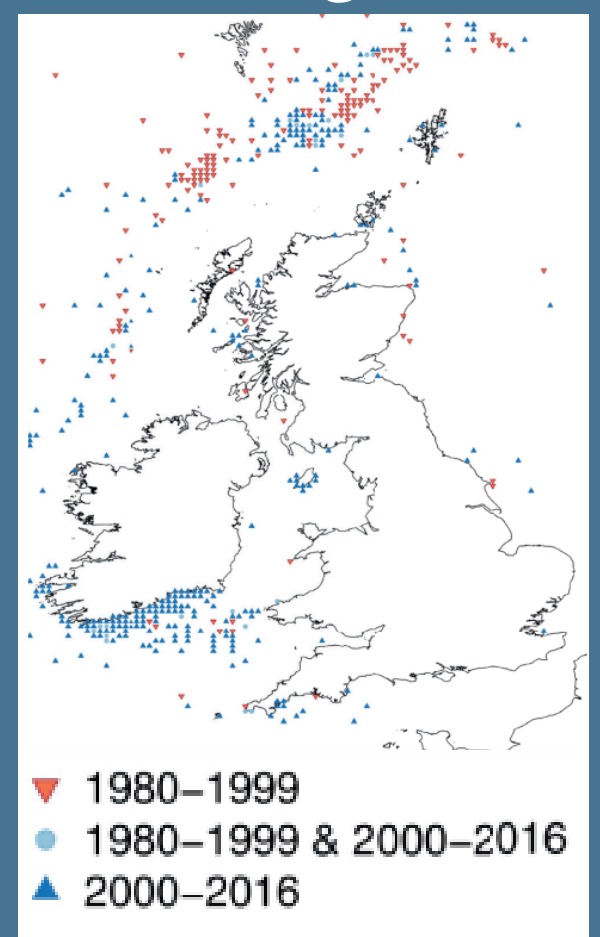
Reproduction

Estimates of age at sexual maturity varies from between 6 to 14 years; exploited populations tend to mature earlier. Births mainly occur in the winter after an 11 - 12 month gestation. Period between births is around 3 years.

Conservation & Threats

Although not easily catchable by early whalers due to size and speed, it was heavily exploited during the era of mechanised whaling beginning in the 1860s and at lower levels until the 1980s. It is vulnerable to vessel collisions. Although entanglements in fishing gear are known to occur, it appears that the threat is relatively low.

Range



Mammal
SOCIETY

We rely on the generosity of our supporters to help British Mammals.
Registered Charity No 278918. Support our work at mammal.org.uk