

Balaenoptera physalus Linnaeus, 1758



Source: <http://marinebio.org>

Common name: Fin whale

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Cetartiodactyla

Family: Balaenopteridae

Geographical distribution: *B. physalus* occurs worldwide, mainly, but not exclusively, in offshore waters of temperate and subpolar zones. *B. physalus* shows some poleward migration in summer although it appears to be somehow present throughout its range during the whole year.

Habitat: *B. physalus* is a pelagic and coastal species, from shore seaward to the 1,800 m.

Size and Lifespan: Adult *B. physalus* are about 19 m long for males and 20 m for females, with a maximum of 25 m in males and 27 m in females. It is estimated that a 25-metre whale would weigh about 70,000 kg.

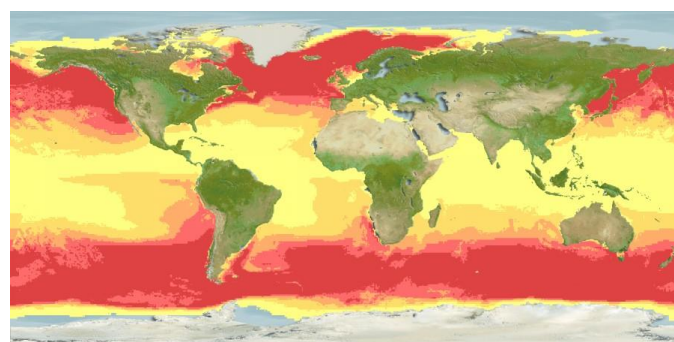
Feeding habits: During autumn and winter, there is almost no feeding, at which time whales are found in lower latitudes. The diet varies between areas and seasons. Herring, capelin and other shoaling fish are eaten in both the North Atlantic and North Pacific, along with squid, and euphausiids (krill - shrimp-like crustaceans) and copepods (small crustaceans).

Commercial importance: Following depletion of Blue Whale stocks, whalers shifted their attention to Fin Whales. Populations everywhere were substantially reduced. The International Whaling Commission (IWC) set catch limits at zero for *B. physalus* in the North Pacific and Southern Hemisphere starting in 1976. The IWC adopted a provision (popularly known as the commercial whaling moratorium) in 1982 to set all catch limits for commercial whaling to zero from 1986, although Iceland, Norway, and the Russian Federation have filed objections or reservations to the provision. Limited hunting of Fin Whales off western Greenland is permitted for "aboriginal subsistence" purposes.

Protection: *B. physalus* is assessed as Vulnerable for the Mediterranean in the IUCN Red List (Panigada & Notarbartolo di Sciara, 2012). *B. physalus* is listed on Appendix I of CITES - but this does not apply to Iceland, Norway, and Japan, who hold reservations – as well as on Appendices I and II of the CMS. Under the Agreement for Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black and Mediterranean Seas, *B. physalus* in the Mediterranean, along with other cetaceans, are protected from deliberate killing by signatories to the agreement.

Knowledge on plastic ingestion: Ingestion has been reported only in few studies; however, for the Mediterranean Fin Whale, it has been estimated that animals could consume more than 3000 microplastic particles per day, along with associated persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic (PBT) chemicals (Baini et al., 2017; Fossi et al., 2014).

Use as biological indicator in other projects: *B. physalus* has not been used as a bioindicator of marine litter and microplastic ingestion in other projects.



Geographical distribution of *Balaenoptera physalus*
(www.aquamaps.org)