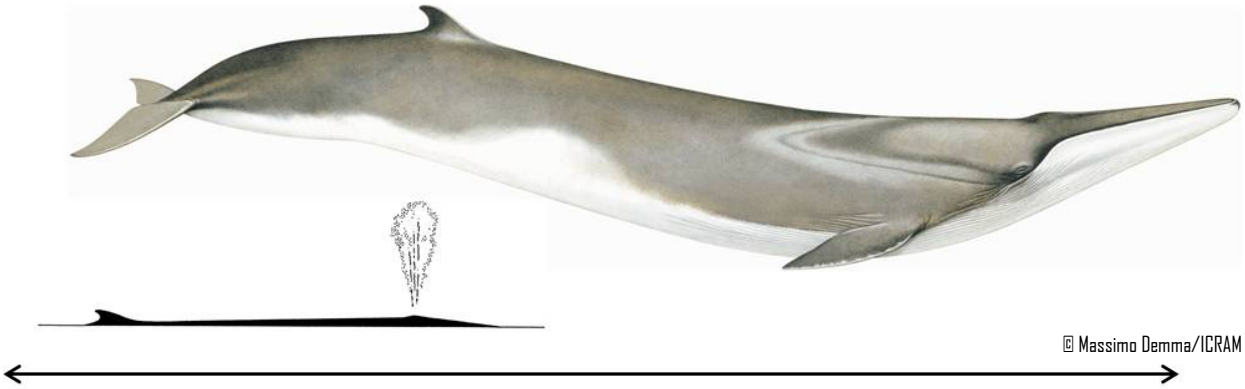
Class: **Mammalia** Order: **Cetacea** Sub-order: **Mysticeti** Family: **Balaenopteridae** Genus: ***Balaenoptera***	IUCN global conservation status: **Endangered** ACCOBAMS/IUCN global conservation status: **Vulnerable** (Mediterranean)	
	Mediterranean: **Regular**	Black Sea: **Absent**

FIN WHALE

Balaenoptera physalus (Linnaeus 1758)

English: Fin whale



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♂ : about 20 m ♀ : about 22 m

Name:
- Scientific: From the Latin *balaena* = whale and the Greek *pteron* = wing or fin (indicating the difference between Rorquals, which have a dorsal fin, and Right Whales, which do not), and *phôseter* = blower
- Common: From the Norwegian *royrkval,* which means baleen whales

DESCRIPTION

The second largest living animal, after the blue whale

Size: Sexual dimorphism:

Male:	18-20 m
Female:	20-22 m
Newborn:	6-6.5 m - 3 tons

In the Mediterranean, these values are smaller.

Head: Triangular when seen from above, narrow and pointed snout – 20-25% of body.
A median ridge from the rostrum to the two blowholes.

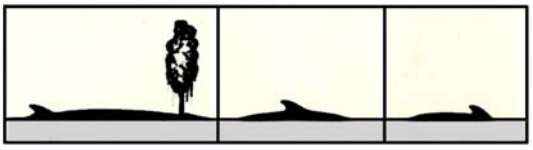
Body: Shape: slender and spindle shaped.
Colouration: dark grey on the back, sometimes brownish, white on the ventral side.
A saddle-shaped chevron on the back in front of the dorsal fin.
The shape of the dorsal fin and chevron are used in photo-identification.
Characteristics: asymmetrical colouration on the head.
The right jaw is light-coloured while the left is dark. Baleen plates, the inside of the mouth and the lower lip are also light-coloured on the right side.

Dorsal fin: Located in the back, it never exceeds 60 cm in height.

Pectoral fins: Rather short

Tail: Relatively large (about ¼ the body length), upper side dark like the back, underside white, rimmed in dark grey. Rarely visible.

Blow: Vertical, narrow and very visible (4 - 5 m high), often audible at several hundred meters.

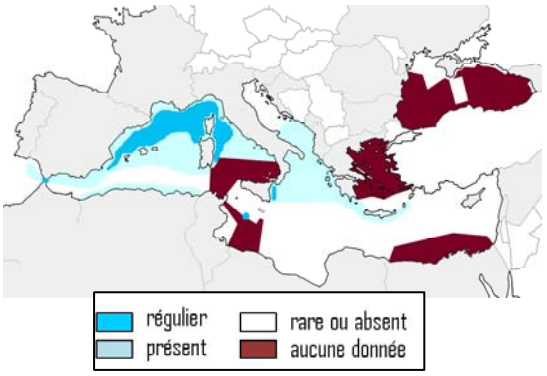


Distribution

Cosmopolitan species, more frequent in cold-temperate and sub-polar waters. Makes large migrations between the cold and productive waters in summer and tropical waters in winter.

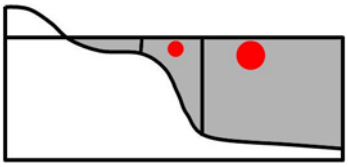
Mediterranean and Black Seas

Pelagic species that lives mostly offshore, above abyssal plains, however it also visits bays and shallow waters.
Extremely rare in the Adriatic Sea, the Aegean Sea and the Levant Sea and absent from the Black Sea.
The Corso-Ligurian Basin and the Gulf du Lions are Mediterranean regions with the highest abundance (Notarbartolo di Sciara *et al.* 2003).
A limited seasonal movement of fin whales exists in the North Atlantic to the Alboran Sea, with trips to the east recorded in early winter and trips to the west in early summer (Castellote *et al.* 2009).



Habitat and Ecology

Although mainly found in deep waters (some dives have been reported up to 2,500 m) off the shelf, they also live at the shelf and slope.



Behaviour

Relatively sociable, can be observed alone or in small groups from 3-10 individuals. Inconspicuous, it almost never shows its flukes when it dives. It rarely spyhops, but often breaches, clearing the water completely, to re-enter on its side or belly and less often its back, with a resounding splash. In summer, it feeds in the cold, productive waters, and during winter it migrates to warmer waters to breed.

Longevity: 60-75, up to 100 years
Swimming speed: The fastest whale after the Sei whale 5 to 10 kts (9-18 km/h), but capable of reaching 20 kts (35 km/h).
Dives: On average, 10 min. (but can stay down up to 30 min.), with dives reaching 2,500 m.

Reproduction

Sexual maturity: 6- 8 years
Breeding season: Winter
Gestation: 11- 12 months with births occurring every 2- 3 years at most.
Nursing: 6- 8 months

Food

Small pelagic crustaceans ("Krill", mostly *Meganyctiphanes norvegica* in the Mediterranean) and sometimes small pelagic fishes.

Threats

The main threat to the fin whale in the Mediterranean appears to be collisions with ships (Cagnolaro & Notarbartolo di Sciara 1992, Panigada *et al.* 2006, Weinrich *et al.* 2006). Other potential threats include bycatch in driftnets (Podestà et Magnaghi 1989), contamination by organic chemicals (Fossi *et al.* 1992), unregulated whale watching activities (Airoldi *et al.* 1999) and global climate change (Gambaiani *et al.* 2009).