

Source: Institute of Cetacean Research

## Fast Facts

- Cetacean, from the Latin word "*cetus*" meaning a large sea animal and the Greek word "*ketos*" meaning sea monster.
  - The largest animal that lives on earth today is the blue whale, averaging 100ft long and weighing 110 tons (don't forget! 1 ton=2000 pounds!)
  - Whales do not have hind legs like those of their land-dwelling ancestors. Nevertheless, internally, all whales have vestigial pelvic bones that are what's left of hind limbs gradually disappearing through evolution
  - Baleen is an adaptation Mysticete whales developed that aids in capture of very small prey in large amounts. It grows from the roof of the mouth and hangs down in structures called plates. Baleen is made out of **keratin**, just like our hair and fingernails.
- Source: [www.acsonline.org](http://www.acsonline.org)
- Cetaceans "sing" to communicate with each other, they also click and whistle. To hear different whale songs visit: <http://dkd.net/whales/wsounds.html>



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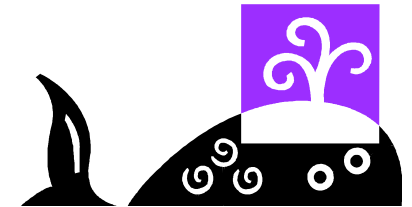
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# Whales

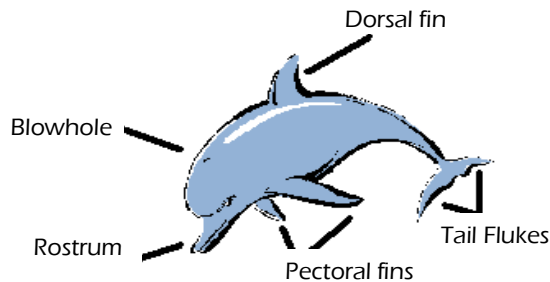


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[www.ifaw.org](http://www.ifaw.org)

# What is a Cetacean?

The characteristics that makes cetaceans part of the mammal family are their warm-bloodedness, and their birth of live young. Whales also feed their young with milk produced from their bodies. Some species of whale are even born with patches of hair that fall off as they near adulthood. Members of this scientific order include porpoises and dolphins. Cetaceans are the some of the only creatures under water that breath air, and live underwater. They accomplish this by breathing through their blowholes. Some whales have been known to hold their breaths for up to one hour.

## Anatomy of a Cetacean



## Kinds of Whales

Whales are placed in two general categories : *Odontocetes*, who have teeth and feed on large animals, fish, squid, and sea lions; and *Mysticetes*, who have baleen instead of teeth to help them trap large amounts of very small prey like krill, a whale favorite. Baleen works like a spaghetti strainer, helping trap food inside a whales mouth. The word *Mysticetes* comes from the Greek word for mustache,

which is exactly what baleen looks like in a whales mouth. *Odontocetes* (toothed-whales) use echolocation to find their way in dark murky waters as well as to find food. They also move in pods, whether it be “nursery pods” to care for young or “bachelor pods” all male groups. This characteristic is attributed to only to toothed cetaceans.

Source: www.acsonline.org

## Dolphin the Fish vs. Dolphin the Mammal

There is a big difference between fish called a Dolphin that we eat and the mammalian Dolphin we watch jumping out of the ocean. The



dolphin eaten at restaurants is actually a fish, “Mahi-Mahi” or Dolphin Fish that preys on other fish in the ocean, it is also called “mahi-mahi” and “dorado”. This fish is not part of the whale family and is



Dolphin

delicious fish from which many appetizing dishes can be made. The dolphin in the picture to the left is

a dolphin from the Cetacean order. These dolphins are known for their intelligence, ability to make sounds, their playful demeanors as well as the fierceness with which they protecting their young.

## Whales in the Caribbean

There are many species of whale that live in Caribbean waters or migrate through on their way to feeding or breeding areas. Whale watchers in the Caribbean regularly see dolphins, Short-finned Pilot whales, Humpbacks, Sperm Whales, Pigmy Killer and Melonhead Whales.

Killer Pygmy Whale



## Threats to Whales

Threats to Whales include entanglement in fishing line; ingestion of trash; illegal harvest; boat propellers; global climate change; sonic testing and other underwater noises. The contamination of the ocean also kills potential food sources for whales and other cetaceans.



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- To foster a deeper understanding of and appreciation for our island of St. Christopher (St. Kitts)
- To promote our heritage and
- To safeguard and preserve....
  - Our Natural Environment
  - Our Traditions and Customs
  - Our Music, Visual and Performing Arts
  - Our Monuments, Buildings and Historic Sites

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