

Northern bottlenose whale *Hyperoodon ampullatus*



Døglingur
 Anarnaq
 Andarnefja
 Nordlig nebbhval
 Njunnefális
 Nordlig døgling



Two northern bottlenose whales © Heleen Middel

Northern bottlenose whales are **toothed whales** belonging to the **beaked whale** family. They can only be found in the North Atlantic, generally in cold and subarctic waters. They have a greyish-brown colour with a

small **dorsal fin** and a long dolphin-like **beak**. Like other **beaked whales**, they are deep-diving specialists, with the deepest recorded dive reaching 2,340 meters and lasting 94 minutes [1].

Adult length 9 metres

Adult weight 8,000 kg

Maximum age 37 years

Eats mainly deep-water squid, occasionally fish, sea cucumbers, starfish, and prawns

Group size 4–20

Predators killer whales

IUCN status least concern (2023)

NA abundance close to 20,000

Hunted in 4 whales/year mean 2019-2023

Main threats:



Noise disturbance



Climate change



Pollution



Entanglement

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Male northern bottlenose whales have large, flat foreheads that contain extra dense bone. Scientists believe these features are used for **head-butting** [2]. In rare cases, two adult males have been seen swimming in circles and then charging straight at each other, hitting their heads together. This behaviour is thought to be a way for males to compete, possibly for mates, similar to how animals like deer or goats fight with their heads on land. The strong, reinforced foreheads in males are likely adapted for this, while females have rounder, softer heads. They may not have antlers, but their strong skulls do a similar job!



Forehead of a northern bottlenose whale
© Line Anker Kyhn



Breaching northern bottlenose whale
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Unlike most **beaked whales**, northern bottlenose whales are naturally curious and often approach slow-moving boats, drawn by engine or generator noise. This behaviour once made them easy targets for **industrial-whalers**. They were hunted on a large scale for their oil, including a special type found in their heads, and later for meat, which was used to feed pets and animals on fur farms. Hunting peaked in the mid-1900s but ended by the early 1970s. Today, northern bottlenose whales are rarely hunted, although a few are still taken in Greenland, and in the Faroe Islands if they **strand**.



Research: How many teeth do northern bottlenose whales have? What do **beaked whales** in general use their teeth for?