

Fin whale *Balaenoptera physalus*



Nebbafiskur Tikaagulliusaaq Langgreyður Finnhval Finhval



Fin whale © Aqqalu Rosing-Asvid / Visit Greenland

The fin whale is the second-largest whale species on the planet, and can be found throughout the world's oceans. At sea they can easily be recognised by the distinct ridge between the dorsal fin and tail, giving them the nickname "razorback". While they are mostly solitary, they can sometimes be found in large feeding aggregations. There is clear evidence of their recovery from industrial whaling in the past in the North Atlantic.

Adult length 21 metres
Adult weight 75,000 kg
Maximum age 90 years
Eats krill and small pelagic fish
Group size usually solitary in the North Atlantic

Predators killer whales
IUCN status least concern (2022)
NA abundance 80,000
Hunted in 9 whales/year
mean 2019-2023 60 whales/year

Main threats:



Climate change



Ship strike



Entanglement



Noise disturbance

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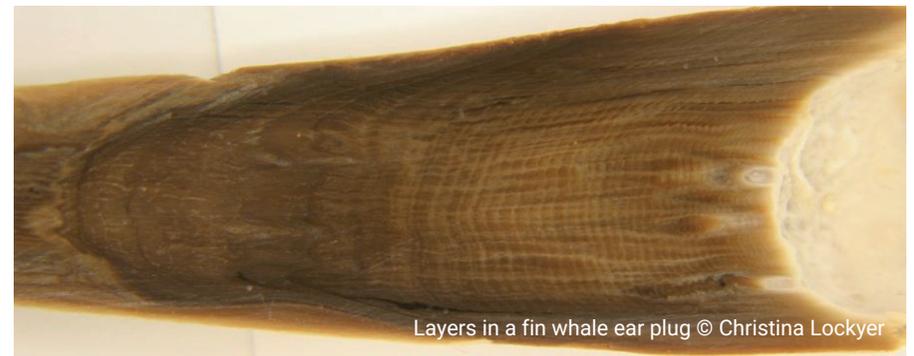


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Fin whales have asymmetrical head colouration, with the right side of their lower jaw being white and the left side dark, possibly helping them in hunting as camouflage. When feeding, they typically turn onto their right side. Marine animals often feature this so-called "countershading", with dark upper sides blending into dark ocean depths and lighter undersides matching the bright water's surface, providing camouflage from both above and below.



White right lower jaw © Heleen Middel



Layers in a fin whale ear plug © Christina Lockyer

Scientists can figure out how old fin whales are by looking at waxy ear plugs in their ears. These ear plugs have growth layers, just like tree rings, that tell us how many years the whale has been around. Fin whales can live for a long time, at least 80-90 years. The oldest one captured near Iceland was 94 years old, and off Antarctica 111 years old!



Research: The global [IUCN Red List](#) status of the Fin Whale is "Vulnerable" while the most recent assessment (2023) listed the species as "Least Concern" on the regional [European IUCN Red List](#). What is the difference between these lists and how is the status decided?