

Sei whale *Balaenoptera borealis*



Seihvalur Tikaagulliusaarnaq Sandreyður Seihval Sáidefális Sejhval



Sei whale and calf © Christin Khan / NOAA, NEFSC

Although the sei whale is the third longest whale, there is surprisingly little known about the **species**, neither from old whaling records nor modern scientific accounts. This is because the sei whale is easily mistaken for a fin whale, and because they are mainly found offshore. Sei whales use a range of different feeding techniques, making them flexible in their **prey** choice. They are believed to be the fastest of the large whales, reaching speeds up to 50 km/h!

Adult length 15 metres
Adult weight 20,000 kg
Maximum age 70 years
Eats krill, crustaceans, fish
Group size 1-5

Predators killer whales
IUCN status least concern (2022)
NA abundance >10,000
The sei whale is **protected globally**

Main threats:



Climate change



Ship strike



Entanglement



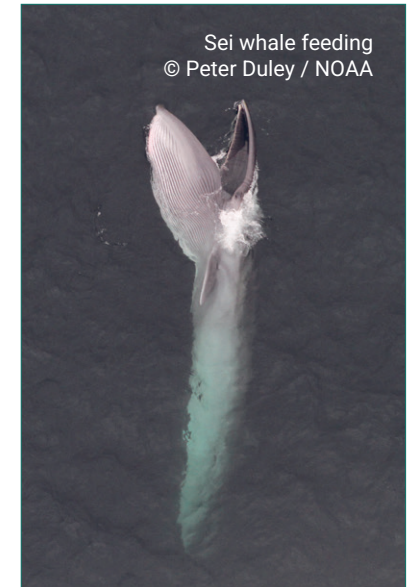
Noise disturbance

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Sei whales share a similar mouth shape to other **rorquals** (for example the fin and blue whale), but their **baleen** fringes are exceptionally fine and silky. This helps them change the types of food they eat by using two different feeding methods: “**lunge feeding**” and “**surface skim feeding**”. **Lunge feeding** is when whales rush forward with their mouth open to catch **prey** in one go, while in **skim feeding** the whale slowly swims near the surface with its mouth open, filtering its **prey** as it moves along. What's special about sei whales is that they can do both! This lets them eat a wider variety of prey than other **baleen whales**.



Sei whale feeding
© Peter Duley / NOAA



A fluke print © Lassi Kurkijärvi

Sei whales dive a bit differently than most other whales. Instead of arching their backs or lifting their tails out of the water before diving, they simply sink below the surface. But just as other whales, when they dive, they often leave behind “**fluke prints**”. These are smooth circles on the water's surface made by the movement of their tails underwater. These prints are like gentle ripples that show where the whale has been.



Research: Sei whales are often confused with fin whales. What are some of the main differences? Think of the way they look, where you can find them, and how they behave.