

SALISH SEA

MARINE MAMMAL ID GUIDE



The Salish Sea
SCHOOL

Adventure | Research | Action

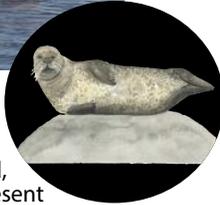
TheSalishSeaSchool.org

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"The ocean stirs the heart, inspires the imagination and brings eternal joy to the soul." – Robert Wyland

HARBOR SEAL

Phoca vitulina



ID Tip: Small flippers, wriggle on their bellies on land, lack visible ear flaps, hind flippers are always behind the body as their pelvic bone is fused, hind flippers are haired with nails present on all digits. Believed to have descended from a terrestrial weasel-like ancestor.

STELLER SEA LION

Eumetaopias jubatus



ID Tip: Hind flippers are always behind the body and are haired with nails present on all digits. Thought to have descended from a terrestrial bear-like ancestor.

CALIFORNIA SEA LION

Zalophus californianus



ID Tip: Darker brown, only males are known to frequent the Salish Sea. Males have a "knob" on the top of their head. They bark loudly, and "walk" on land as they are able to bring hind flippers under the body, hind flippers are hairless, nails present on middle 3 digits and on 1/4 length up of the flipper.

NORTHERN ELEPHANT SEAL

Mirounga angustirostris



ID Tip: Able to bring hind flippers under the body, hind flippers are hairless, nails present on middle 3 digits and on 1/4 length up of the flipper.

RIVER OTTER

Lontra canadensis



ID Tip: Swim with their belly facing downwards, their bodies almost submerged.

SEA OTTER

Enhydra lutris

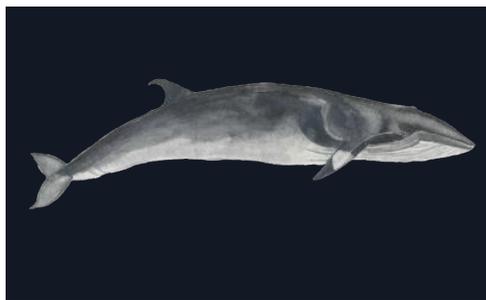


ID Tip: Sea otters do backstroke while floating fairly high above the surface of the water

Uncommon to be seen inland, mainly seen on coastal waters.

MINKE WHALE

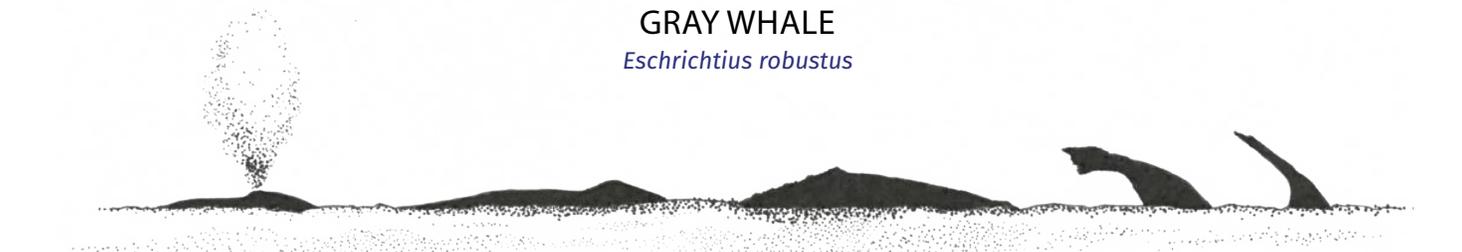
Balaenoptera acutorostrata



ID Tip: A very sneaky whale! The smallest baleen whale in the North Pacific, their blow is low, bushy and inconspicuous. Usually the fin becomes visible at the same time as the blow. The dorsal fin curve towards the back; dives without showing tail fluke so tail flukes are very rarely seen; aerial behaviours are also very rare. Often solitary.

GRAY WHALE

Eschrichtius robustus



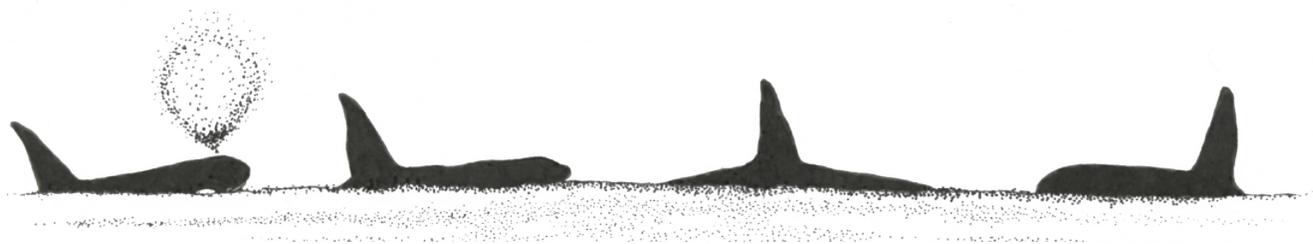
ID Tip: Mottled grey skin with scarring and pigmentation, usually covered with barnacles and whale lice; no dorsal fin, only a small hump followed by a series of 'knuckles' 2/3 of the way back from the head; blow is low and bushy, often 'heart' shaped; when feeding, makes sharp turns in shallow water and may raise pectoral fins and/or tail flukes out of the water; only baleen whale in which the upper jaw is longer than the lower jaw.

HUMPBACK WHALE

Megaptera novaeangliae



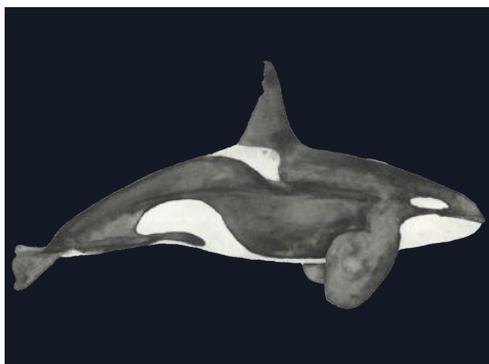
ID Tip: Dorsal fin is 2/3 of the way back along the body, variable in shape, becomes pronounced when the whale dives. Blow is 6-9 feet in height and bushy. Flukes are raised on a deep dive, the underside of the tail can have white patches; can be very acrobatic (breaching, tail-lobbing and pectoral fin slapping), pectoral fins these fins are nearly 1/3 as long as the body.



ID Tip: Black on the back, white on the belly; grey “saddlepatch” behind the dorsal fin, white “eyepatch” located just behind the eye, tail flukes are black on top and white underneath – in males, the tips curve downwards, aerial behaviors are common (breaching, spyhopping, tail-lobbing, pectoral fin slapping).

BIGG'S ORCA

Orcinus orca



ID Tip: Compared to fish-eating orcas: more pointed dorsal, Large solid saddle patch, Larger body size, Pod size ~1-12.

SOUTHERN RESIDENT ORCA

Orcinus orca



ID Tip: Compared to mammal-eating orcas: open saddle patch on some individuals, Smaller body size, Pod size 10-50.

WHALE BEHAVIOR



Breaching



Pec Slap



Tail Slap (Lop)



Porpoising



Cartwheel



Spyhop



Keeping



**Tail Wave or
Headstand**



LUNGE FEEDING

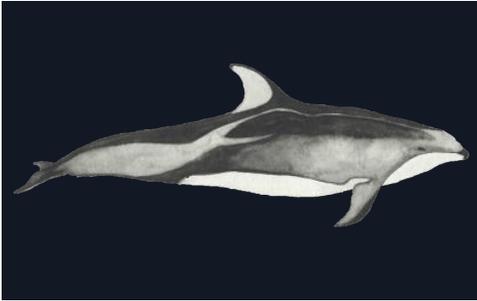
When a whale takes a huge gulp of water, which is then filtered through the baleen.



FLUKING

When a large whale prepares for a deep dive, it arches its back and the last thing you see is a fluke sticking straight up above the water. Some baleen whales, notably fin whales and minke whales, don't fluke.

PACIFIC WHITE SIDED DOLPHIN
Lagenorhynchus obliquidens



ID Tip: Backside is black, sides are striped light and dark gray, belly is white; very curved towards the back, located in the middle of the back bicoloured, dark grey and white; very surface active, often leap clear of the water, often move quickly in large groups; will approach boats to bow ride.

HARBOR PORPOISE
Phocoena phocoena



ID Tip: Body is dark brown to gray, lighter color on the belly distinct; triangular dorsal fin same color as body; does not bring body completely out of the water tend to avoid boats when surfacing, dorsal fin appears to rotate as on a wheel.

DALL'S PORPOISE
Megaptera novaeangliae



ID Tip: Black body with white patch on lower flanks; dorsal fin is small, triangular in shape with white tip and black base; trailing edge of tail edge is white; creates a distinct 'rooster-tail' splash when traveling quickly, does not bring body entirely out of the water; during slow dives shows a distinctive sharp curve to the hind quarter as it disappears under water (distinguishes it from harbour porpoise). Looks like a box rolling through the water, whereas a harbor porpoise looks like a tire (wildwhales.org).