



Published on *Ocean Networks Canada* (<https://www.oceannetworks.ca>)

[Home](#) > Humpback Whales

Humpback Whales ^[1]

Submitted by Dwight Owens Sun, 2013-12-01 12:40

Humpback whales can grow to be up to 16 m long and weigh an average of 36,000 kg. They have unusually long pectoral fins that are nearly 1/3 of their body length, giving them their scientific name *Megaptera novaeangliae*, meaning "big wing of New England." Their pectoral fins and the undersides of their tail flukes can be all black, all white or any combination of the two. Individuals can be identified by these colouration patterns, which are as unique as a human finger print. Despite their large size, they are known to be acrobatic, occasionally breaching and slapping their fins on the water's surface. They live in most oceans, undergoing yearly migrations of up to 8,300 km from their breeding and calving areas in tropical and subtropical waters to the nutrient rich polar waters where they spend their summers feeding. They do not eat in the winter, and live off their fat stores during the breeding and calving season.

All humpback whales vocalize, making a variety of sounds called wops, grunts, upsweeps, downsweeps, whistles, etc. Male humpback whales combine their vocalizations into complex patterns that form songs up to half an hour long, which they repeat for hours or days. All humpback whales in a particular ocean region sing the same song, which changes from year to year.

Humpback whales have a lifespan of 45 to 50 years. Humans and possibly orcas are their only predators. Threats to humpback whales include ship collisions, entanglement in fishing gear and noise pollution.

Call Types	Description	Duration (seconds)	Frequency Range
Wops, grunts, downsweeps, upsweeps, whistles	May be combined in complex patterns to form a 8-30 min song	1 to 10	20 Hz to 25 Hz

Mysticeti

Mysticetes are some of the largest animals on Earth, and they eat some of the smallest animals in the ocean. Instead of teeth, mysticetes have flexible, hairy keratin plates called baleen. They take large gulps of water and filter it through their baleen, eating the plankton, krill and small fish left behind. They were heavily hunted in the 17th to 20th centuries for oil, and their

Ocean Networks Canada has recorded the following Mysticete species:

- [Humpback Whale](#)
- [Grey Whale](#)
- [Fin Whale](#)
- [Blue Whale](#)

Tags:

- [humpback whales; humpbacks; whales; marine mammals; mysticeti; cetacea](#) ^[2]

Categories:

- [Backgrounders](#) ^[3]

```
// FIXES AMPERSAND IN BREADCRUMB var ONC_breadcrumb =  
document.getElementById("breadcrumb"); if (ONC_breadcrumb) { var ONC_innerHTML =  
ONC_breadcrumb.innerHTML; ONC_innerHTML = ONC_innerHTML.replace("&", "&");  
ONC_breadcrumb.innerHTML = ONC_innerHTML; }
```

Highlights

- [Audio](#)
- [Data](#)
- [Learning](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Video](#)

Reading Room

- [Active Research](#)
- [Backgrounders](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [Glossary](#)
- [News Briefs](#)
- [News Stories](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Publications](#)

Cool Stuff

- [Apps](#)
- [Digital Fishers](#)
- [iBooks & e-Pubs](#)
- [Live Video](#)
- [Maps](#)
- [Images](#)
- [State of the Ocean](#)

Data & Tools

- [Apps](#)
- [Data Plots](#)
- [Data Search](#)
- [Data Policy](#)
- [Data Help](#)
- [OPeNDAP Web Services](#)

Opportunities

- [Calendar](#)
- [Educator Opportunities](#)
- [Global Partnerships](#)
- [Industry Network](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Staff List](#)
- [Technology Services](#)

Sites & Instruments

- [Arctic Sites](#)
- [Northeast Pacific Sites](#)
- [Salish Sea Sites](#)
- [Notice to Mariners](#)

Follow Us



[Sign up for our newsletter](#)

Feedback

Send us your questions and comments *

How could we improve this page?

Your Name

Your Email *

Your Location

CAPTCHA

This question is for testing whether or not you are a human visitor and to prevent automated spam submissions.



What code is in the image? *
Enter the characters shown in the image.



[About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Media Relations](#) | [Legal Notices](#)

© Ocean Networks Canada. All rights reserved. 2474 Arbutus Road, Victoria, BC, V8N 1V8
| 1.250.472.5400

```
(function () { var d = new Date; var year = d.getFullYear();  
document.getElementById("copyright-date").innerHTML = year; })();
```

Source URL: <https://www.oceannetworks.ca/humpback-whales>

Links:

[1] <https://www.oceannetworks.ca/humpback-whales>

[2] <https://www.oceannetworks.ca/article-tags/humpback-whales-humpbacks-whales-marine-mammals->

mysticeti-cetacea

[3] <https://www.oceannetworks.ca/article-categories/backgrounders>