

## Common Species of the Gulf of Maine:

### Bird species:

#### Shearwaters:

Greater shearwater – Brown bird with a white underbelly and white ½ ring on neck. Stiff wingbeats, flaps, then shears along the surface of the water. Often seen in large groups sitting on the surface.



Shearwaters are members of the tubenose group of birds. They have the ability to drink salt water, separate the salt out of the water, and excrete the salt out of tubes on their noses. In this way, they can hydrate by drinking ocean water. If we were to try the same thing, we would become extremely dehydrated, get very sick, go crazy, and eventually die. These birds are quite remarkable!

Greater shearwaters nest on an island half way between the southern tip of Africa and the southern tip of S. America, called Tristan da Cunha. They fly down there to nest during southern hemisphere summers, then back up to the Gulf of Maine to feed during northern hemisphere summers.

Sooty shearwater – Darker solid brown shearwaters.



Manx shearwater – Smaller than greater and sooty, very dark, nearly black back, stark white underbelly. No pointed tail feathers (think manx cat – no tail)



Northern fulmar – Gray and white shearwater. Can be confused with herring gulls. Gray wings with white patches on them. Two color phases common: pale gray on back and wings, white elsewhere or uniformly dark gray



### Jaegers, Skuas, and Gannets:

Northern gannet – Largest pelagic bird in this region. 6-foot wingspan. Most birds in this area during the summer are immatures, and are a mottled brown in color. Adults are white, outer half of wings black, with an orange hue on the top of their heads and slight light blue above the eyes, like eyeshadow.



Pomarine Jaeger – larger stockier than Parasitic with a darker and wider breast band. Central tail feathers twisted and blunt or spoon-shaped



Parasitic jaeger – Medium sized bird, larger than long tailed jaeger. Often have partial breast band. Center tail feathers extend beyond the rest



Long-tailed jaeger – small bird with very long central tail feathers. Upperparts paler than other jaegers and blackish cap smaller and more defined



South Polar Skua – large bird, most often uniform gray with conspicuous white patches on the outer wing. Tail blunt and short



Greater Skua – large, dark, heavy-bodied, mottles gray-brown with white patches on the outer wing. Tail short and blunt



Other Common Seabirds:

Common loon – large, heavy bodied bird with thick bill. Breeding plumage shown below.  
Nonbreeding dark grey with white throat and underparts



Common Eider Duck – large seabird, female is light brown, male is white and black, long sloping bill



Great Cormorant – large bird with black plumage, long tail, yellow throat patch, white near bill.  
Breeding has white on head and upright feathers on top



Double-crested Cormorant – smaller than great. Black plumage with bare patches of orange-yellow bare bill. Tufts of feathers above eye while breeding and black and white crest



### Seasonal birds:

Bonapartes Gull – seen in September-December. Small gull with gray above, white patches on leading edge of outer wing



Black-legged Kittiwake – seen in Sept.-Dec. Small bird with yellow bill, head and underparts white with gray tops of wings and black tips. Black legs



Red-necked Phalarope – Seen in August-Oct. Sparrow sized, long thin bill, breeding plumage below, nonbreeders are dark above and white below



Red Phalarope - Seen in August-Oct. Sparrow sized, long thin bill, breeding plumage is all red underparts and dark back



Red-throated Loon – migrate through Oct. and Nov. Medium sized but smallest of the loons. Thin bill. Breeding plumage shown below. Non breeding is pale gray and white.



### Rarely Sighted Seabirds:

Caspian Tern – largest of the terns, black cap on head, larger red bill than any other tern, black coloration towards wing tips



Foresters Tern – Medium sized tern. Breeding plumage shown below. Light grey head with a black stripe over the eye when nonbreeding



Black Tern – Small tern, dark in breeding plumage. Head and underside white in non breeding plumage.



Dovekie – small, chunky black and white bird. Very short neck. Breeding plumage entirely black back and head with white underside



Harlequin Duck – Medium sized. Male with white, grey, and reddish brown plumage. Female with brown plumage with white spot on head



Thick-billed Murre – Medium sized, black head and white underside



Black-headed Gull – small gull, black under wing tips with white patch on outer wing. Pale grey back with dark crimson bill



Cory's Shearwater – Dusky, brown head with a light colored bill. Lighter upperparts than the Manx and Greater



Ancient Murrelet – more agile than most auks. Gray back with “shawl” draped across shoulders, white neck with black head



### **Marine Mammals (whales & seals) (*Mention MMPA when seeing whales and/or seals*):**

#### **Seal species:**

Harbor seal -

Weight: about 245 pounds (110 kg)

Length: about 6 feet (~2 m)

Appearance: generally blue-gray back with light and dark speckling; they lack external ear flaps and have short forelimbs

Lifespan: about 25-30 years

Diet: mainly fish, shellfish, and crustaceans

Behavior: they tend to haul out on land and rest with head and flippers elevated, in a banana-like fashion

Conservation status: Least concern



### Grey Seal –

Weight: 550-880 pounds (250-400 kg)

Length: 7.5-10 feet (2-3 m)

Appearance: Pups are born with white fur, then females have a silver-grey coat with scattered dark spots and males have a dark gray coat with silver gray spots; males also have a long arched nose

Lifespan: 25-35 years

Diet: fish, crustaceans, squid, octopus

Behavior: gather in large groups to mate, with males competing with each other for access to females

Conservation Status: Least concern



### Whale species:

Minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorosata*) –  
Length at birth: 8'2"–9'2" (2.5-2.8 m)  
Weight at birth: ~710 lbs. (320 kgs.)



Max. length: 32' (9.8 m) – males; 35' (10.7 m) – females  
Max. weight: ~20,000 lbs. (9,200 kgs)  
Description: gray back with lighter underside. Two white patches on pec fins (mittens)  
Life span: ~50 years?  
Feed: small schooling fish and krill  
Conservation status: least concern

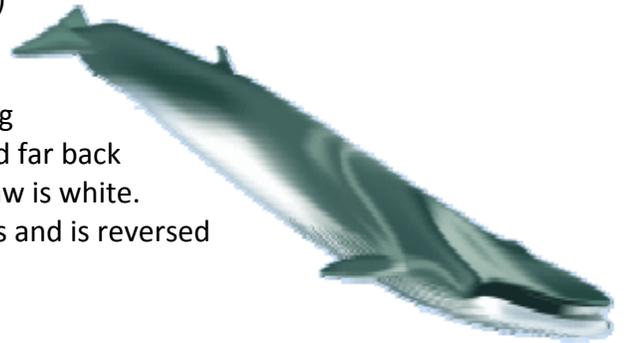
Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) –

Length at birth: 13-15' (4-4.6 m)  
Weight at birth: ~1,500 lbs. (680 kgs.)  
Max. length: 52-56' (16-17 m)  
Max. weight: 90,000 lbs. (40,000 kgs)  
Description: black body with white underside. Underside of fluke is black and white pattern used to identify individuals. Long pec fins  
Life span: at least 50 years  
Feed: small schooling fish and krill  
Conservation status: least concern



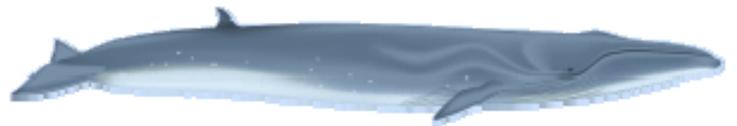
Fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) –

Length at birth: 19'6"-21' (6-6.5 m)  
Weight at birth: 4,000-6,000 lbs. (1,800-2,700 kgs.)  
Max. length: 89' (27.1 m m)  
Max. weight: 260,000 lbs. (120,000 kgs)  
Description: Browner-black back with white swirling pattern (chevron). Underside lighter. Dorsal located far back on body. Lower left jaw is black/gray, lower right jaw is white. Asymmetrical coloration continues to baleen plates and is reversed on tongue.  
Life span: at least 80 years  
Feed:  
Conservation status: Endangered



Sei whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*) –

Length: 45 to 55 feet  
Weight: 14 to 17 tons  
Max. length: 65 feet  
Description: 32 to 60 throat grooves, single ridge running from the tip of the snout to the blowholes, bluish-gray body with white on the underside, may have light scars from lampreys attaching to body, swimming at speeds of up to 30 knots  
Life span:?



Feed: plankton - copepods (prolonged time at surface skim feeding)  
Conservation status: Endangered

North Atlantic Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) –

Weight: up to 79 tons (158,000 lbs; 71,700 kg)

Length: about 50 feet (15 m);  
calves are about 14 feet (4.2 m) at birth

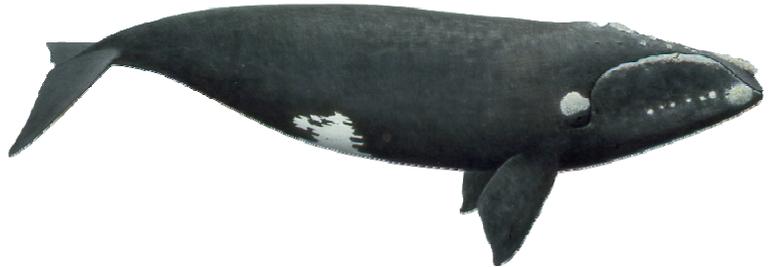
Appearance: stocky black body, with no dorsal fin, and callosities (raised patches of rough skin) on the head region that appear white because of the cyamids (whale lice).

Lifespan: at least 70 years, but there are few data on the longevity of right whales. There are indications that closely related species may live over 100 years.

Diet: zooplankton, including copepods, euphausiids, and cyprids

Behavior: Unlike many other baleen whales, right whales feed by opening their mouths and swimming through large patches of zooplankton. Their baleen filters out tiny prey but allows water to flow through.

Conservation status: Endangered (only ~450 left)



Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) –

Weight: up to 330,000 pounds (150,000 kg)

Length: up to nearly 110 feet (33 m), depending on location (blue whales are largest in the Antarctic)

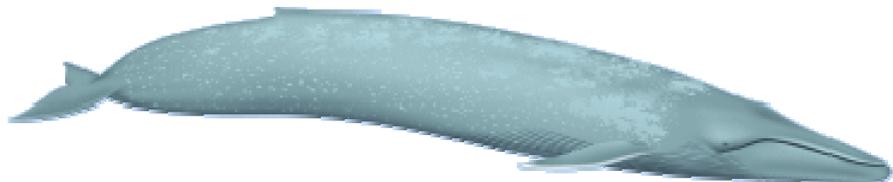
Appearance: long body with mottled gray color pattern that appears light blue when seen through the water

Lifespan: unknown, but sexually mature around 5-15 years

Diet: primarily krill

Behavior: births and mating mostly take place in the winter

Conservation status: Endangered



**Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) –**

Weight: females: up to 15 tons (13,607 kg)  
males: up to 45 tons (40,823 kg)

Length: females: about 36 feet (11 m)  
males: about 52 feet (16 m)

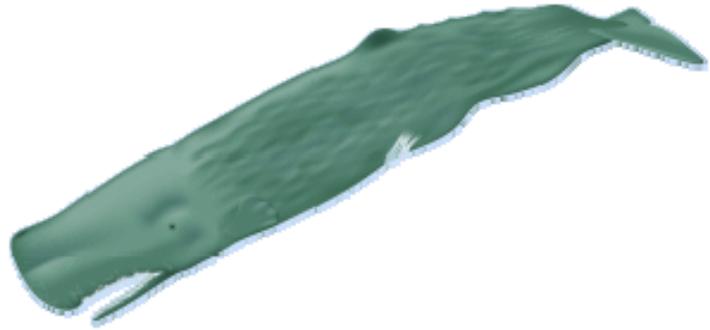
Appearance: mostly dark gray, though some whales have white patches on the belly, with an extremely large head that takes up about 1/3 of its total body length, blow is 45 degrees to left

Lifespan: unknown, but females mature around 30 years old and males mature about 50 years old

Diet: large squid, sharks, skates, and fishes

Behavior: they dive to feed and the average dive lasts about 35 minutes to depths of 1,300 feet (400 m), however dives may last over an hour and reach depths over 3,280 feet (1,000 m)

Conservation status: Vulnerable



**Long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*) –**

Length at birth: 5'3"-6'7" (1.6-2 m)

Weight at birth: 165 lbs. (75 kgs.)

Max. length: 21' (6.3 m) – males; 15'6" (4.7 m) – females

Max. weight: 5,000 lbs. (2,300 kgs.) – males;

2,900 lbs. (1,300 kgs.) – females

Description: black with white saddle patch behind dorsal

Life span: 45 years – males; 60 years – females

Feed: squid, octopus, cuttlefish, small fish

Conservation status: Data deficient (possibly more than one species but more data/research needs to be done)



**Harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)**

Length at birth: 28-30" (70-75 cm)  
Weight at birth: 11-13 lbs. (5-6 kgs.)  
Max. length: 5'2" (1.57 m) – males; 5'6" (1.68 m) – females  
Max. weight: 134 lbs. (61 kgs.) – males; 168 lbs. (76 kgs.) – females  
Description: small grey back with triangular shaped dorsal, blunt nose  
Life span: 24 years  
Feed: non spiny small fish  
Conservation status: Least concern

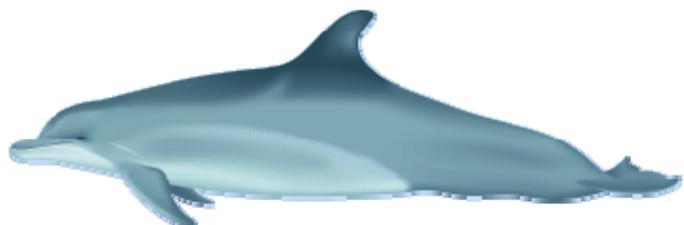


Atlantic white-sided dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus acutus*) –  
Length at birth: 3'7"-4' (1.08-1.22 m)  
Weight at birth: 44 lbs. (20 kgs.)  
Max. length: 9'3" (2.82 m) – males; 8'+ (2.43 m) – females  
Max. weight: 510+ lbs. (230 kgs.) – males; 400+ lbs. (180 kgs.) – females  
Description: black with white belly and yellow stripe in between  
Life span: at least 17 years  
Feed: fish, squid, shrimp  
Conservation status: Least concern



Offshore Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) -

Weight: 300-1400 lbs (135-635 kg)  
Length: 6.0-12.5 ft (~2-4 m)  
Appearance: light gray to black  
Lifespan: 40-50 years; sexual maturity varies by population but ranges from 5-14 years of age  
Diet: invertebrates, squids, fishes  
Behavior: use high frequency echolocation to locate and capture prey; use multiple feeding strategies, including "fish whacking," where they strike a fish with their flukes and knock it out of the water  
Conservation Status: Least concern



## Other Species Seen:

Basking Shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*) –

Weight: 8,000 pounds

Length: 33 feet

Appearance: 2<sup>nd</sup> largest fish in the world, greyish brown with mottled skin, can usually see dorsal and caudal fin above water

Lifespan: ~50 years

Diet: plankton, fish eggs, larvae, copepods

Behavior: slow moving, seen up towards surface with mouth open, filter 2,000 tons per hour, use gill rakers to trap the plankton, allowing water to exit out the gills and mouth, will breach occasionally

Conservation status: Vulnerable



Ocean sunfish (*Mola mola*) –

Weight: 5,000 pounds

Length: 14 feet tall, 10 feet long

Appearance: world's heaviest bony fish, two pairs of hard teeth plates shaped with a slightly curved ridge that look kind of like a bird's beak, tend to be covered in parasites, usually see dorsal above water (floppy looking)

Lifespan: ~10 years?

Diet: Mainly jellies and other zooplankters, squid, fish, crustaceans, brittle stars

Behavior: spend time near the ocean surface but migrate long distances at depth, slow

Conservation status: Vulnerable

