

PRESENTS

ORCA

Orcinus orca

The orca is the largest member of the dolphin family (Delphinidae) and one of the most acrobatic marine species in the world. Although there is only one species, scientists have identified at least 10 groups, known as ecotypes, with distinct morphological and ecological characteristics. Orcas face various threats, including pollution, loss of habitat, accidental entanglement in fishing nets, bioaccumulation of toxic substances in their body and their capture for captivity.

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Cetacea
Suborder: Odontoceti
Family: Delphinidae
Genus: *Orcinus*
Species: *O. orca*



Conservation status:
• NOM 059 – Pr (special protection)
• IUCN – DD (data deficient)



Distribution: Cosmopolitan; can be found in all oceans from polar waters to warmer waters in the equator.



Diet: They prey on squid, octopus, fish, sharks, sea turtles, marine birds and other marine mammals.



Predators: Orcas are top predators, which means they do not have natural predators.



Reproduction: Males at 13 years of age; females between 6 and 10 years old.

15-18 months

Gestation period; they can give birth to one calf every 5 years.

1 year

Lactation period, although the calf will remain close to the mother the first 2 years of its life.

40 years

Estimated age at which females are no longer fertile.

CONSERVATION TIMELINE



1860: Fitzinger describes the genus *Orcinus* and recategorizes the species as *O. orca* (Linnaeus, 1758).



1972: The Marine Mammal Protection Act was enacted in the United States.



1982: The International Whaling Commission prohibited hunting of *Orcinus orca*.



1991: *O. orca* was included in the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).



1992: Mexico publishes the list of protected species, NOM-059-SEMARNAT, and includes the orca under the Special Protection (Pr) category.



1997: The first photoidentification catalogue of orcas in California and Mexican Pacific was completed.



2017: The International Union for Conservation of Nature included *Orcinus orca* in its Red List under Data Deficient (DD) status.



2020: A new ecotype for orcas for Mexico's central Pacific is proposed.



ENTANGLEMENTS
They can drown when they get tangled up in fishing nets.



HUMAN
Either hunted or trapped for captivity.



POLLUTION
Chemical pollutants, heavy metals and polychlorinated biphenyls accumulate in their bodies, causing health problems.

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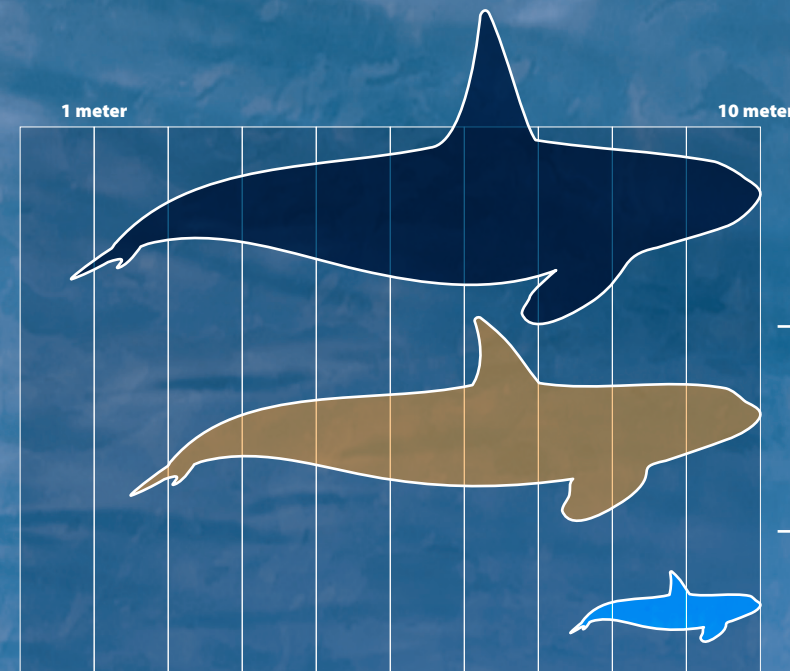
ANATOMY

Orcas exhibit sexual dimorphism and males tend to be larger than females. The most obvious difference is the size of the dorsal fin.

Average life span:

Females: **46-50 years**

Males: **30-38 years**



Average size:

5.8 - 6.7 meters in males

MAXIMUM SIZE RECORDED: 9.2 meters

4.9 - 5.8 metros in females

MAXIMUM SIZE RECORDED: 8.5 meters

2.5 meters in calves

Average weight:

5,000 kg in males

MAXIMUM WEIGHT RECORDED: 9,000 kg

3,600 kg in females

MAXIMUM WEIGHT RECORDED: 4,700 kg

WEIGHT AT BIRTH: 200 kg

55.5 km/h

Maximum speed recorded for a male

8-13 km/h

Average speed while traveling

DISTRIBUTION

Although orcas live in all oceans, they tend to prefer cold waters like those in the Antarctic, Norway and Alaska.



Orcas can be found in Mexico's Pacific ocean and in the Gulf of California, where temperate waters are rich in food.



Round skull that narrows towards the jaw.

BLOWHOLE

1.8 meters

Length a dorsal fin can reach in males.

White oval-shaped eyepatch above each eye.

50-54 VERTEBRAE

11-13 PAIRS OF RIBS

46-50

large teeth that can reach 13 cm in length.

Pigmentation:
Black on upper side and white on the underside.

Saddle patch: grey or white patch behind the dorsal fin (not present in juveniles).

Scars and nicks on skin, fins and fluke, as well as the shape of the saddle patch are unique to each individual.

BEHAVIOR

They form matrilineal groups with complex social structures of up to **20 INDIVIDUALS** spanning 2 or 3 generations.

ECOLOGICAL ROLE

As top predators, orcas help control the populations of their prey.

Eyesight: they have good eyesight above and below water, although they are unable to distinguish colors within the blue wavelength.

Stocky hydrodynamic body.

Large and rounded pectoral fins that provide stability during swimming.

10-20%

length of pectoral fins in relation to total body length.

Pectoral fins have a similar skeletal structure as that of the human arm and hand, except they function differently.

7.6-10 cm

Average thickness of blubber under the skin that helps regulate body temperature in cold waters.

Fluke with one notch at the center.