

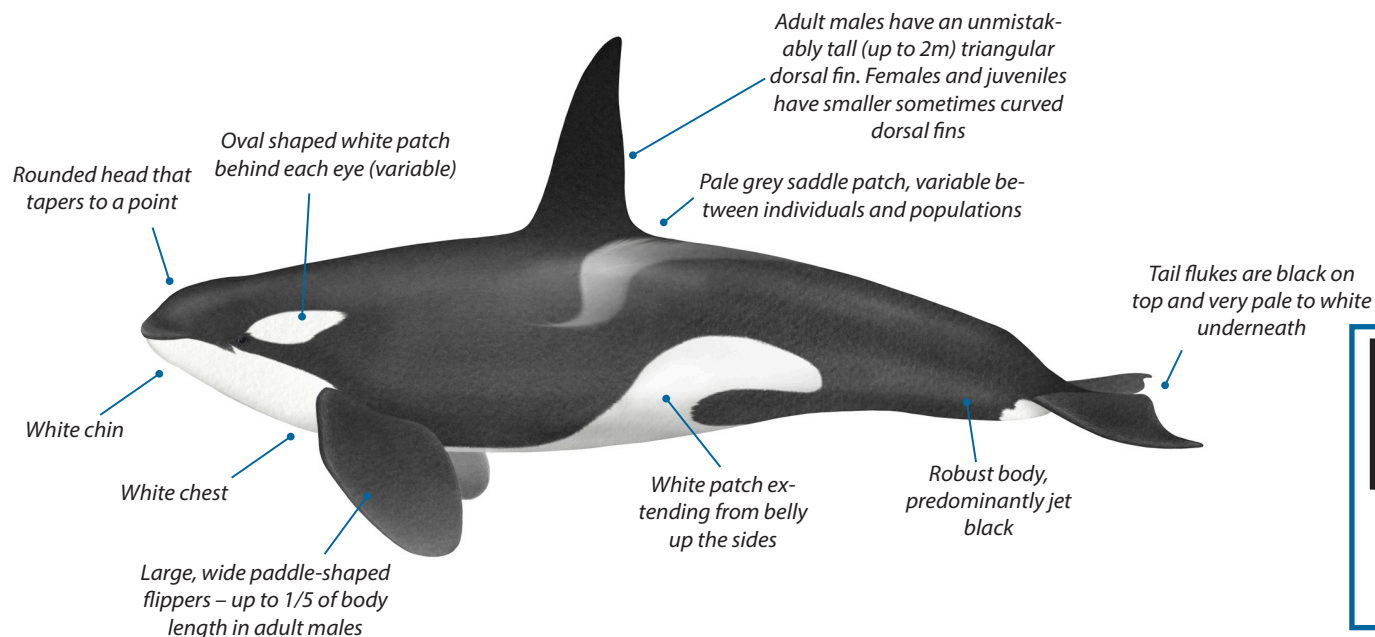
# Killer whale (*Orcinus orca*)

Distribution: Worldwide (see map below and full list of countries in the detailed species account online at: <https://www.handbook.iwc.int/en/species/killer-whale>)

Adult length: up to 9.8m (male)/8.5m (female)

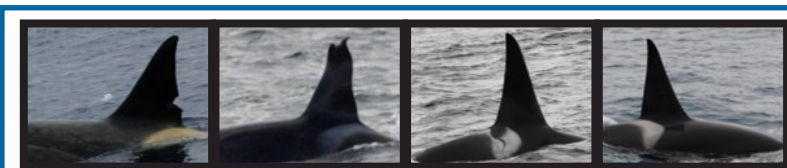
Adult weight: up to 10,000kg (male)

Newborn: 2.1-2.6m /160 – 180kg






Threats: habitat loss, contaminants, prey depletion  
 Habitat: estuarine, nearshore, continental shelf, offshore  
 Diet: fish, squid, marine mammals

IUCN Conservation status: **Data deficient**  
 Resident fish-eating killer whales NE Pacific: **Endangered** under US ESA



Examples of killer whale photographs used to recognise individuals over time through their dorsal fin and the saddle patches/blazes behind their dorsal fins. (photos courtesy of the IWC)

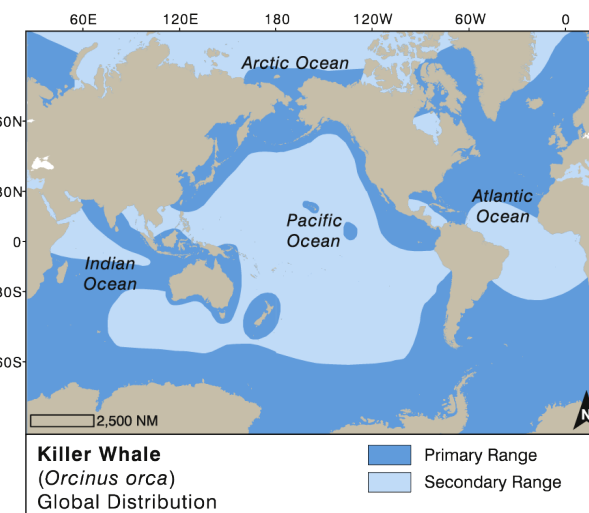
## Fun Facts

-  Different killer whale populations speak different 'languages' and can be distinguished by their calls.
-  Killer whale groups are stable over time with strong family bonds.
-  Different killer whale populations specialize in different hunting strategies: some eat only fish, others strand themselves to catch sea lions, while still others work in groups to attack large whales, much like lions hunting buffalo.

Technically killer whales are dolphins. Males are larger than females and have taller dorsal fins. (see individual on the right). Photo courtesy Chris Johnson



Killer whales range throughout the world's oceans from Norway (left) to Eritrea (right). There are at least 8 different recognised forms with different diets, behaviours and subtle differences in size and colour patterns. Photos courtesy Chris Johnson



Killer whale distribution. Adapted by Nina Lisowski from Würsig, B., Thewissen, J.G.M. and Kovacs, K.M. Editors (2018) "Encyclopedia of Marine Mammals", 3rd ed. Academic Press, Elsevier: San Diego, CA. Copyright Elsevier: <http://www.elsevier.com>

