Sperm whale (Physter macrocephalus)

Distribution: Coastal areas of the North Pacific (see map below and full list of countries in the detailed species account online at: https://wwhandbook.iwc.int/en/species/sperm-whale)

- **Single blow hole at the front of the head and slightly to the Left**
- **Dorsal fin is only a low hump**
- **Visible 'knuckles' or fleshy knobs between the dorsal hump and the tail flukes (varies between individuals)**
- **Flukes are triangular and often lifted before deep dives. They can be scarred and ragged on the trailing edge**

Distribution:

- **Distribution: Coastal areas of the North Pacific**
- **Physter macrocephalus**

**Sperm whale surfacing and dive pattern – notice the blow projecting forward and to the left**

**Fun Facts**

- **Sperm whales typically dive to roughly 800 meters and for 50 minutes in search of food.**
- **Sperm whales’ heads are filled with a waxy/oily substance called “spermacetti” (hence the common name).**
- **The story of Moby Dick was based on hunting of sperm whales in the 1800s.**
- **When under attack, some communities of sperm whales move into a marguerite for formation with heads to the centre and tails**

**Sperm whale**

- **Enormous head – up to 1/3 of total body length and uniquely square in shape**
- **Dark grey or brownish skin is wrinkled and prune-like, with parallel striations running from the head towards the tail, but concentrated on the back 2/3 of the body**
- **Small spatula-shaped flippers**
- **Narrow lower jaw - under-slung and usually not visible from above or the side. Area around mouth may be white**
- **Robust tail stock**

**Diet:** squid

**Habitat:** offshore

**Adult length:** Up to 18m (male)/11-12m (female)

**Newborn:** 3.5-4.5m /1,000kg

**IUCN Conservation status:** Vulnerable

**Mediterranean sub-population** Endangered

**Threats:** ship strikes, plastic ingestion, climate change