

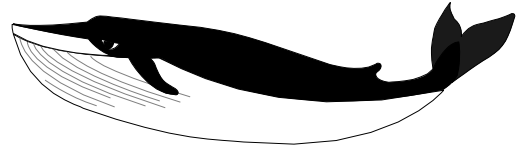
# The Fin Whale

*Balaenoptera physalus*

The life size whale that you see at Ocean Commotion is a fin whale.

## Fun Facts About Fin Whales:

- Are the second largest whales in the world
- Found in all oceans of the world
- Live in family groups (called pods) of 3 to 20 whales
- Live up to 90 years on average, but older specimens have been found
- Nicknamed “greyhound of the sea” because of its speed
- Are frequently hunted by the whaling industry, and are an endangered species
- Use their powerful tail flukes against sharks and other whales
- Smashed the boats of early whalers into splinters



## Eating Habits:

- Uses baleen to “comb” krill, anchovies, and other small fish from the water for food
- Feeds while swimming on its side with it’s mouth open

**Speed:** Fin whales are the fastest whales, swimming up to 12 knots (14 mph) and sprinting at 20-30 knots (23-35 mph).

**Color:** Fin whales are dark blue-gray on top with a lighter underside, right lip and baleen plate.

**Size:** Fin whales grow up to 88 feet long and weigh up to 55 tons, over 100,000 pounds.

**Surfacing:** Fin whales surface every 6-10 minutes for 4-7 blows. The spout looks like an inverted cone with the blow accompanied by a whistle. Fin whales are the deepest diving whales.

**Whale Babies:** The gestation period is 12 months, and mothers can have calves every three years.

**Fin Whale Populations:** Northern Hemisphere = 65,000 fin whales  
Southern Hemisphere = 15,000 fin whales  
(From the Society for Marine Mammalogy, 2007)

## ***To receive the pattern and directions to build your own life-size fin whale:***

<http://whale.wheelock.edu/whalenet-stuff/LucyPage.html>. Send a check for \$10 to Dr. J. Michael Williamson, MICS, 20 Moynihan Road, South Hampton, MA 01982. Dr. Williamson will send you the directions and a list of materials in a booklet entitled, “How to Build an Inflatable (55 ft.) Fin Whale.” The booklet also includes suggested classroom activities and data.

## ***Cool Whale Websites:***

**NOAA Fisheries: The Kids’ Times** <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/education/whales.htm>

**Wheelock College (Boston, MA) WhaleNet** <http://whale.wheelock.edu>

**Cornell Lab of Ornithology: Studying Marine Mammals by Sound**  
<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/brp/listen-to-project-sounds/>

**World Wildlife: Whales** <http://worldwildlife.org/species/whale>

**Louisiana Sea Grant College Program**

