

Northern Ireland's Ocean Giants



Otter *Lutra lutra*

Adult length 1 to 1.3 metres
ID Notes: Mid to dark brown coat, tail 40% of body length, flattened head with broad whiskery muzzle.



Harbour (Common) Seal

Phoca vitulina
Adult length 1.35 - 1.9 metres
ID Notes: Smaller of the two seal species, mottled coat, dog-like face.



Grey Seal

Halichoerus grypus
Adult length 1.6 to 2.6m
ID Notes: Larger of the two seal species, horse-like face with 'Roman nose'.



Humpback Whale

Megaptera novaeangliae
Adult length 11 to 16 metres
ID Notes: Low bushy blow, dorsal fin $\frac{2}{3}$ way along back, often flukes on diving.

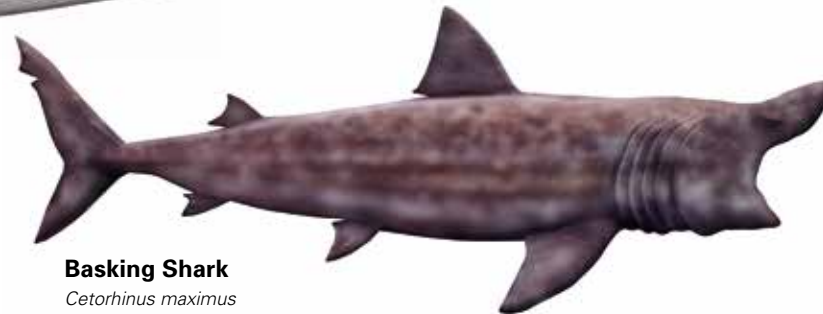


Human at same scale as illustrations.



Minke Whale

Balaenoptera acutorostrata
Adult length 7 to 11 metres
ID Notes: No visible blow, dorsal fin $\frac{2}{3}$ way along back, white band on flippers.



Basking Shark

Cetorhinus maximus
Adult length 5 to 11 metres
ID Notes: Tail and large dorsal fin visible at surface simultaneously.



Harbour Porpoise

Phocoena phocoena
Adult length 1.4 to 1.7 metres
ID Notes: The smallest of our cetaceans, dark grey body with small triangular dorsal fin.



Common Dolphin

Delphinus delphis
Adult length 1.7 to 2.7 metres
ID Notes: Slender in appearance, distinctive creamy yellow hourglass pattern along the sides.



Killer Whale

Orcinus orca
Adult length 5.5 to 9.5 metres
ID Notes: White eye patch, very tall dorsal fin $\frac{1}{2}$ way along back, grey saddle patch.



Risso's Dolphin

Grampus griseus
Adult length 2.6 to 4 metres
ID Notes: Scarring makes older animals look white, tall dorsal fin $\frac{1}{2}$ way along back.



Bottlenose Dolphin

Tursiops truncatus
Adult length 2 to 4 metres
ID Notes: Large robust dolphin, grey in colour with white underside.

Recording your Ocean Giant sightings

25 species of cetacean (whale, dolphin and porpoise) have been recorded in Irish waters.

This guide includes the seven most frequently recorded cetacean species in Northern Irish waters along with our two seal species, the otter, and the basking shark. Cetacean and basking shark sightings should be reported to the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group on www.iwdg.ie.

Seal and otter sightings should be reported to the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording on www.nmni.com/cedar.

The most effective way of verifying any sighting is for you to take a photo or video and submit it with your sighting details. Your sightings will contribute valuable data to the research and conservation of Northern Ireland's Ocean Giants.

Code of Conduct

If you encounter marine mammals or basking sharks when in a boat, please follow these guidelines to minimise disturbance:

- Reduce your speed to six knots or less.
- Do not approach closer than 100m from the animals.
- Do not remain in contact with the animals for longer than 15 minutes
- Do not drive directly at, or chase, the animals.
- Try to maintain a steady course and speed and let the animals approach you.
- Do not allow the animals to be corralled between vessels or allow more than 2 vessels approach the same group of animals.
- Avoid approaching groups with young calves present.
- When departing an encounter, maintain a steady course and increase speed gradually.

Reporting Strandings

If you find a live or dead stranded whale, dolphin, porpoise, or basking shark please report it to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on **(028) 7082 3600** immediately.

If you find a seal which is ashore and looks like it may be injured or malnourished, please do not touch it or chase it back into the sea. Observe from a distance and keep dogs and people away from it. Call Exploris Aquarium on **(028) 4272 8062** immediately for further advice and assistance.

Dead seals or otters can be reported to DAERA by emailing marine.wildlife@daera-ni.gov.uk stating the location and details, and attaching any photos of the dead animal.

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Humpback Whale Occasional sightings of this species are recorded off the north coast, to the east of the Copeland Islands and off the south Co. Down coastline. Sightings are focused on the summer months when the animals may forage in the North Channel.



Minke Whale May be recorded in the spring or summer months anywhere off the Northern Irish coast. Regular but infrequent sightings have been recorded from Ramore Head, Black Head and St. John's Point.



Killer Whale Are recorded regularly but infrequently in Northern Irish waters. May be seen at any time of year with most sightings occurring around offshore rocks and islands where seals haul out. Most sightings are of individuals of the well-studied 'West Coast Community' killer whale pod.



Bottlenose Dolphin May be sighted year-round off all coasts, but with most sightings recorded off the north and north-east coasts. Usually seen in small groups of 10-20 animals but groups of up to 150 have been reported. Very active at the surface and will readily approach vessels to bow ride.



Common Dolphin Most sightings are recorded offshore in the spring and summer months particularly from the area between the south Co. Down coast and the Isle of Man, and from the north coast. Very active at the surface and will readily approach vessels to bow ride.



Harbour Porpoise May be sighted year-round off all coasts and are the most frequently recorded cetaceans in Northern Irish waters. Generally shy and do not readily approach vessels. They are best sighted in very calm seas and have a gentle rolling motion at the surface. Sightings hotspots include Ramore Head, Portmuck, Black Head, the Copeland Islands, and Bloody Bridge.



Basking Shark Are sighted predominantly during the summer months and are best sighted in very calm sea conditions, but can breach clear of the water on occasion. Most sightings are recorded on the north coast between Malin Head and Runkerry Head. The typical view on the surface is of the large triangular dorsal fin followed by the tail. When feeding the tip of the snout may also be visible. They generally ignore vessels.

