

Whales and Dolphins of the Gulf of Mexico



Keith Mullin, photo courtesy of NMFS

Bottlenose Dolphin
(*Tursiops truncatus*)

Size: Adults 6-12 feet. At birth approx. 3 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 35,159* (excluding estuarine stocks)
Trivia: The original "Flipper" was a bottlenose dolphin named Mitzi and lived from 1958-1972.



Carol Roden, photo courtesy of BOEM

Spinner Dolphin
(*Stenella longirostris*)

Size: Adult 6-7.2 feet, males slightly larger than females. At birth approx. 2.7 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 1,989*
Trivia: Spinner dolphins get their name because they spin horizontally, from the tips of their beaks to their tails, over the water.



Carol Roden, photo courtesy of BOEM

Killer Whale
(*Orcinus orca*)

Size: Adult males to 31 feet. Adult females to 23 feet. At birth approx. 8 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 49*
Trivia: Killer whales are the largest species of dolphins.



Wayne Hoggard, photo courtesy of NMFS

Bryde's Whale
(*Balaenoptera edeni*)

Size: Adults 43-51 feet; females slightly larger than males. At birth approx. 11 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 15*
Trivia: Bryde's whales are the most commonly observed baleen whale in the Gulf of Mexico.



Craig Hayslip, photo courtesy of BOEM

Sperm Whale
(*Physeter macrocephalus*)

Size: Adult males 49-59 feet. Adult females to 36 feet. At birth approx. 13 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 1,665*
Trivia: "Moby Dick" was a sperm whale. Sperm whales are the only resident endangered cetaceans in the Gulf of Mexico.



Carol Roden, photo courtesy of BOEM

Atlantic Spotted Dolphin
(*Stenella frontalis*)

Size: Adults 7-7.5 feet. At birth approx. 3 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 27,393*
Trivia: The bodies of Atlantic spotted dolphins are covered with spots, and they become more densely spotted with age.



Keith Mullin, photo courtesy of NMFS

Risso's Dolphin
(*Grampus griseus*)

Size: Adults 10-12.5 feet; males slightly larger than females. At birth approx. 5 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 1,589*
Trivia: Risso's dolphins lose their gray pigmentation as they grow older and can appear almost white.



Photo courtesy of NMFS

Melon-headed Whale
(*Peponocephala electra*)

Size: Adults 8.5-9 feet. At birth approx. 2.7 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 2,283*
Trivia: Melon-headed whales have a preference for deep water. Their melon-shaped head gives them their name.



Carol Roden, photo courtesy of BOEM

Pantropical Spotted Dolphin
(*Stenella attenuata*)

Size: Adults 5.2-8.5 feet. At birth approx. 2.7 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 34,067*
Trivia: Pantropical spotted dolphins are the most abundant offshore marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico.



Carrie Hubard, photo courtesy of NMFS

Short-finned Pilot Whale
(*Globicephala macrorhynchus*)

Size: Adult males to 20 feet. Adult females to 17 feet. At birth approx. 5.5 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 716*
Trivia: Short-finned pilot whales are highly communicative, making sounds such as squeals, whistles, smacks, and snores.



Carol Roden, photo courtesy of BOEM

Striped Dolphin
(*Stenella coeruleoalba*)

Size: Adults 7-8 feet. At birth approx. 3 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 3,323*
Trivia: Striped dolphins are beautifully marked, fast-swimming dolphins sometimes called "streakers."

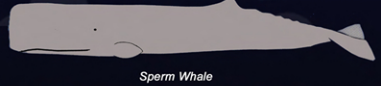


Carol Roden, photo courtesy of BOEM

Clymene Dolphin
(*Stenella clymene*)

Size: Adults 6-6.6 feet. At birth approx. 2.7 feet.
Gulf of Mexico Population: 6,575*
Trivia: Clymene dolphins are thought to feed nocturnally.

Size Comparison



There are at least 78 species of cetaceans - whales, dolphins, and porpoises - in the world. While porpoises are not known to reside in the Gulf of Mexico, 21 species of whales and dolphins regularly occur in Gulf waters and are identified in the National Marine Fisheries Service's Stock Assessment Reports. These animals are protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The sperm whale is also protected by the Endangered Species Act.

Whales, dolphins, and porpoises share characteristics with humans. They have lungs and hold their breath while swimming underwater, so they must come to the surface to breathe. They also carry their young in the womb, give live birth, and nurse their young. These are some characteristics that classify them as mammals, in the taxonomic order of Cetacea.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) manages the exploration and development of the Nation's offshore resources. It seeks to appropriately balance economic development, energy independence, and environmental protection through oil and gas leases, renewable energy development, and environmental reviews and studies. BOEM's support and funding of comprehensive studies of the possible effects of human activities on the distribution, abundance, and behavior of marine mammals are an important part of this mission.

* Gulf of Mexico populations from National Marine Fisheries Service Stock Assessment Reports.



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

For copies of this poster contact
1-800-200-GULF
WWW.BOEM.GOV