# Finless Porpoise

Porpoises are a group of fully aquatic marine mammals, all of which are classified under the family Phocoenidae, parvorder Odontoceti (toothed whales). Although similar in appearance to dolphins, they are more closely related to narwhals and belugas than to the true dolphins. There are eight extant species of porpoise, all among the smallest of the toothed whales. Porpoises are distinguished from dolphins by their flattened, spade-shaped teeth distinct from the conical teeth of dolphins, and lack of a pronounced beak, although some dolphins also lack a pronounced beak. Porpoises, and other cetaceans, belong to the clade Cetartiodactyla with even-toed ungulates.

| Sl No. | Characteristics | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Common Name | Finless Porpoise |
| 2 | Scientific Name | Neophocaena phocaenoides |
| 3 | Length | 1.9 metres |
| 4 | Colour | dark gray on their dorsal side, fading to a lighter shade on their ventral side |
| 5 | Average weight | 72 kilograms |
| 6 | Food habits | small fish, crustaceans, and cephalopods |
| 7 | Habitat | shallow, coastal waters and are often found in areas where the water is less than 20 meters (65 feet) deep |
| 8 | Any interesting facts about them | One of the most notable characteristics of finless porpoises is their lack of a dorsal fin |

# Features

The finless porpoise (Neophocaena phocaenoides) is a small marine mammal that belongs to the family Phocoenidae. As the name suggests, the finless porpoise lacks a dorsal fin, which sets it apart from other porpoises and dolphins.

In terms of colour, finless porpoises are generally dark grey on their dorsal side, fading to a lighter shade on their ventral side. They have a robust, spindle-shaped body that is more cylindrical in shape compared to other porpoises.

Both male and female finless porpoises are similar in appearance, although males tend to be slightly larger, reaching lengths of up to 1.9 metres (6.2 feet) and weighing up to 72 kilograms (158 pounds), while females are usually around 1.7 metres (5.6 feet) long and weigh up to 55 kilograms (121 pounds).

One of the most notable characteristics of finless porpoises is their lack of a dorsal fin. This adaptation is thought to help them manoeuvre more easily in shallow waters and avoid getting caught in fishing nets. They also have a rounded, blunt snout and a small mouth filled with numerous small teeth.

In terms of behaviour, finless porpoises are social animals that live in small groups or pods.

# Food Habits

In terms of food habits, finless porpoises primarily feed on small fish, crustaceans, and cephalopods. They use echolocation to locate their prey and are known to dive to depths of up to 100 metres (328 feet) to catch their food.

# Habitats

Finless porpoises are adapted to living in shallow, coastal waters and are often found in areas where the water is less than 20 metres (65 feet) deep. They tend to prefer calm waters, such as estuaries, bays, and lagoons, and may also be found in freshwater rivers and lakes in some parts of their range.

# Vulnerable Species

The finless porpoise is listed as “Vulnerable” on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, which means that it is at high risk of extinction in the wild.

In India, the population of the finless porpoise is estimated to be less than 10,000 individuals, and the species is considered endangered in the country. The population of finless porpoises in India is threatened by a variety of factors, including habitat loss, pollution, overfishing, and accidental entanglement in fishing gear.

One of the most significant threats to the finless porpoise in India is the loss and degradation of its habitat due to coastal development and pollution. In addition, the species is also at risk of being accidentally caught in fishing nets, which can cause injury or death.

Efforts are being made to conserve the finless porpoise in India and protect its habitat. The Indian government has implemented regulations to control overfishing, pollution, and other activities that threaten the species. In addition, several protected areas have been established along the coast to conserve the species and its habitat.

Protected Areas

In India, the finless porpoise can be found in several national parks and protected areas along the coast.

The Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park in Tamil Nadu is home to a variety of marine mammals, including the finless porpoise.

Gulf of Kutch Marine National Park is located in Gujarat and is known for its diverse marine life, including the finless porpoise.

Sundarbans National Park in West Bengal, this national park is home to the endangered Ganges River Dolphin, which is closely related to the finless porpoise.

Chilika Lake Wildlife Sanctuary in Odisha, is a major wintering ground for migratory birds and also supports a variety of aquatic mammals, including the finless porpoise.

Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, this marine national park is known for its coral reefs and diverse marine life, including the finless porpoise.

# Conservation of the Species

Protecting the natural habitats of these dolphin species is crucial. This includes maintaining water quality, preventing pollution, and regulating the use of river systems, estuaries, and coastlines.

Human activities such as fishing, boating, and development can have a significant impact on dolphin populations. Reducing the impact of these activities by regulating fishing practices, reducing noise pollution, and minimising boat traffic can help to preserve dolphin populations.

Raising awareness of the importance of these dolphin species and their habitats can help to generate support for

conservation efforts. Education programs can be implemented for local communities, schools, and tourists to teach them about the importance of these species.

Conducting research and monitoring programs can help to better understand these species and their habitats. This information can be used to develop effective conservation strategies and monitor the success of these efforts over time. Effective conservation efforts will require collaboration and partnerships between various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, local communities, and researchers. By working together, these groups can develop and implement effective conservation strategies to protect these dolphin species.

With the increase in marine tourism activities such as boat rides and water sports, it is important to regulate these activities in a manner that ensures the safety and conservation of dolphins. This can be done by enforcing strict guidelines on boat traffic, keeping a safe distance from dolphins, and avoiding activities that can cause stress or harm to dolphins.

Pollution can be extremely harmful to dolphin populations. This includes plastic pollution, chemical pollution, and noise pollution. Reducing pollution levels in the environment can help to protect these species and their habitats.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the conservation of these dolphin species is critical to maintain the biodiversity of our planet and the health of aquatic ecosystems. We must take concerted efforts to protect these intelligent and charismatic creatures from habitat loss, human impact, pollution, and other threats. By implementing the strategies mentioned above, we can ensure the long-term survival of these unique species and the

preservation of their habitats for future generations.