

## [Page 18 - The Whales in Cape Breton's Waters](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 16](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1977/6/1

The Whales in Cape Breton's Waters features Blue Whale *Balaenoptera musculus*, to 98 feet long. Found in all oceans, this whale is seriously depleted throughout the world. Mitchell estimates about 6000 and 6000 pygmy blue whales. It is probably a migratory animal, following the "krill." They are very social animals. The pregnant females usually go south whereas males and pre-adolescent whales would stay north longer. Younger whales are getting stranded in ice. Fin Whale, *Balaenoptera physalus*, about 70 feet. Found in all oceans. They are not numerous and Mitchell thinks they never were. The Fin Whale has great temperature tolerance and thus stays in the Gulf of St. Lawrence until the ice drives him out. Kellogg (1929) said that distribution depends on the seasonal appearance of plankton, capelin and herring. They eat a wide range of food including euphasiid crustaceans and squid. Sergeant: "Concentrations appear to pass through Cabot Strait and off the east coast of Newfoundland northward in June and southward in October." Minke whale, *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*, about 25 feet. Found in all oceans. This is the smallest of the baleen whales. They are a near-shore animal. No real population studies available other than catch statistics. Migrates up the N.S. coast in May and is found in Newfoundland waters and the Gulf. Well-known at the mouth of the Saguenay River in summer. It is a common and hardy creature, a few individuals remaining in the Gulf till December, following the spawning herring. (Sergeant) Majority winter south to Florida. Humpback whale, *Megaptera novaeangliae*, about 45 feet. Found in all oceans. Arrives about May and stays until September. It's a very tame whale coming close to vessels at sea. A slow swimmer along known routes, its numbers are seriously depleted. Mitchell estimates 1200 to 1500 in the northwestern Atlantic. North Atlantic Bottlenose Whale, *Hyperoodon ampullatus*, about 22 feet. Found in temperate to arctic North Atlantic. Beamish: "You've got a real good stock of those that lives almost exclusively in the gully east of Sable Island. They are very curious animals • if there's lots of noise they'll come over and investigate. They are possibly the longest diving animals in the world • though we don't have positive information. They are bottom feeders and since they are toothed whales they probably have sonar." Occasionally visit the Gulf in summer. Beluga, *Delphinapterus leucas*, about 15 feet. Boreal to boreal in northern hemisphere. A population remains throughout the year in the estuary of the St. Lawrence. (Sergeant) Beamish says that this population (in the mouth of the Saguenay River) is certainly there in the summertime--about 1000 animals--but "we don't know where it goes in the winter. It's a real mystery." Warshall: They prefer "the cod-rich waters. They are shallow divers • up to fifty feet • but along the coast they can reach bottom-dwelling fish like haddock and plaice. They also eat crabs and even dig in the mud for worms." Cape Breton's Magazine/IS