

## Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)

("Puffing pig")



*Photo credit: LivingSeas/N. Hawkins*

### Key facts

*Length:* up to 1.9 meters

*How long they live:* Harbour porpoises usually live for only 12 years!

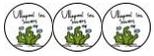
*Diet:* a variety of fish, squid, octopus, shellfish and shrimp

*Range* (where they usually are)  
coastal waters of north Atlantic  
and north Pacific.



*Photo credit: HWDT/J.Shrimpton*





*How to spot them:* you don't usually see their face just a small triangle fin rolling in the water. No beak

*Character:* small and shy. They get a hard time from other cetaceans. Stays in small groups from 2-5.

## Threats

### *Humans:*

- Accidental capture in fishing gear: bycatch
- Noise pollution: vessels, seal deterrents.
- Habitat degradation

### *Natural:*

- Orca attacks
- Bottle nose dolphin attacks – scientists are not sure why they do this as they don't eat the porpoises
- Lack of food





## Extra info about harbour porpoises in Scotland:

- Harbour porpoises are the most commonly seen cetacean (name for whales, dolphins and porpoises) in Scotland and can be seen all year round.
- The Hebrides is a very important area for harbour porpoises as we have some of the highest (densities) numbers of porpoises in one area, compared to other areas in Europe.
- In Gaelic they are sometimes referred to as puthag which means 'little puffing one' as you can often hear their blow but not see it.



Photo credit: HWDT/P.Garrard





## Favourite facts:

- Porpoises can hold their breath for 6 minutes at a time!
- Porpoises are one of the planet's most successful hunters, they constantly hunt day + night, catching up to 550 fish an hour! They rarely miss a fish.
- Porpoises make hundreds of clicks a second to help them hunt for food, this is called echolocation. They can even use sound to help them find food hidden under the sand.
- Porpoise echolocation clicks are so high-pitched humans cannot hear them.
- Porpoise teeth are all the same shape. They are blunt like a spade. Unlike humans, porpoise calves don't lose their baby teeth. They have one set of teeth which grow continuously as they get older.

## Photos of porpoises in Loch Broom:



Photo credit: LivingSeas/N. Hawkins





## How you can help:



You can help scientists learn more about porpoises by reporting any that you see. Reporting is quick and easy using the free Whale Track app on your phone. Find out more at [whaletrack.hwdt.org](http://whaletrack.hwdt.org).

**Hamish and Ullapool Sea Savers would like to thank the following people for their amazing support making this fact file:**

Pippa at the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust

Noel at Living Seas Scotland



Hebridean  
Whale &  
Dolphin  
Trust



[www.ullapoolseasavers.com](http://www.ullapoolseasavers.com)

