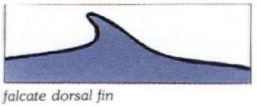
GUIDE TO WATCHING WHALES IN CANADA

ORDER : CETACEA
SUBORDER : MYSTICETI
or BALEEN WHALES

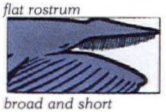
General characteristics of baleen whales:
paired blowholes and baleen instead of teeth.

RORQUAL FAMILY *(Balaenopteridae)*

streamlined body

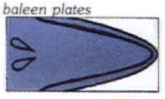


falcate dorsal fin

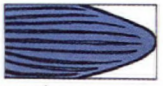


flat rostrum

broad and short baleen plates



paired blowholes



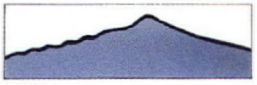
ventral grooves

- BLUE WHALE p. 18-**19**
- FIN WHALE p. 20-**21**
- HUMPBACK WHALE p. 22-**23**
- MINKE WHALE p. 24-**25**

(6 species in North America)

GRAY WHALE FAMILY *(Eschrichtidae)*

natural mottled body pigmentation and presence of barnacles



lack a dorsal fin, but dorsal ridge or bumps

short baleen plates

paired blowholes

few folds instead of ventral grooves

- GRAY WHALE p. 26-**27**

(1 species in North America)

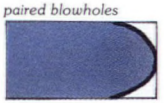
RIGHT WHALE FAMILY *(Balaenidae)*

thick body, large head

no dorsal fin

narrow and long baleen plates

paired blowholes



no ventral grooves

- RIGHT WHALE p. 28-**29**
- BOWHEAD WHALE p. 30-**31**

(2 species in North America)

See page 4 for relative sizes

GUIDE TO WATCHING WHALES IN CANADA

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Quebec Region
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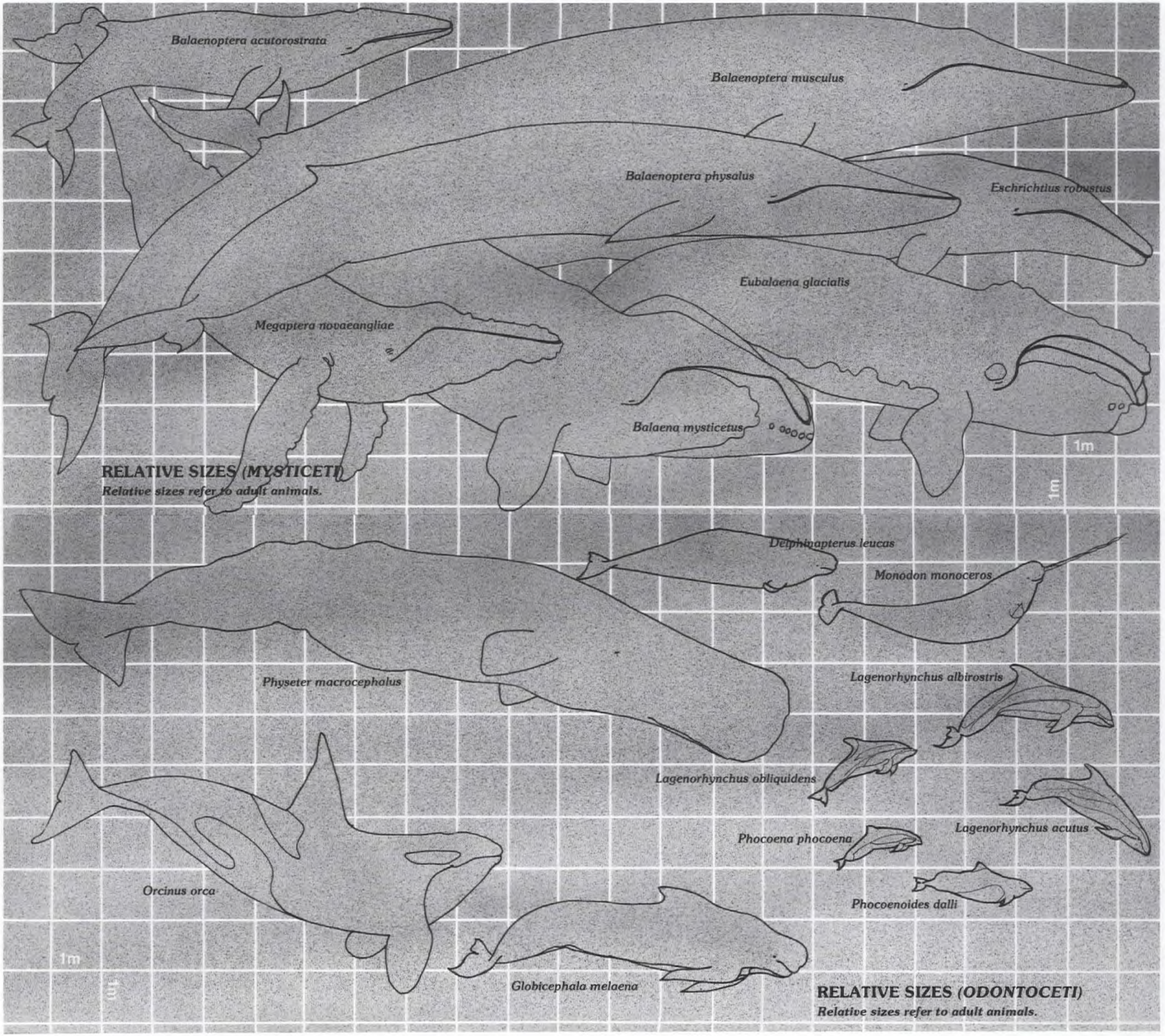

Balaenoptera acutorostrata
Balaenoptera musculus
Balaenoptera physalus
Eschrichtius robustus
Eubalaena glacialis
Megaptera novaeangliae
Balaena mysticetus
1m
1m
RELATIVE SIZES (MYSTICETI)
Relative sizes refer to adult animals.
Delphinapterus leucas
Monodon monoceros
Physeter macrocephalus
Lagenorhynchus albirostris
Lagenorhynchus obliquidens
Lagenorhynchus acutus
Phocoena phocoena
Phocoenoides dalli
Orcinus orca
1m
1m
Globicephala melaena
RELATIVE SIZES (ODONTOCETI)
Relative sizes refer to adult animals.

FOREWORD

Whale watching is fun and educational, but certain precautions must be taken to ensure the safety of both the whales and the people watching them.

The guidelines presented in this brochure reflect the opinions of a number of scientists who study whale behaviour in Canada.

These guidelines include general tips on how to watch whales safely from various types of boats without disturbing the cetaceans. It should be remembered, however, that specific precautions may be in order when you are watching particular species in certain areas under given sailing conditions. Some specific cases are mentioned in this guide, but further details may have to be obtained locally.

The section on the characteristics of various whale species is intended to assist the reader in identifying the animals sighted. The information provided is very basic, however, and to learn more about these creatures we suggest you consult the publications listed at the end of the brochure.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Government of Canada) welcomes your comments and observations regarding these whale watching guidelines. Please address your correspondence to:

Director General
Communications Directorate
Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Government of Canada
200 Kent Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0E6

General note on status

The International Whaling Commission has passed a moratorium (zero quota) for the commercial kill of whales from all stocks for the 1986 coastal and 1985-86 pelagic seasons and thereafter. This moratorium is not binding on the governments of Japan, Norway and the USSR, which have in accordance with the terms of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, 1946, lodged objections to the moratorium.

WHALE WATCHING IN CANADA

The popularity of whale watching has grown considerably in recent years, and many excursions are now available to allow you to observe these animals in their natural habitat. The killer whales and gray whales of the eastern coastal waters of the Pacific, the belugas of the Arctic and the St. Lawrence Estuary, and the right whales, blue whales, and humpback whales of the western Atlantic coastal waters have thus become tourist attractions.

At certain locations in Canada, whales can be watched from the shore. Examples include St. Mary's and Trinity bays in Newfoundland, the Quoddy area in New Brunswick, the northwest coast of Cape Breton Island, the Saguenay area and north shore of the St. Lawrence Estuary in Quebec, Churchill in Manitoba, Pond Inlet and the shores of the Arctic Ocean and Beaufort Sea in the Northwest Territories, the Pacific Rim National Park and the Johnstone Strait area in British Columbia.

Whales are not hunted commercially in Canadian waters, but whale-watching has become a popular pastime in recent years, and examination of any effects this activity may have on these animals is certainly warranted.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans of the Governement of Canada is concerned that uncontrolled observation may modify the whales' behaviour, cause them injury, or keep them away from certain habitats at critical times. For example, whales can be seriously injured by propellers. Divers with scuba gear who hitch rides on the cetaceans' dorsal fins or boats that race them or move in too close can so disrupt mating, nursing, feeding and resting such that the animals will prefer to go elsewhere. They can also be disturbed by sustained noises, such as the droning of aircraft or boat engines, or sudden noises such as shouts or gunshots.

The lives and safety of observers can also be threatened. Breaching whales have landed on boats, injuring, and even killing, occupants. And divers who hitch rides risk a similar fate.

By following the rules in this guide, you can watch whales safely and avoid injuring or disturbing them in their traditional feeding, mating, and migration areas.

Please note that Canada Fisheries Act regulations specifically prohibit harassment of whales, dolphins and porpoises.

MAIN AREAS FOR WHALE WATCHING IN CANADA
ARCTIC OCEAN
ATLANTIC OCEAN
PACIFIC OCEAN
Resolute
Pond Inlet
MACKENZIE BAY
FROBISHER BAY
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
BRITISH COLUMBIA
ALBERTA
SASKATCHEWAN
MANITOBA
Churchill
ONTARIO
QUEBEC
Mingan
NEWFOUNDLAND
St. John's
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
Cape Bon Desir
SAGUENAY
Pointe Noire
NOVA SCOTIA
NEW BRUNSWICK
ROBSON BIGHT
U.S.A.
BOAT TOURS
VIEW POINTS

GUIDELINES FOR WHALE WATCHING

GENERAL RULES

— Do not hunt, chase, follow, disperse, drive, or herd pods or individual whales.

— Do not disturb whales for example while they are resting, feeding and travelling.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR BOATERS

Several types of craft are used for whale-watching: small, fast boats with outboard or inboard motors, cruise vessels, boats with diesel engines, sailboats, and inflatable dinghies. Each has its advantages and disadvantages.

Engine noise can annoy the animals and interfere with their communication. The high pitch sound waves produced by high-rpm engines, such as outboard motors, cause the greatest disruption of normal whale behavior. On the other hand, the silent approach of a vessel, especially one that moves in quickly, in low light conditions, may surprise whales and lead to possible collisions.

A small craft has the advantages of speed and maneuverability, while a large vessel provides better visibility at greater distances. There are specific safety and navigation rules which must be followed for each type of craft, but much is left to the navigator's judgment.

You can satisfy your curiosity in a safe manner and at the same time avoid injuring or disturbing the whales **by following these general guidelines:**

— if one or several whales are sighted in the vicinity of your vessel, avoid any sudden speed or course changes;

— if you are less than 300 metres (1,000 feet) from an animal, reduce speed and advance slowly, using an oblique line of approach;

— avoid heading directly toward the whale;

— do not go closer than 100 metres (300 feet) of a whale, dolphin, or porpoise. The animal may choose to come much closer to you; if it does, do not chase it and be wary of any individual that appears to be tame. Keep clear of the flukes;

— when you are at a distance of 100 metres (300 feet), shift your motor into neutral or idle. If you must use your motor to hold your position, keep your speed down. If you have a sailboat with an auxiliary motor, leave it in idle to signal your presence or turn on your echosounder;

— when leaving the location, start out slowly and wait until you are more than 300 metres (1,000 feet) from the animal before accelerating;

— travel parallel to whales.

Even if whale-watching is not the primary purpose of your excursion, be on the lookout to avoid collisions, especially in waters where whales have been sighted or reported.

— If it is impossible to detour around a whale or a pod of whales, slow down immediately and wait until you are more than 300 metres (1,000 feet) away before resuming speed.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR AIRCRAFT

The droning of an airplane engine and especially the beating of a helicopter rotor will be detected by whales near the surface.

— Do not descend lower than 450 metres (1,500 feet) from the water.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICULAR SPECIES AND AREAS

Because of whales' distinctive habits, problems related to the observation of certain species, and the geographic or oceanographic features of some areas, special precautions must sometimes be taken.

BRITISH COLUMBIA: KILLER WHALES OF THE ROBSON BIGHT ECOLOGIAL RESERVE

This reserve was created to protect a portion of the killer whale's natural habitat for research purposes. The following rules apply when watching this species:

— keep more than 300 metres (1,000 feet) from the whales. Anyone wishing to observe whales at closer range within the reserve must obtain a permit from the co-ordinator of the Ecologial Reserves Unit, 1019 Wharf Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 2Y9, (604) 387-1859. Outside the reserve, killer whales may be approached to within 100 metres without a permit;

— do not approach whales head-on, as the whales will disperse;

— be conscious of how your actions will affect the whales and avoid doing anything that will disturb or harass them.

QUEBEC: BELUGAS IN THE ST. LAWRENCE ESTUARY

The beluga population of the St. Lawrence Estuary has been designated an "endangered" population by COSEWIC* and strict measures for its protection are warranted. Do not try to approach belugas. If you are involuntarily near a pod, follow the general rules and guidelines noted above, as well as these additional precautions:

— do not allow your boat to drift toward the animals. Keeping your speed down, use your motor to maintain a distance of 300 metres (1000 feet);

— be constantly on the lookout to ensure you are not breaking up pods or separating females from their young.

The Beluga Protection Regulations under the Fisheries Act prohibit beluga hunting in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, St. Lawrence River and Saguenay River or their tidal tributaries. The Regulations also prohibit the willful disturbance of belugas.

** COSEWIC: Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.*

NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA: NORTH AMERICAN RIGHT WHALES IN THE BAY OF FUNDY AREA

In addition to the rorquals, dolphins and porpoises that frequent this area, right whales also visit during summer months.

By the end of the 19th century, the right whale had been hunted to the verge of extinction. Today, even though it has long been a protected species, the population is still small.

Please note that you should be very careful while observing whales of this species. Remember that they are relatively slow-moving and avoid doing anything that might interfere with their activities or injure them.

In addition to the general guidelines listed above, the following special instruction should be observed when watching right whales:

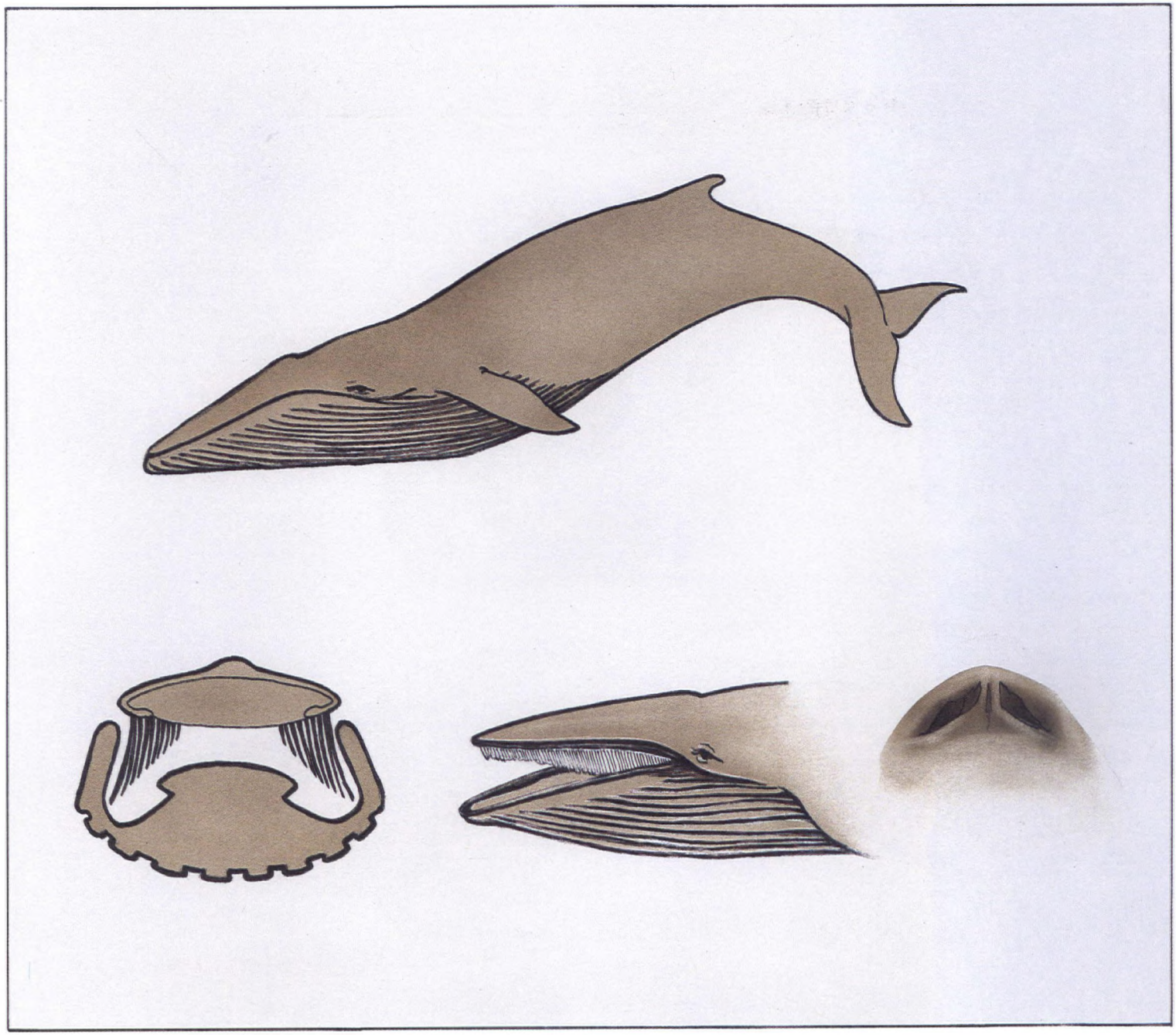
— *never approach the animals at a speed exceeding 4 knots.*

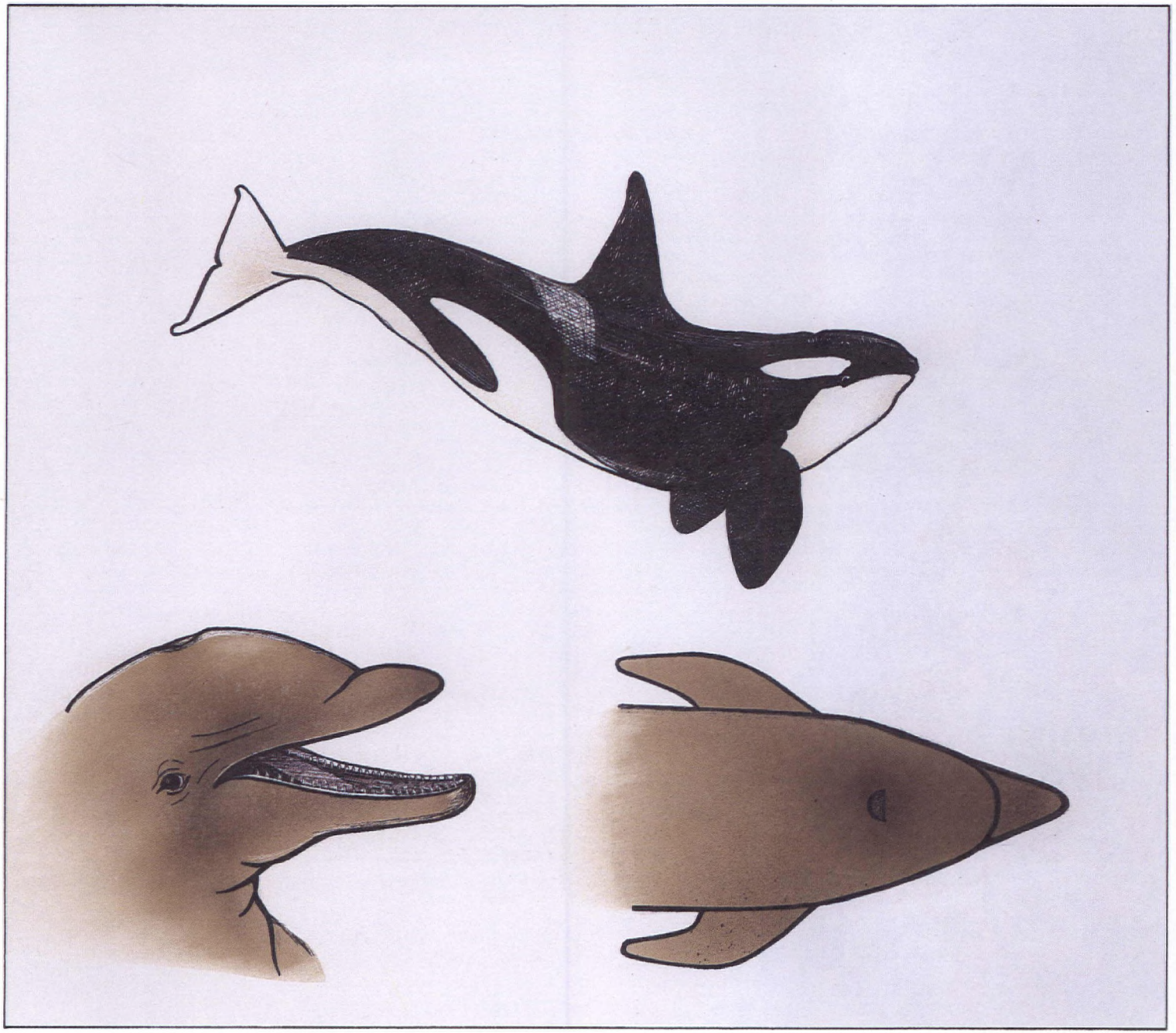
DISTINGUISHING WHALE GROUPS

The numerous species of cetaceans that live in the oceans are divided into two main groups: baleen whales or Mysticeti, such as the blue whale, and toothed whales or Odontoceti, such as the beluga.

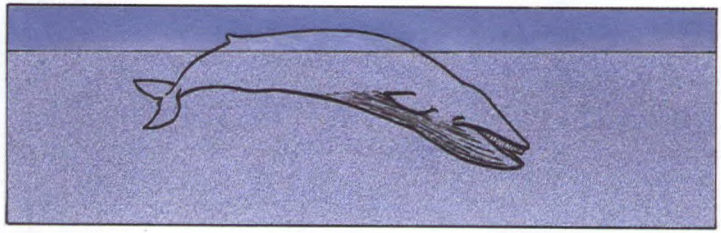
Baleen whales have paired blowholes and series of baleen plates instead of teeth. These are horny, triangular plates with fringed inner edges attached to the upper jaw. The plates act like a sieve, allowing water to filter through and trapping the tiny animals on which the whales feed. The rorquals (blue whale, fin whale, sei whale, minke whale and humpback whale) have expandable throat grooves, while the right whales (right whale and bowhead whale) have no throat grooves at all. The gray whale has deep folds instead of throat grooves.

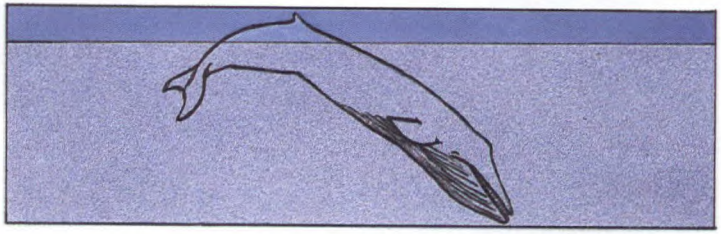
Toothed whales have simple conical teeth used to catch fish and squid, which they swallow whole. Toothed whales have only one external blowhole whereas baleen whales have two.

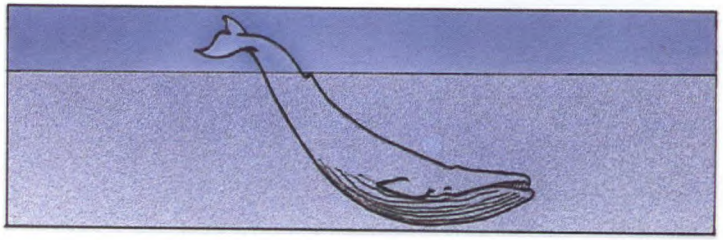




IDENTIFYING SPECIES FROM WHAT CAN BE SEEN OUT OF THE WATER







Whales are most often identified from the parts of their bodies that are visible out of the water when they come up to breathe. Features that can usually be observed include colouring; details of pigmentation; the presence or absence, shape, relative size of the dorsal fin; the position of the dorsal fin determined relatively of the time between its appearance and the time the head breaks the surface; and the shape of the caudal fin (flukes), if it is exposed in sounding dive.

Whales' other surface activities also make it possible to observe various parts of their bodies. These activities include ***spyhopping*** *(raising the head up to view the aerial surroundings) by most species;* ***breaching*** *(jumping out of the water) by species such as the humpback whale, minke whale, gray whale and dolphins;* ***lobtailing*** *(beating the surface of the water with their flukes) by species such as the humpback whale and the right whale; and* ***flippering*** *(slapping the surface of the water with their fins), often observed in species such as the humpback whale. While the reasons for these forms of behaviour are not all understood, proposed explanations include the need to make noise to announce their presence; play; movements associated with feeding or, in the case of dolphins, travelling, and removal of parasites from their bodies.*

COMPARISON OF VARIOUS WHALE SPECIES OBSERVED FROM THE SURFACE

The sketches show the portions of the body visible above the surface during a breathing sequence, generally viewed from the side. However, the sketches of the flukes may represent oblique or rear views. Remember that the shape of the dorsal fin and flukes, as well as markings, can vary considerably among individuals of the same species. You may also encounter specimens of the current year's young or juveniles as well as adults.

In calm weather, the height and shape of a whale's spout or blow can also help to identify some species or to spot distant whales. The blow results from the condensation of the warm, humid air exhaled by the whale.

Finally, it should be noted that respiration sequence characteristics are less useful for identifying toothed whales since their blow is seldom seen and body movement during respirations is more rapid. Colouring, and the shape and relative size of the dorsal fin are the key identification features for these animals, except when they jump from the water and display their entire bodies.

BLUE WHALE
(Balaenoptera musculus)

Canadian status
A rare whale (COSEWIC*).

World status
Protected since 1966 (IWC**).

Habitat
GENERAL: in offshore areas but sometimes in shallow waters.
SUMMER: arctic and subarctic waters, except for a local population in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
WINTER: temperate waters.

Feeding
Small crustacea (krill) exclusively; in summer, eats up to 4 metric tons of krill a day.

Reproduction
Mating season: winter
Gestation period: 10-12 months
Calving season: around April
One young every 2-3 years
Lactation period: 7 to 8 months

Behaviour or surface activity
Travels singly, in pairs or in small groups. Blows up to 15 times before sounding; submerges 5 to 20 minutes.

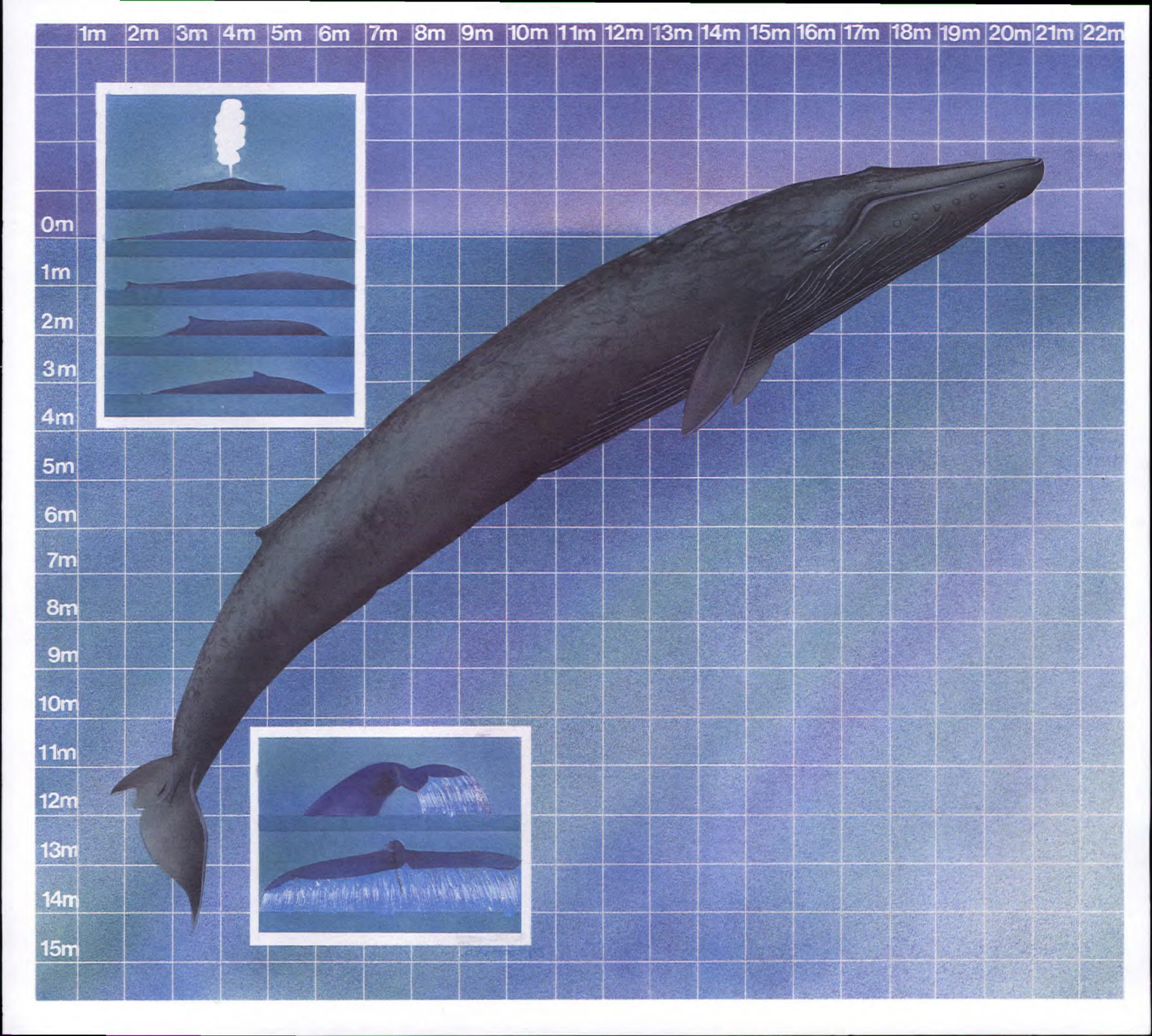
Before the dorsal fin can be seen, the head has submerged and moved underwater for a few seconds.

RORQUALS
Balaenopteridae

Swimming speed
Normal: 10-14 knots
Maximum: 18-20 knots

Note
The blue whale is the largest of all animals living or extinct. The colour pattern seems to be useful in identifying individual whales. Pictures of the back with the dorsal fin are collected for that purpose.

* *Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada*
** *International Whaling Commission*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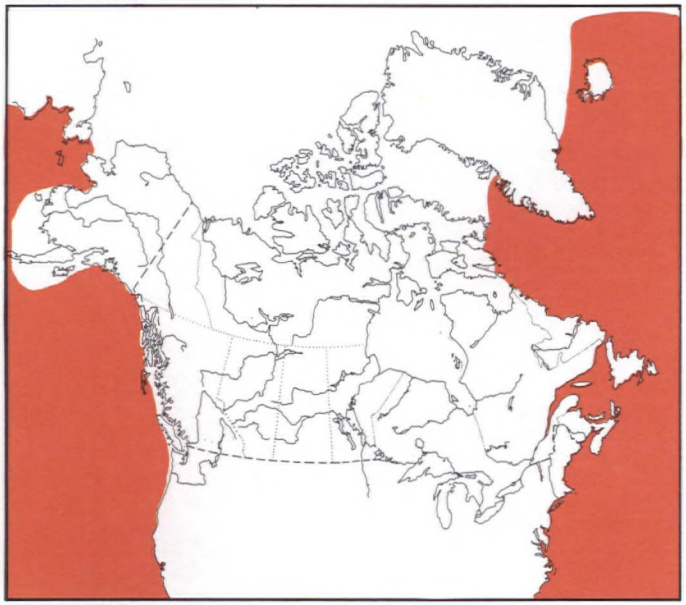
FIN WHALE
(Balaenoptera physalus)

RORQUALS
Balaenopteridae

Status
The North Pacific populations and some North Atlantic stocks are protected from any commercial exploitation (IWC*). This species, as all others, has not been exploited in Canadian waters since 1972.

Habitat
GENERAL: in arctic, subarctic and temperate seas with preference for temperate seas; inshore and offshore.
SUMMER: reaches Gulf of St. Lawrence and Vancouver Island areas around March-April.

Feeding
Diversity of small fish and crustacea.



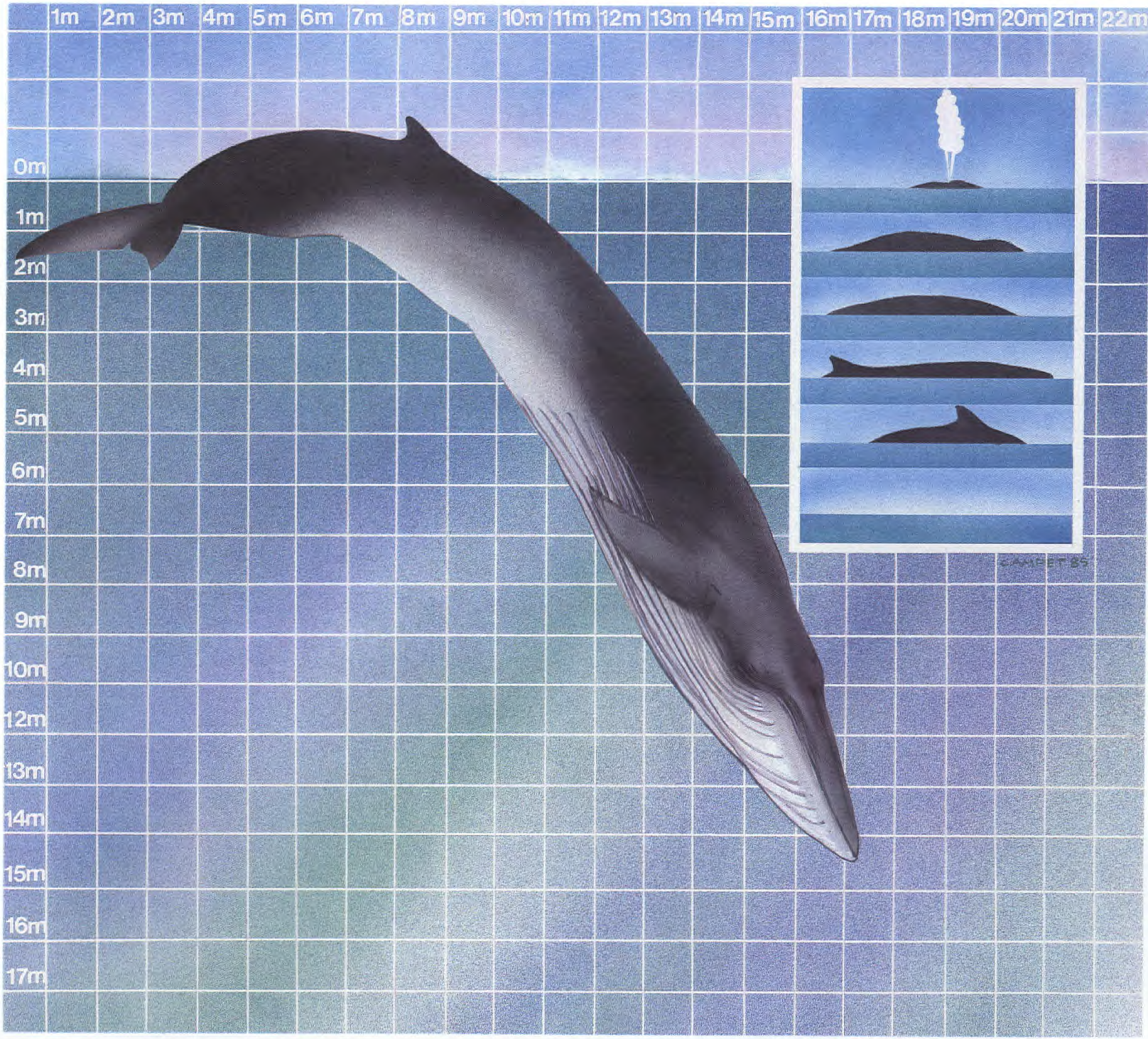
Reproduction
Mating season: winter
Gestation period: 11-12 months
Calving season: winter
One young every 2-3 years
Lactation period: about 7 months

Behaviour or surface activity
Travels singly or in pods of 2 to 12. Blows 5 to 8 times and submerges 4 to 20 minutes.

Swimming speed
Normal: 10-15 knots
Maximum: 20-30 knots

Note
The fin whale is among the fastest balaenopteridae.

* *International Whaling Commission*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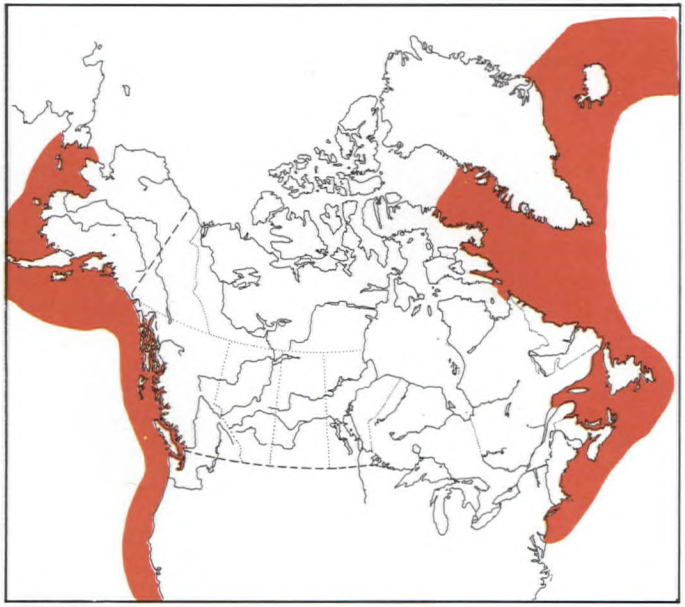
HUMPBACK WHALE
(Megaptera novaeangliae)

Canadian status
Considered threatened (COSEWIC*).

World status
Protected since 1966 (IWC**).

Habitat
GENERAL: all oceans, usually in inshore waters and continental shelf.
SUMMER: migrates to cold waters for feeding.
WINTER: migrates to warm waters for calving.

Feeding
Diversity of small fish (capelin, herring, sand lance) and krill.



RORQUALS
Balaenopteridae

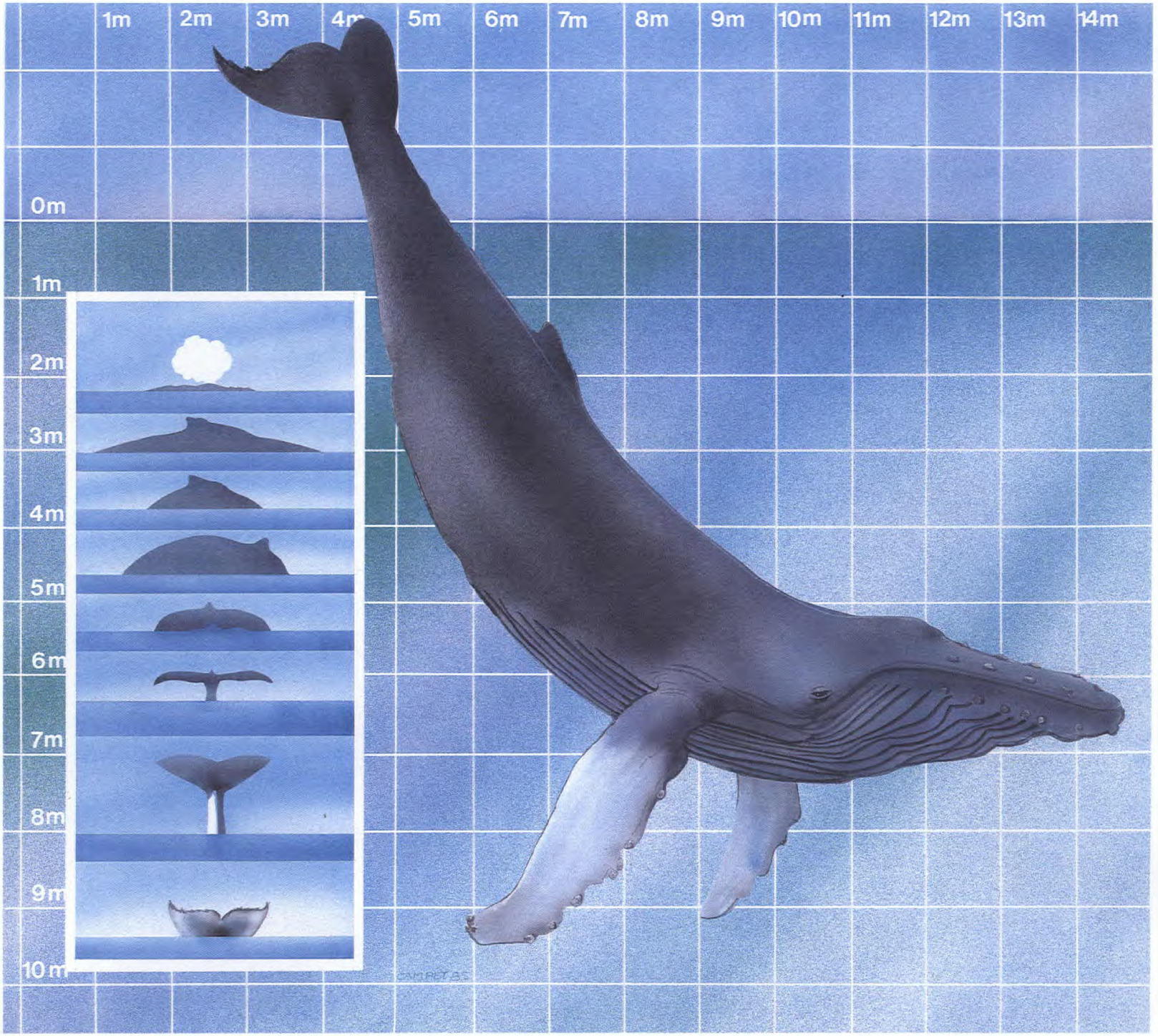
Reproduction
Mating season: winter
Gestation period: 11-12 months
Calving season: winter
One young every 2-3 years
Lactation period: 10 1/2 to 12 months

Behaviour or surface activity
Travels singly or in herds of 2 to 8. Blows 5 to 10 times; submerges for 10 to 20 minutes. This whale is well known for its acrobatics. Breaches, spyhops, flukes and flipper can slap the water.

Swimming speed
Normal: 3-5 knots
Maximum: 9-10 knots

Note
The humpback whale, especially the male during reproductive season, has a complex vocal pattern that is changing from year to year. This is the so-called "singing whale" whose song has been compared to birds' songs. The colour pattern of the ventral side of the flukes is useful in identifying individual specimens and studying their local migrations and distribution. A catalogue has been published listing identified whales.

* *Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada*
** *International Whaling Commission*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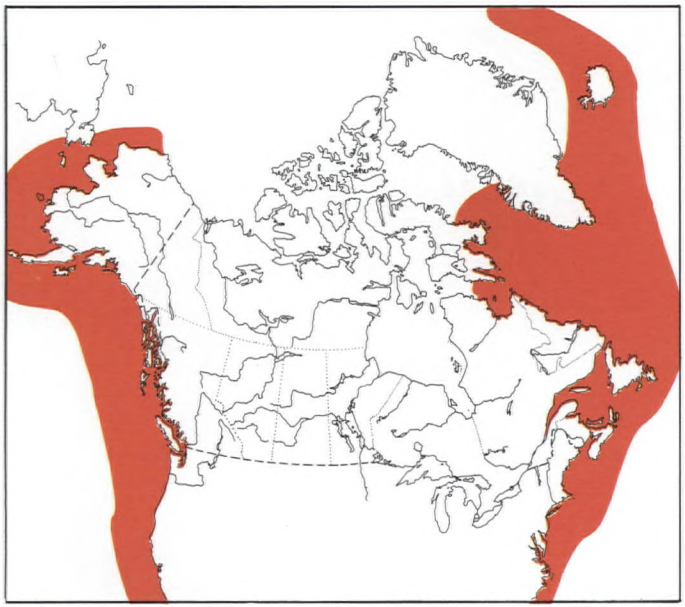
MINKE WHALE
(Balaenoptera acutorostrata)

RORQUALS
Balaenopteridae

Status
Some north Pacific and some north Atlantic stocks are protected (IWC*).

Habitat
GENERAL: arctic, subarctic and temperate waters; more common inshore.
SUMMER: ventures into bays and estuaries.

Feeding
Varied diet including a diversity of small fish (capelin, herring, sand lance), planktonic crustacea and squid.

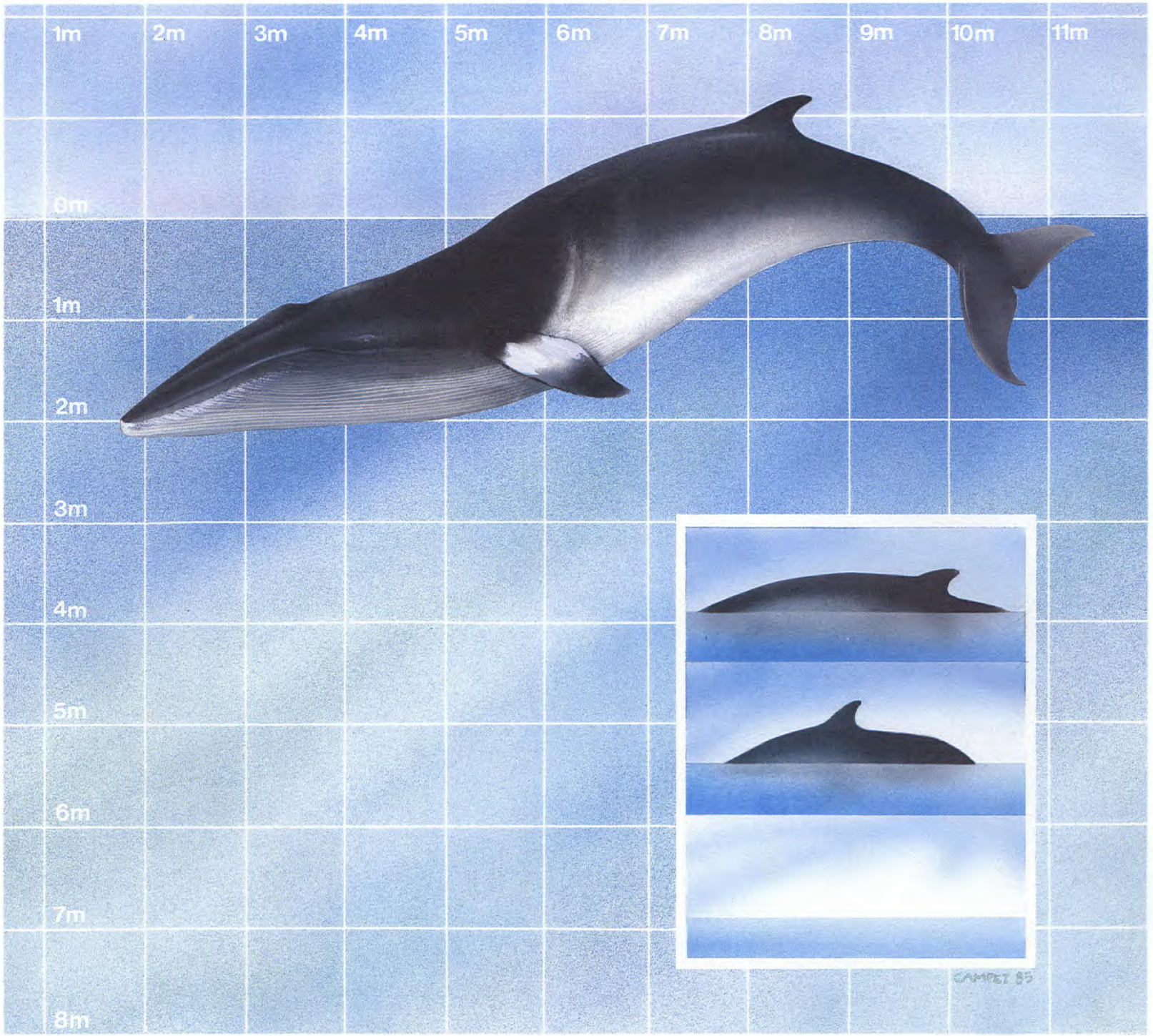


Reproduction
Mating season: December to May
Gestation period: 10 months
Calving season: between October and March
One young every one to 2 years
Lactation period: 4 to 5 months

Behaviour or surface activity
Usually travels singly. This whale is active at sea surface and it can be seen breaching. Sometimes curious and attracted to boats. Blows several times; head surfaces first and may come out of the water; dorsal fin is exposed almost simultaneously with the top of head.

Swimming speed
Normal: 6-8 knots
Maximum: 20 knots

* *International Whaling Commission*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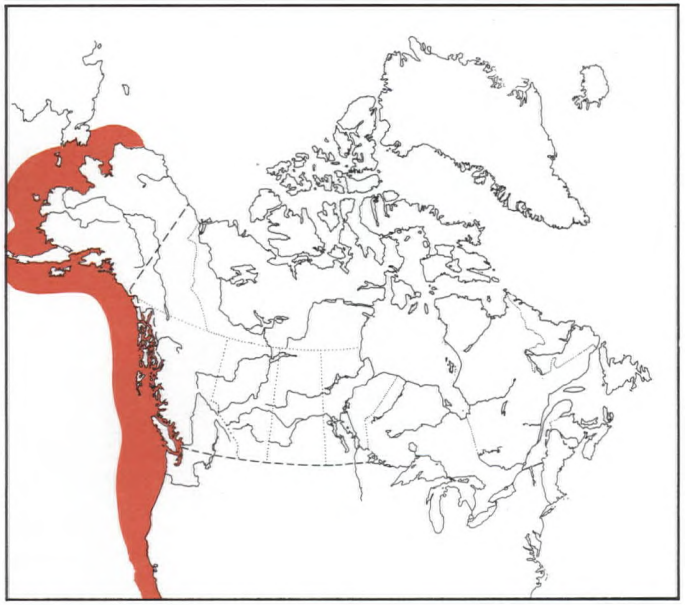
PACIFIC GRAY WHALE
(Eschrichtius robustus)

GRAY WHALES
Eschrichtidae

Status
Protected since 1946 (IWC*) when believed near extinction. Has increased significantly since.

Habitat
GENERAL: temperate waters; close to shore, continental shelf.
SPRING: migrates along Canada's west coast towards cold waters to feed.
FALL: migrates towards southern California and Mexico to calve. Travelling as many as 16,000 km annually, its migration is the longest undertaken by any mammal.



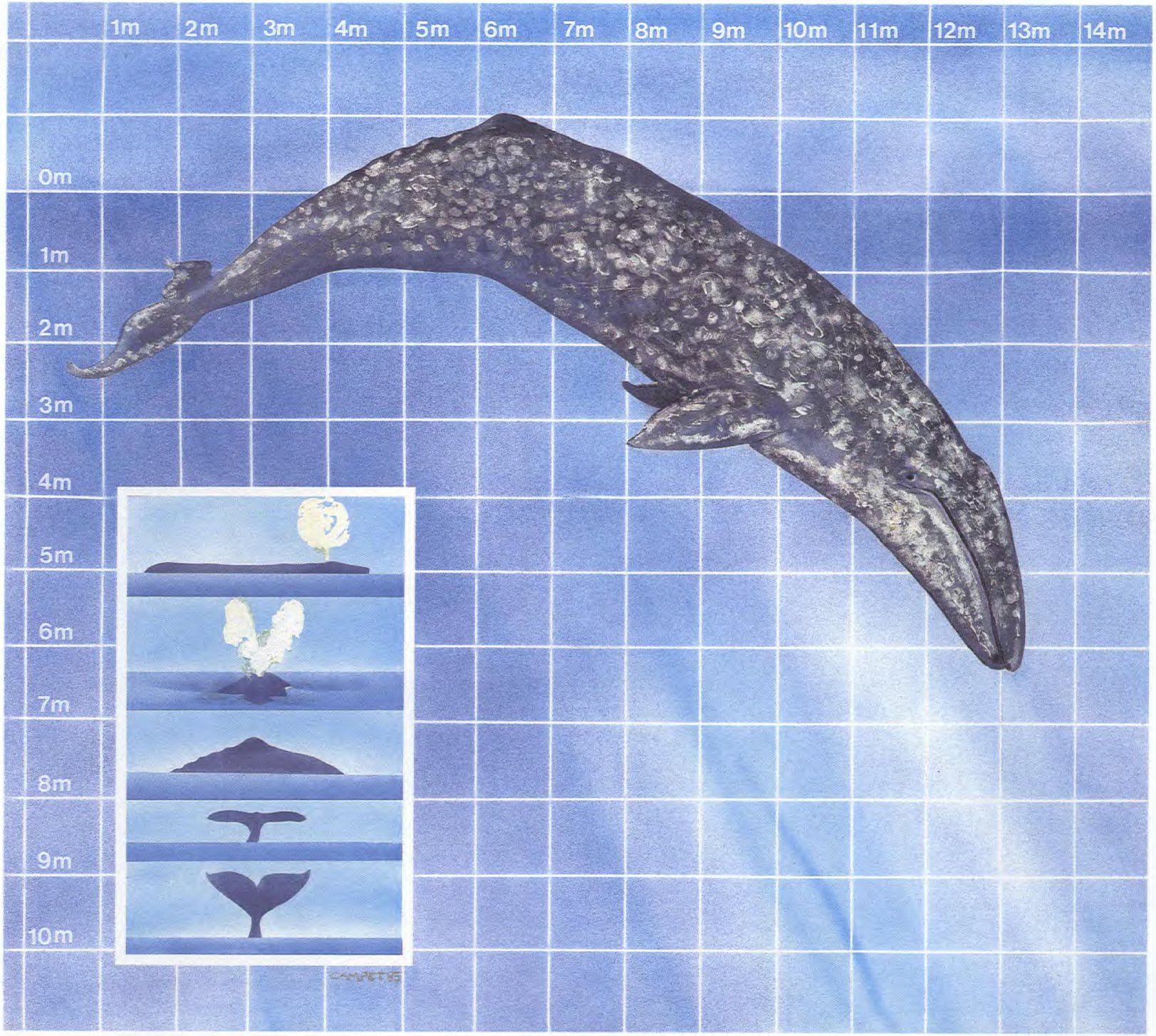
Feeding
Diversity of bottom animals (amphipods, gasteropods, worms and small crabs) and some pelagic crustacea.

Reproduction
Mating season: December to January
Gestation period: 12 months
Calving season: December or January, in lagoon's shallow water
One young every 2 years
Lactation period: 5 to 6 months

Behaviour or surface activity
Usually travels singly but feeds in small pods. Blows 4 to 5 times, makes 4 or 5 quick shallow dives and submerges for about 5 minutes. The females actively protect their calves against enemies.

Swimming speed
Normal: 2-4 knots
Maximum: 10 knots

* *International Whaling Commission*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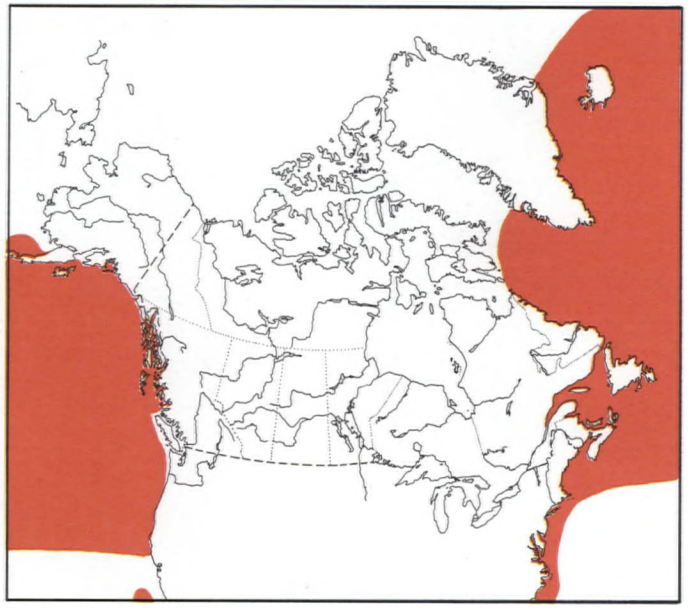
RIGHT WHALE
(Eubalaena glacialis)

Canadian status
Endangered (COSEWIC*)

World status
Extremely uncommon, protected since 1930 (IWC**).

Habitat
Temperate seas, often inshore in shallow waters.

Feeding
Pelagic crustacea.



RIGHT WHALES
Balaenidae

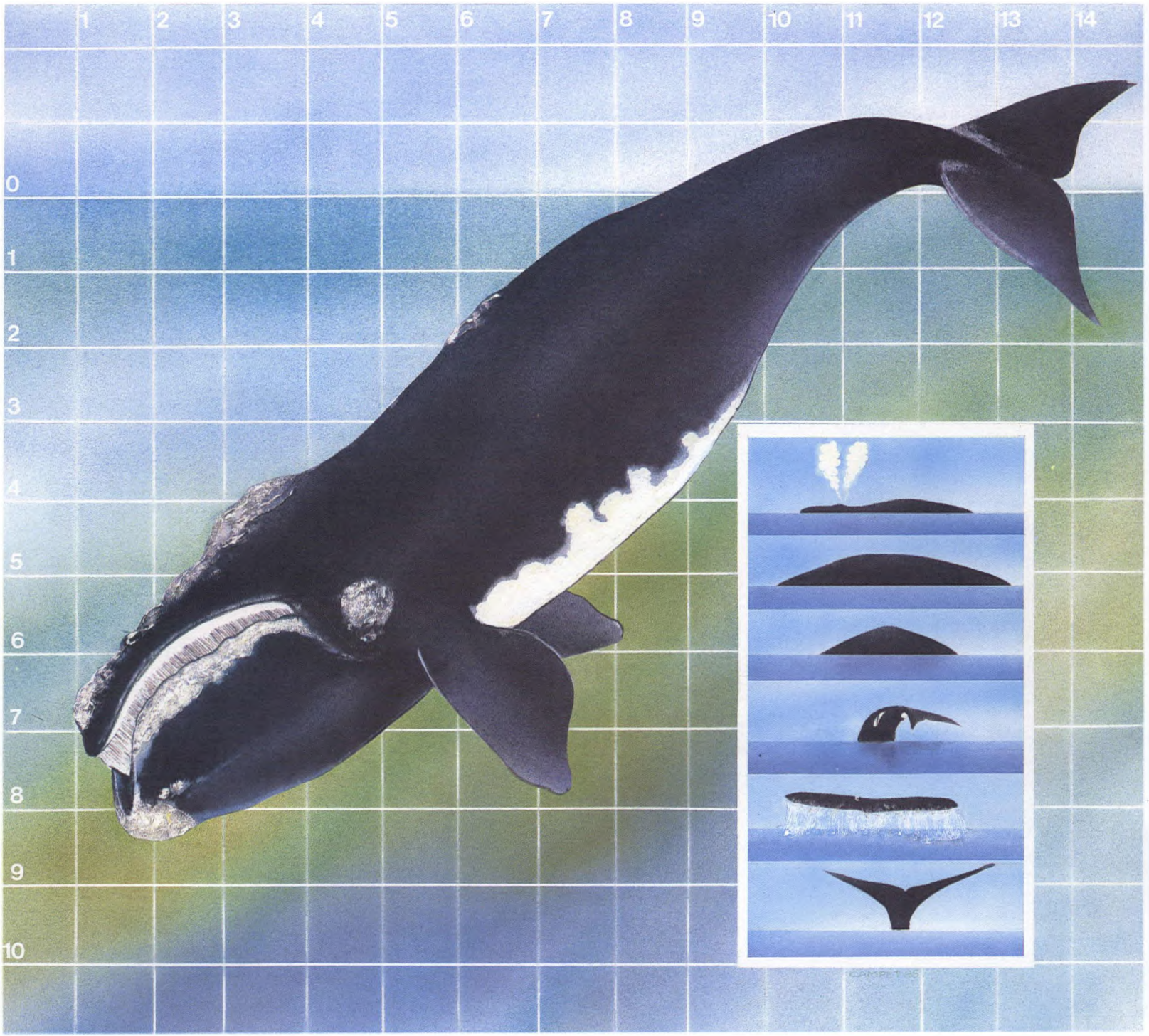
Reproduction (not well known)
Gestation period: 11-12 months
One young every 3 years or more
Lactation period: 6 to 12 months

Behaviour or surface activity
Travels singly, in pairs on in small pods. Blows 5 to 6 times, submerges 3 to 12 minutes.

Swimming speed
Normal: 2 knots
Maximum: 5 knots

Note
The head callosities are useful in identifying individual whales.

* *Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada*
** *International Whaling Commission*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BOWHEAD WHALE
(Balaena mysticetus)

Canadian status
Endangered species (COSEWIC*)

World status
Protected from commercial whaling (IWC**).

Habitat
Arctic and subarctic waters in association with pack ice often in shallow areas.

Feeding
Small crustacea or bottom animals.

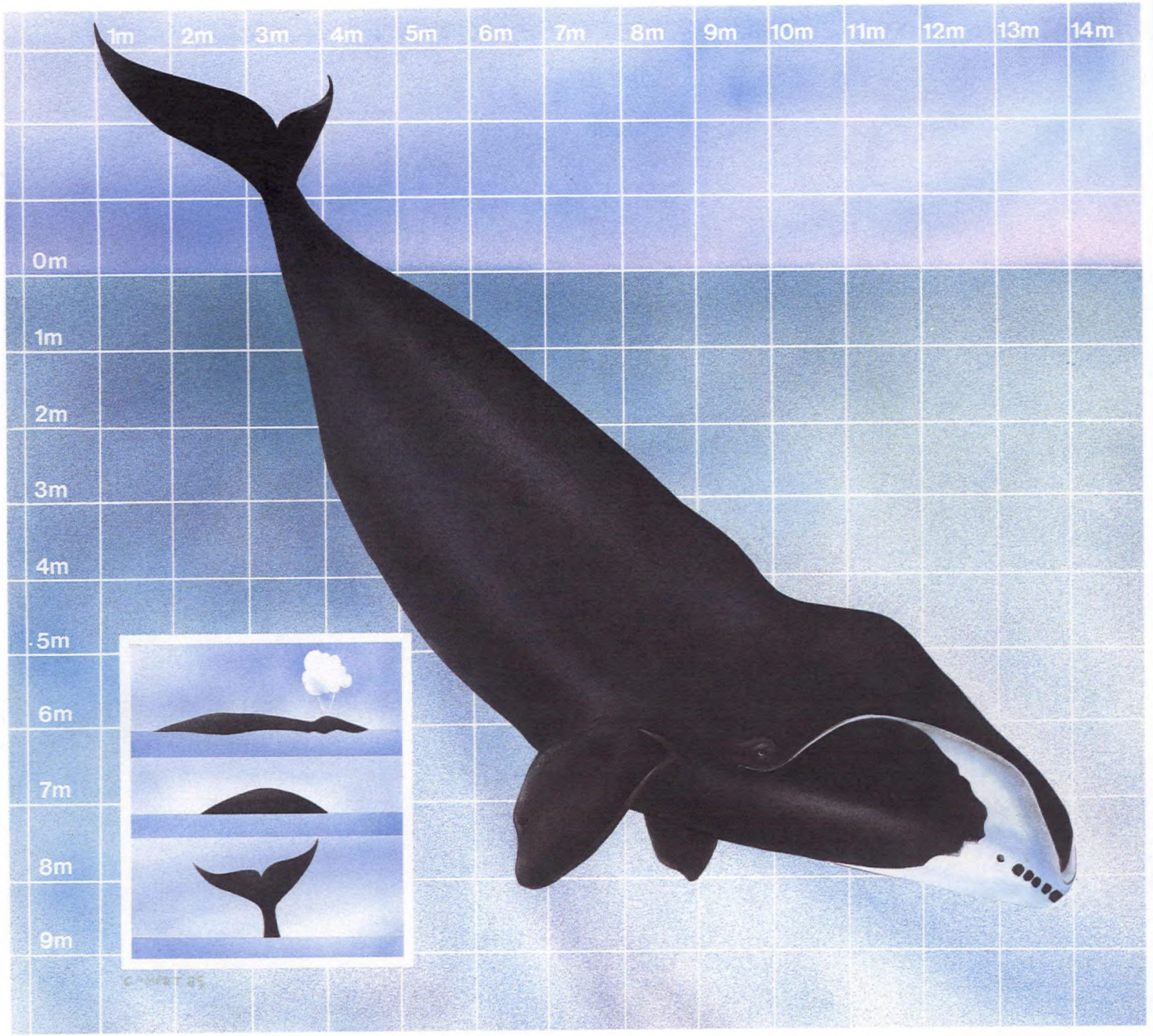
RIGHT WHALES
Balaenidae

Reproduction (not well known)
Mating season: spring
Gestation period: 10-12 months
Calving season: March to August
One young every 2-3 years
Lactation period: about one year

Behaviour or surface activity
Travels singly, in pairs or in pods of up to 50.
Blows 7 to 9 times, submerges 5 to 20 minutes.
Slow-moving and easily alarmed.

Swimming speed
Normal: 6 knots

* *Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada*
** *International Whaling Commission*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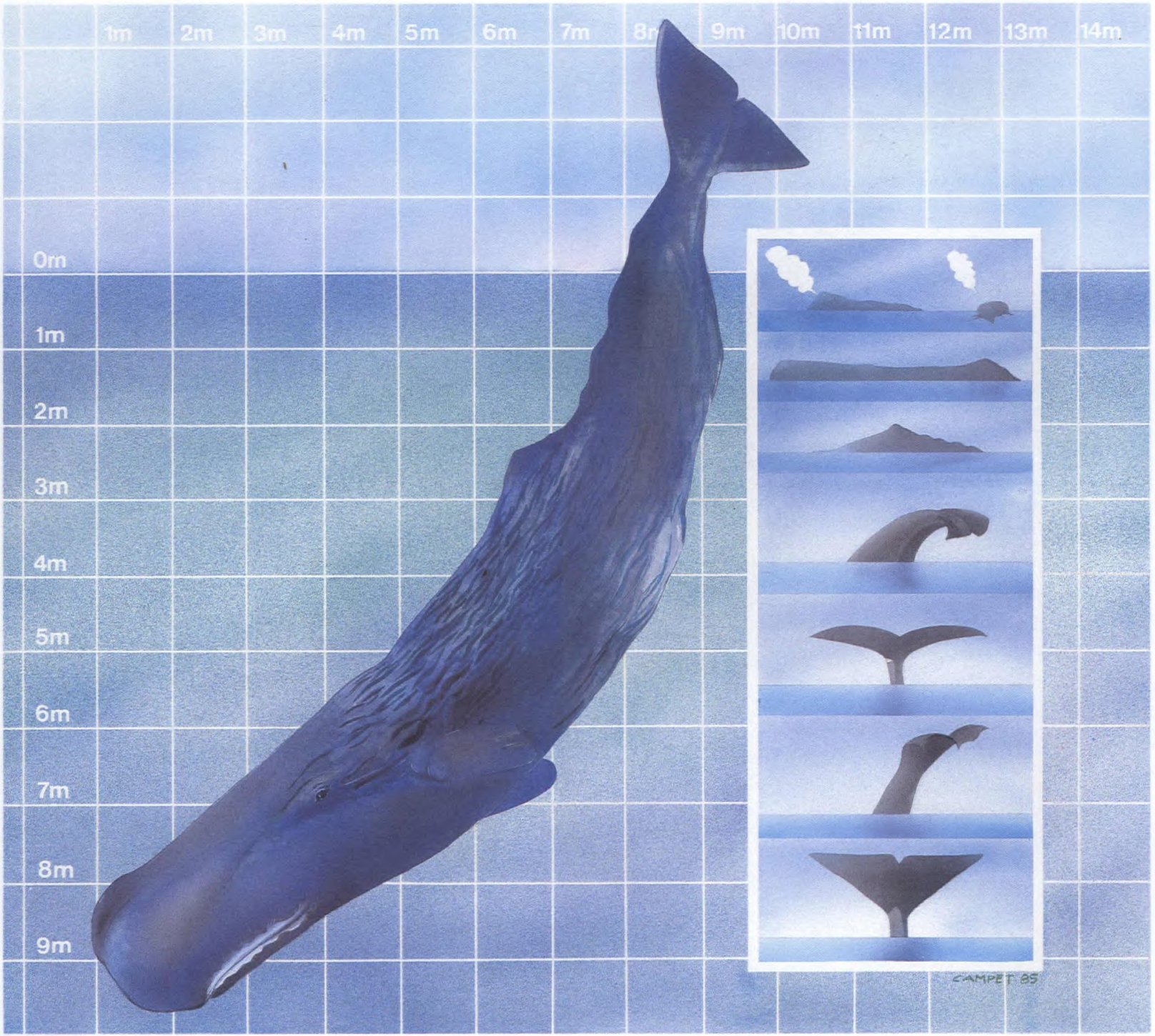
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SPERM WHALE
(Physeter macrocephalus)

Status
All southern hemisphere, North Pacific, North Atlantic and Northern Indian Ocean stocks are protected (zero quotas) from commercial exploitation (IWC*).

Habitat
GENERAL: all oceans of the world but more common in temperate and tropical waters. Usually offshore.
SUMMER: bulls travel northward in loose groups.

Feeding
Mostly squid but may also eat a variety of fish.

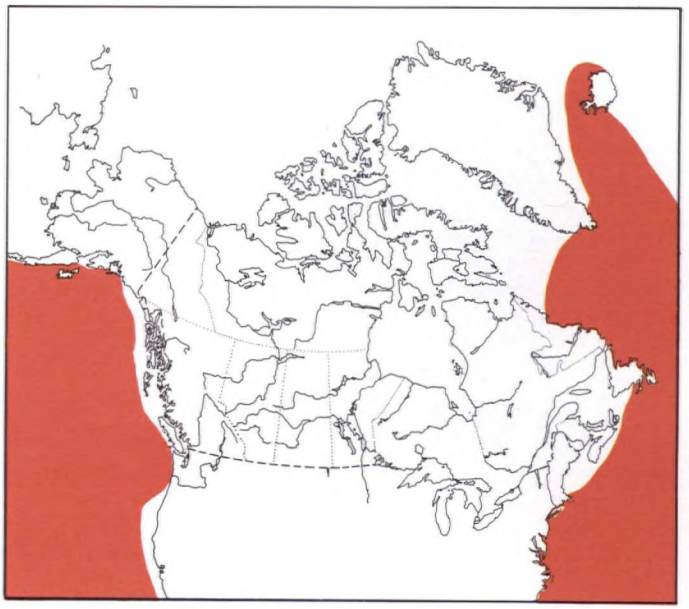
Reproduction
Mating season: January to July;
peak in April and May
Gestation period: 16-17 months
Calving season: May to November
One young every 3-4 years
Lactation period: 2 years

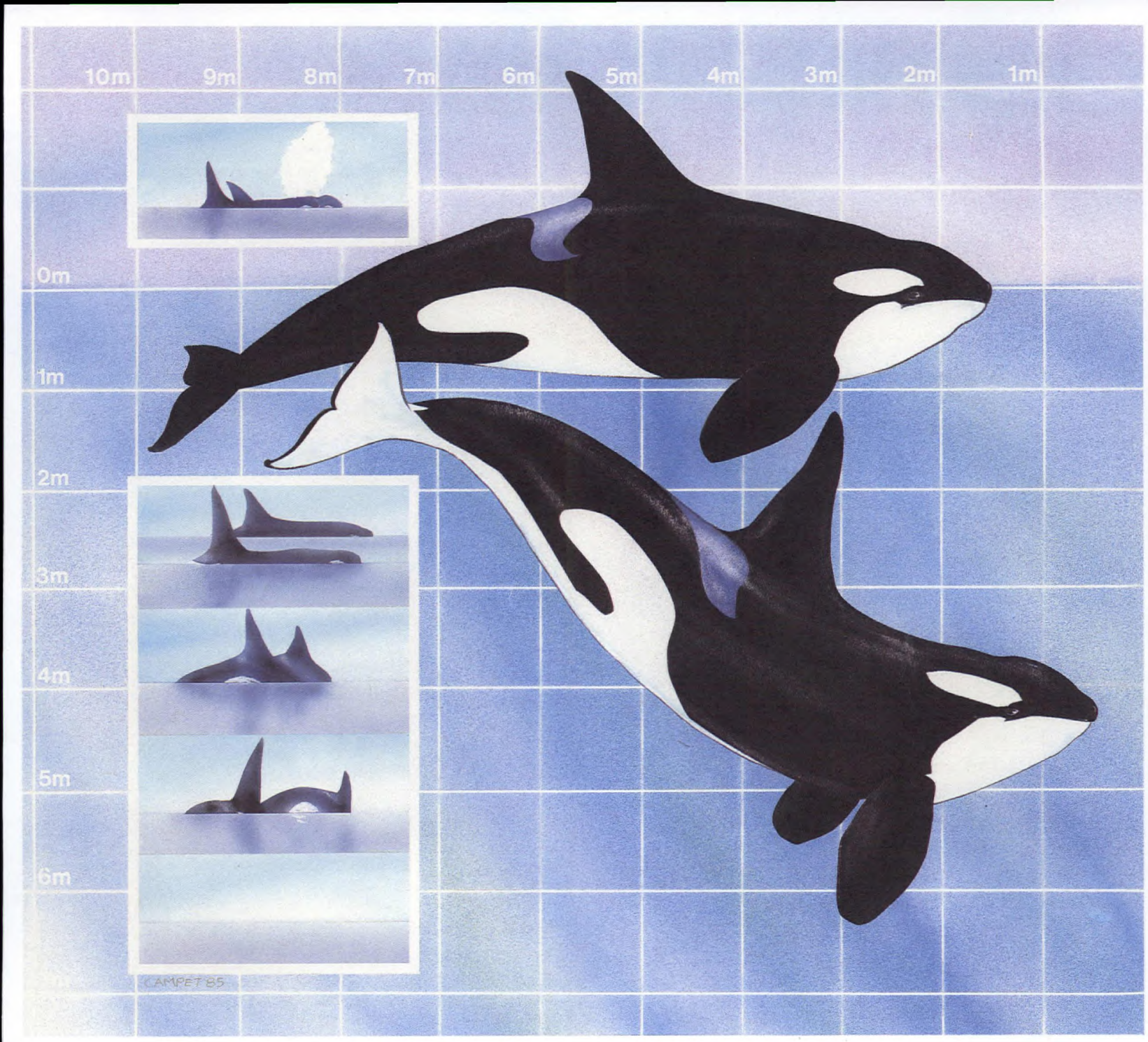
Behaviour or surface activity
Lies still on surface after deep dive for about 10 minutes, makes 50 short and regular blows; submerges up to 70 minutes.

Swimming speed
Normal: 3-4 knots
Maximum: 12 knots

SPERM WHALES
Physeteridae

* *International Whaling Commission. This protection does not apply to the western division of the North Pacific for the government of Japan which, under the terms of the Convention, have objected.*

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KILLER WHALE
(Orcinus orca)

Habitat
Lives in all oceans. Comes close to shore in pursuit of its prey.

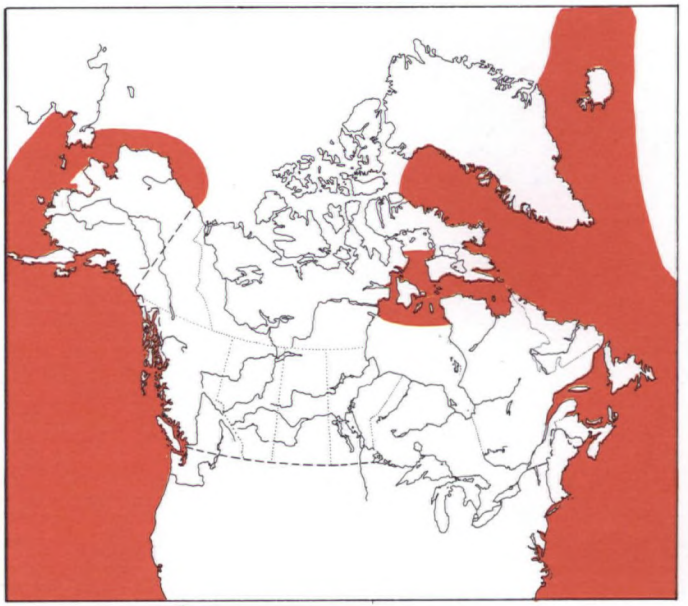
Feeding
Has a diversified diet of fish, seals, dolphins, porpoises, whales and even aquatic birds.

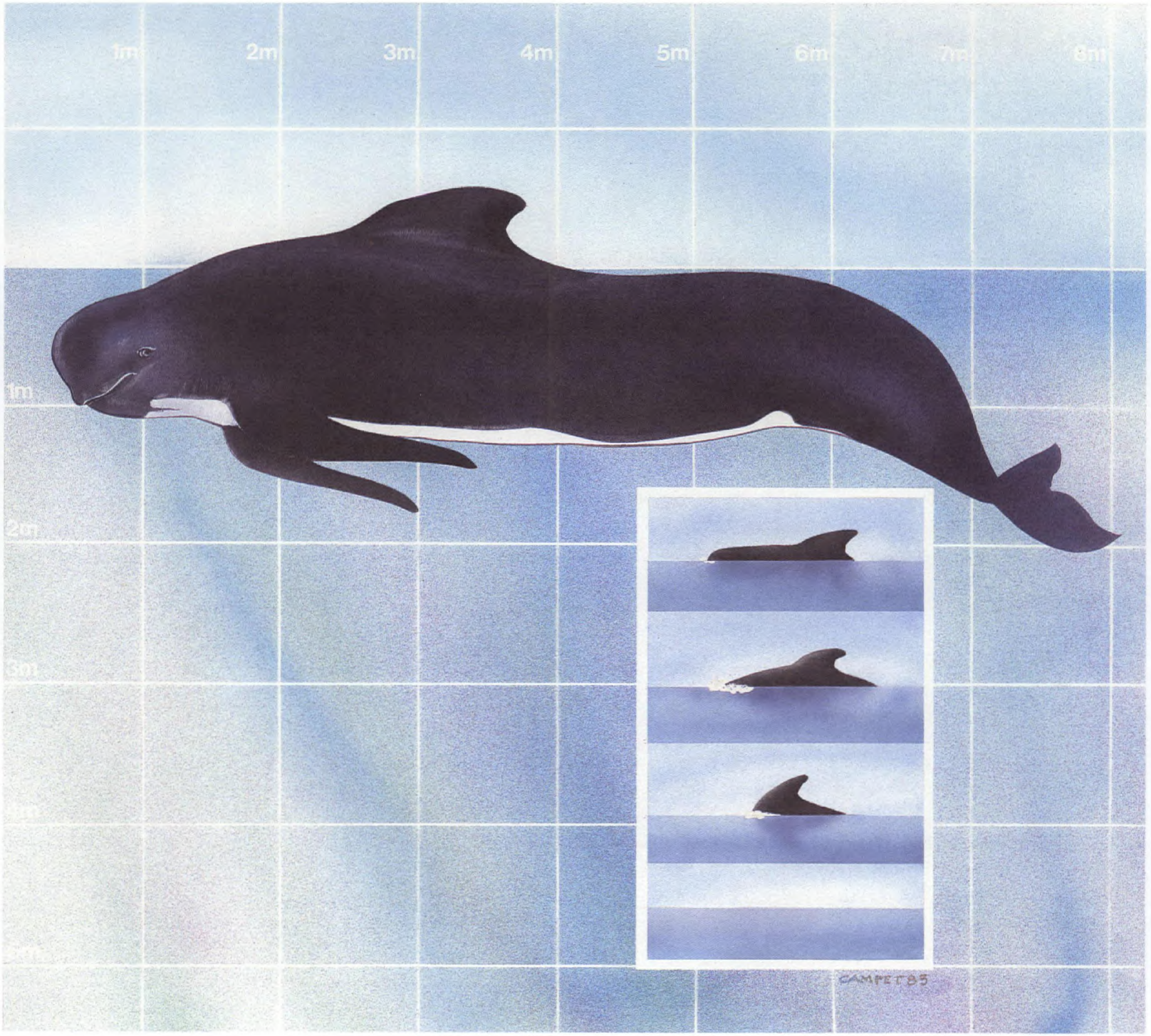
Reproduction
Gestation period: about 12 months or more
Lactation period: one year or more

Behaviour or surface activity
Travels in pods of up to 50. Makes 3 to 5 relatively inconspicuous blows, submerges 1 to 4 minutes. Breaches.

Swimming speed
Normal: 3-6 knots
Maximum: 25 knots

Note
Named for its ferocious feeding habits. Develops permanent group associations made up of males, females and young, in which communication evolves in a characteristic dialect. Many small pods often travel together. The shape of the grey saddle behind the dorsal fin, with particular scars or shape of that fin, helps in differentiating individuals. Inshore resident animals in British Columbia provide a unique opportunity to study these populations.

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LONG FINNED PILOT WHALE
(Globicephala melaena)

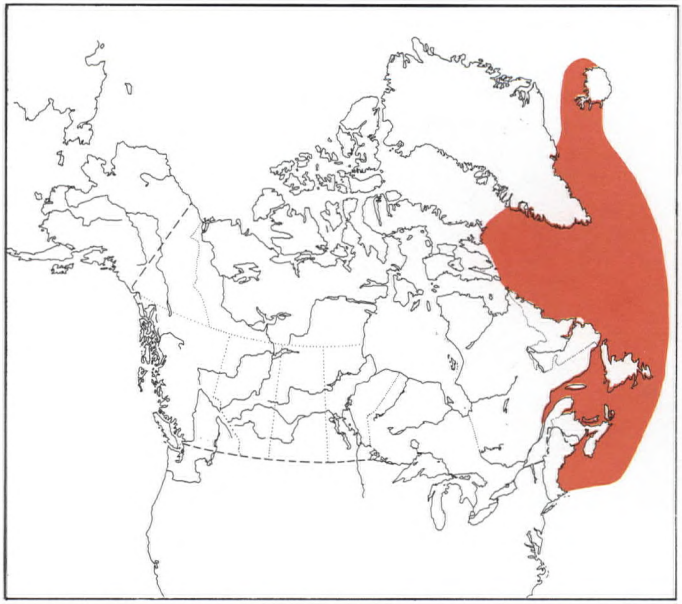
OCEAN DOLPHINS
Delphinidae

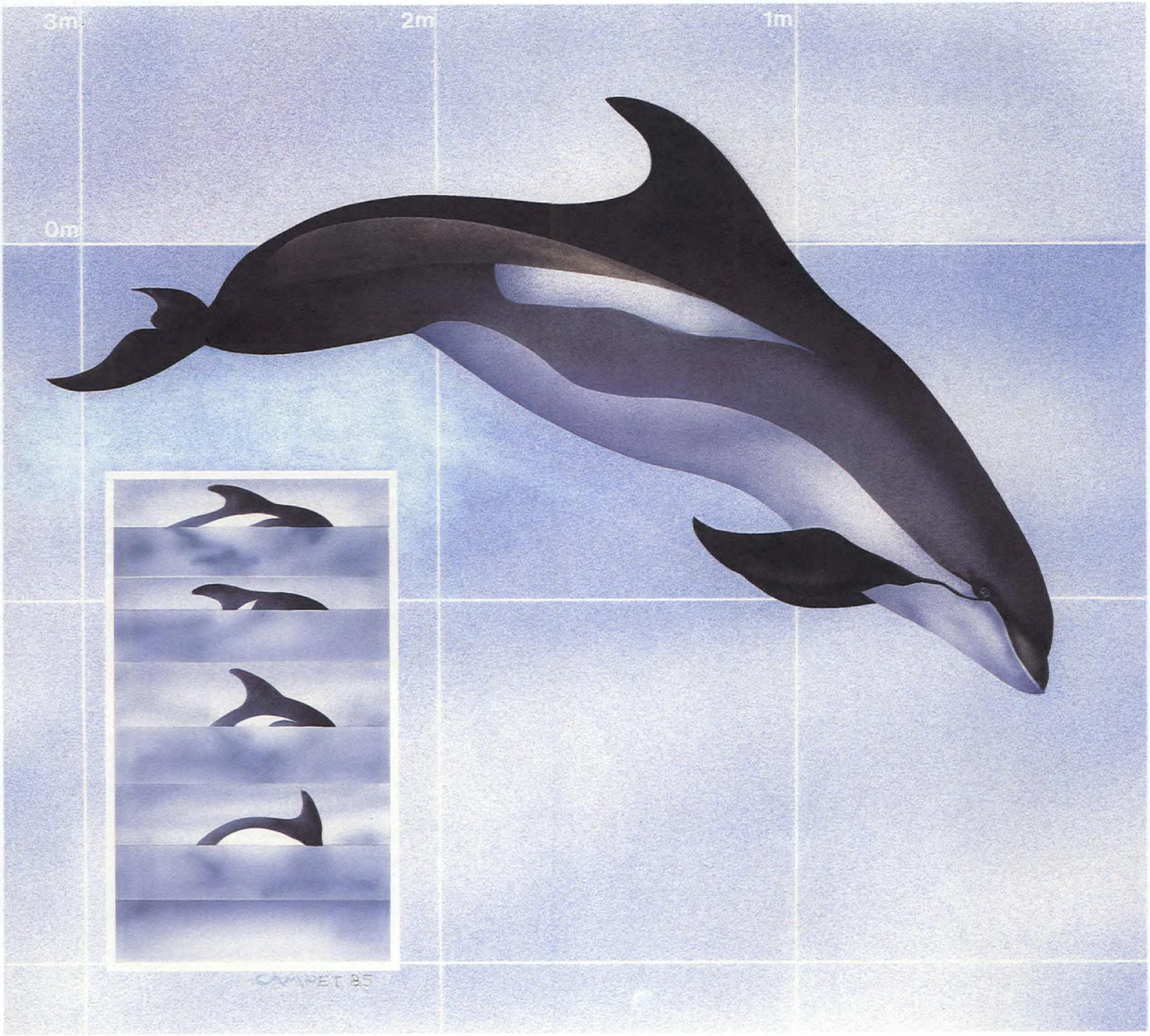
Habitat
GENERAL: subarctic or temperate waters; usually offshore
SUMMER: comes close to shore and bays.

Feeding
Squid, fish (cod, plaice), amphipods.

Reproduction
Mating season: April-May
Gestation period: Around 15 1/2 months
Calving season: all year but mostly from May to November
One young every 2-3 years
Lactation period: 21-22 months

Behaviour or surface activity
Travel sometimes in pods of 5 to 300 but inshore pods of 20 to 50 are more common. Makes several frequent blows, submerges for several minutes. Dives and blows as a group when herded. Does not often breach but frequently spyhops and lobtails.

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ATLANTIC WHITE-SIDED *DOLPHIN* *(Lagenorhynchus acutus)*

OCEAN DOLPHINS
Delphinidae

Habitat
GENERAL: subarctic and temperate waters; usually offshore.
SUMMER: comes in coastal areas.

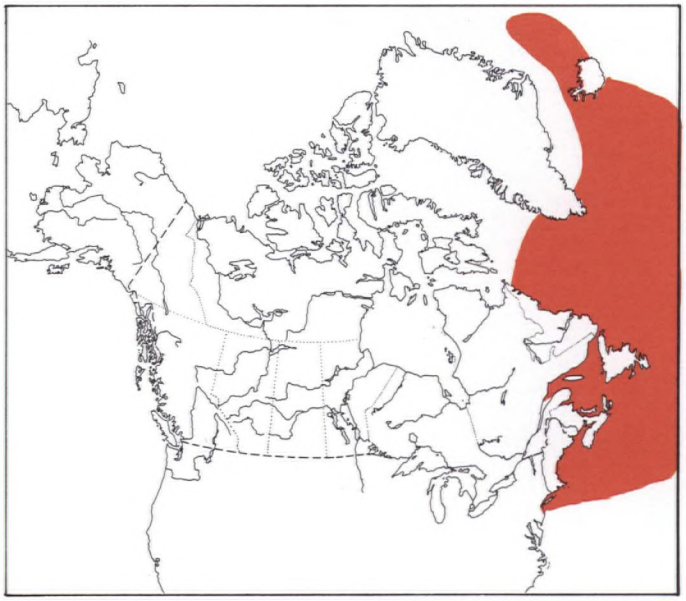
Feeding
Diversity of fish (herring, capelin, sand lance, salmonids, mackerel) shrimp and small squid.

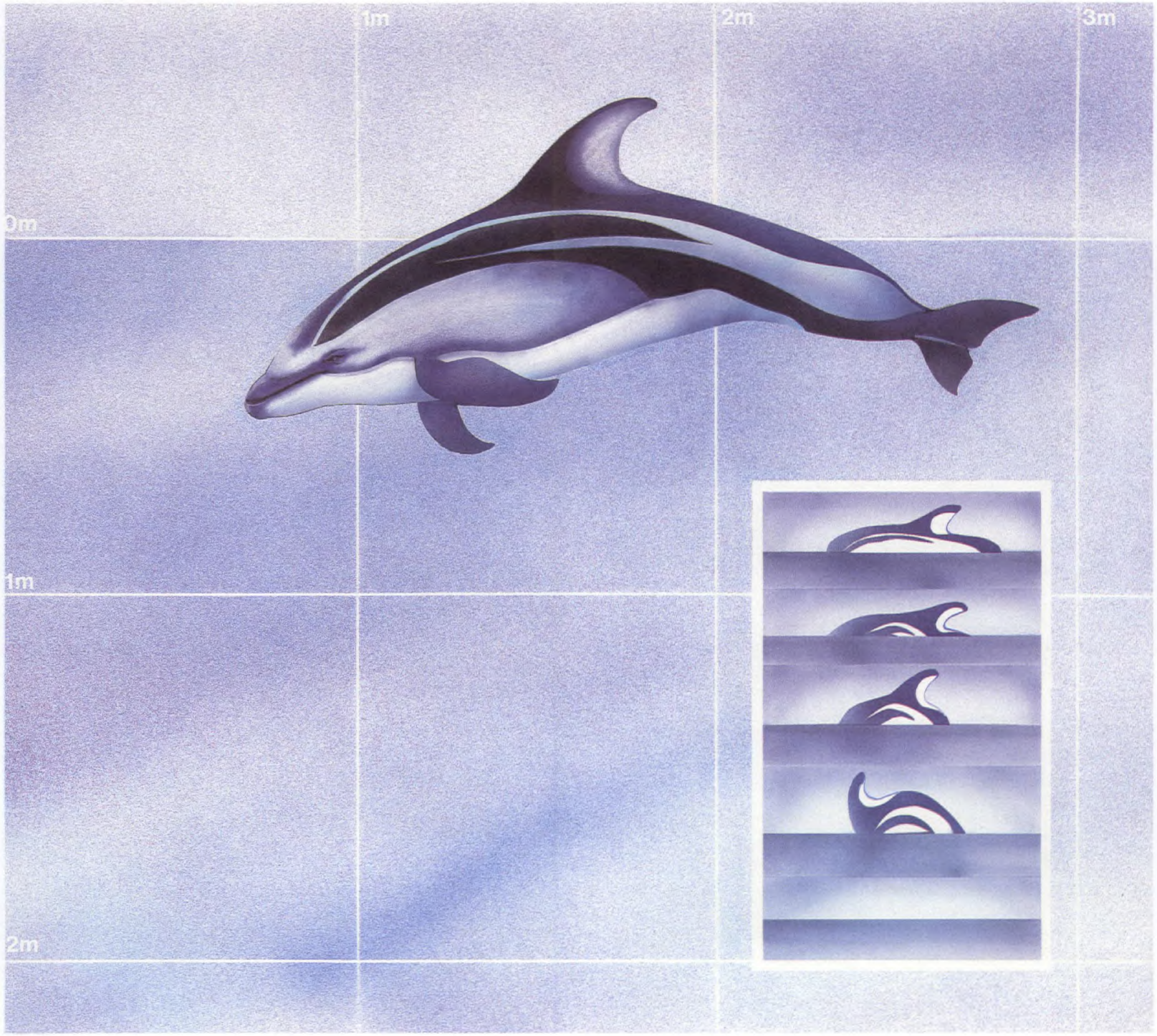
Reproduction
Mating season: summer and early fall
Gestation period: 10-11 months
Calving season: May to August
One young every 2-3 years
Lactation period: more than one year

Behaviour or surface activity
Sometimes seen in very large herds.
Frequent breaching.

Swimming speed
Normal: 15 knots
Maximum: 30-32 knots

Note
Of all Canadian cetaceans, this is the only species with a yellow or brownish patch.

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PACIFIC WHITE-SIDED DOLPHIN
(Lagenorhynchus obliquidens)

OCEAN DOLPHINS
Delphinidae

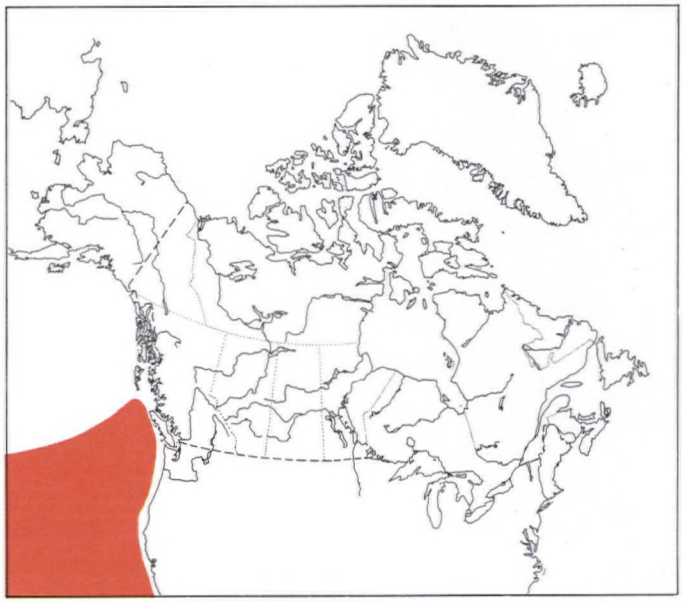
Habitat
GENERAL: subarctic and temperate waters
SUMMER AND FALL: offshore
WINTER AND SPRING: comes closer to shore

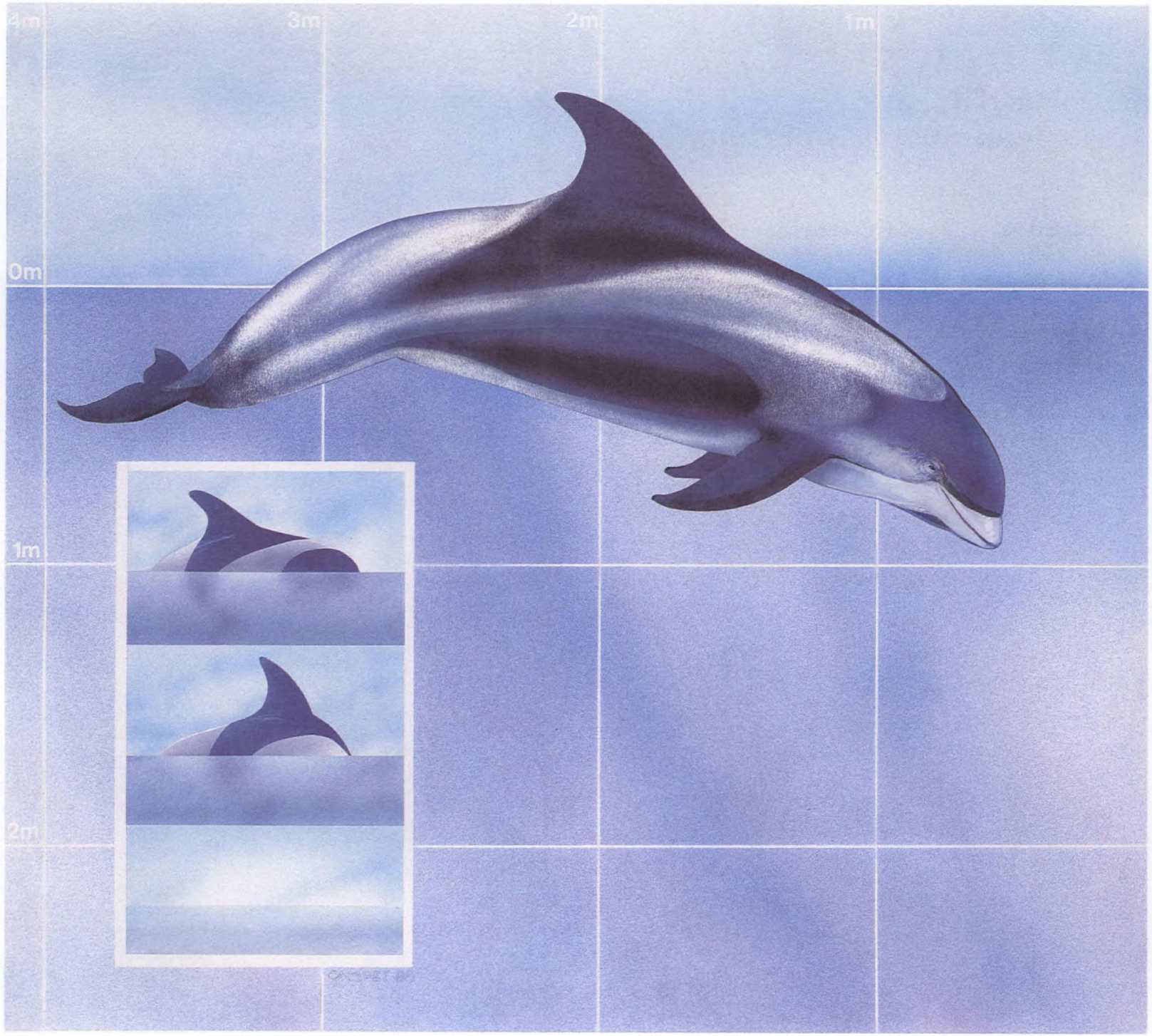
Feeding
Diversity of small fish and small squid.

Reproduction
Gestation period: 10-12 months
Calving season: summer — early fall

Behaviour or surface activity
Gregarious, gather sometimes in very large herds of more than 1,000. Fast swimmers, breach frequently.

Swimming speed
Normal: 15 knots

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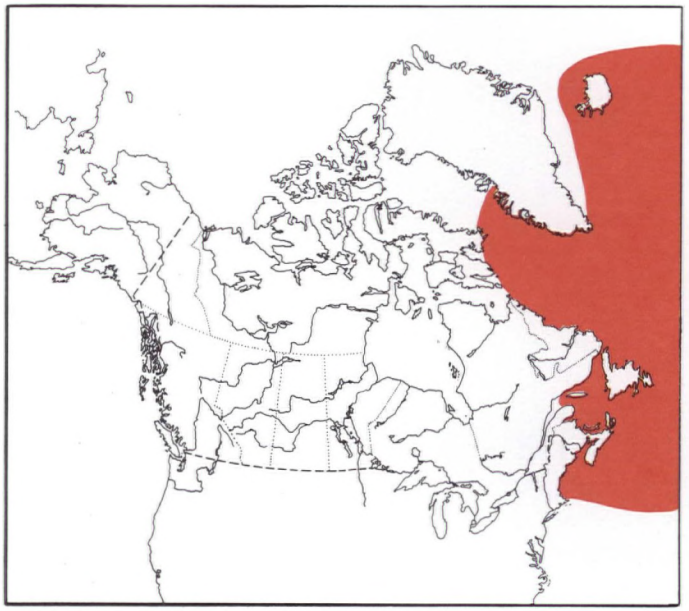
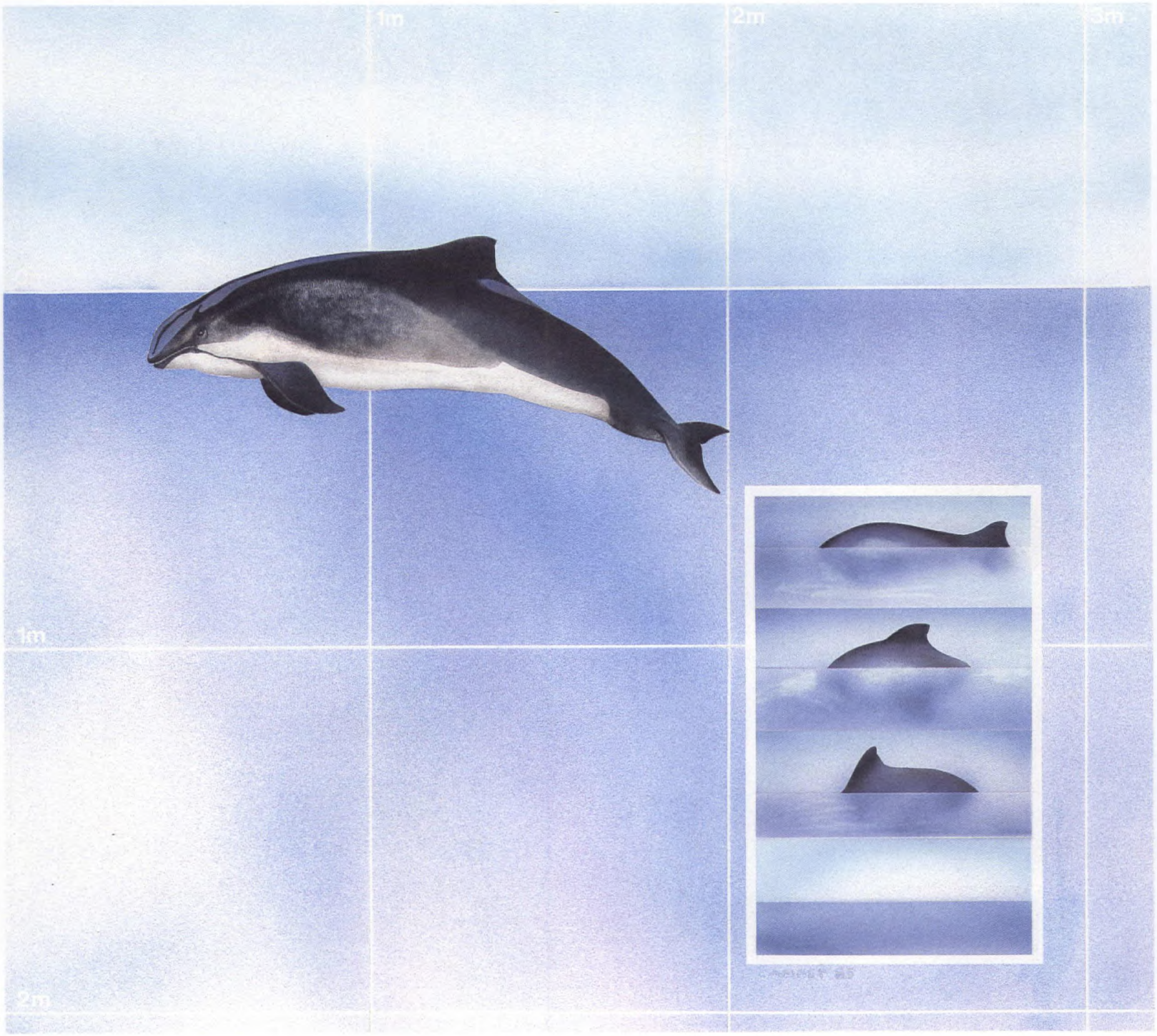
WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHIN
(Lagenorhynchus albirostris)

Habitat
Arctic, subarctic and temperate waters; usually offshore in deep waters, but gets inshore in northern waters. Seen in the Maritimes in spring and fall.

Feeding
Diversity of fish (cod, herring, capelin) squid and octopus and bottom crustacea.

Reproduction
Mating season: fall
Gestation period: about one year
Calving season: summer

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HARBOUR PORPOISE
(Phocoena phocoena)

PORPOISES
Phocoenidae

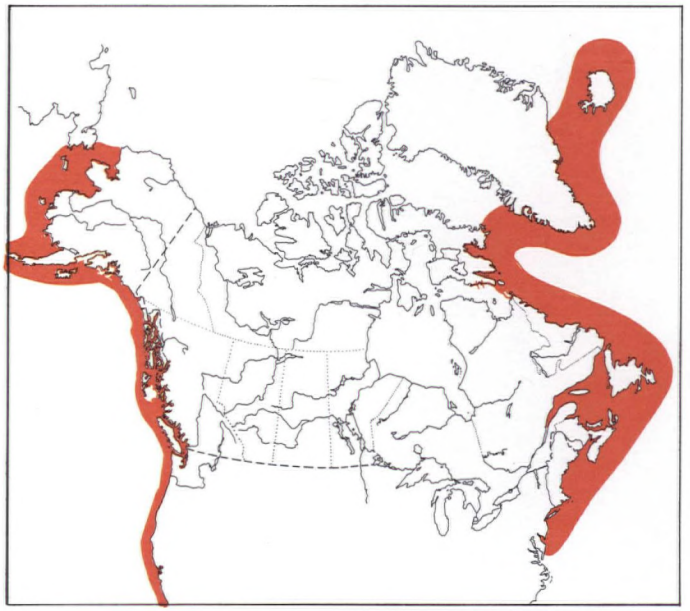
Habitat
Subarctic and temperate; usually inshore, often in bays and estuaries.

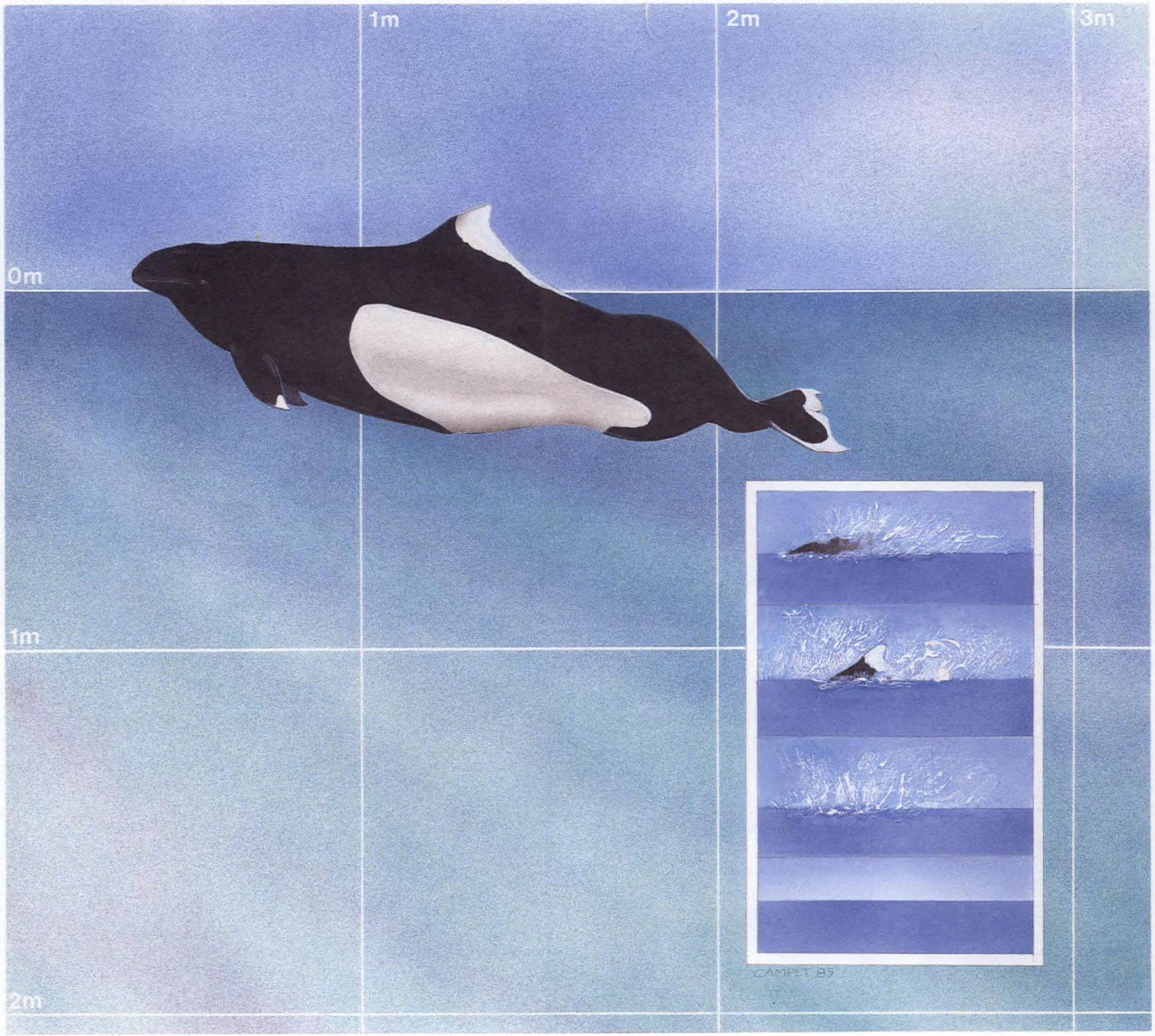
Feeding
Diversity of fish (herring, pollock, mackerel, hake), squid and bottom crustacea.

Reproduction
Mating season: June to August
Gestation period: 11 months
Calving season: March to July
One young each year
Lactation period: about 8 months

Behaviour or surface activity
Often swims quietly at the surface. Keeps away from vessels. Hard to see, difficult to study.

Swimming speed
Maximum: 12 knots

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DALL'S PORPOISE
(Phocoenoides dalli)

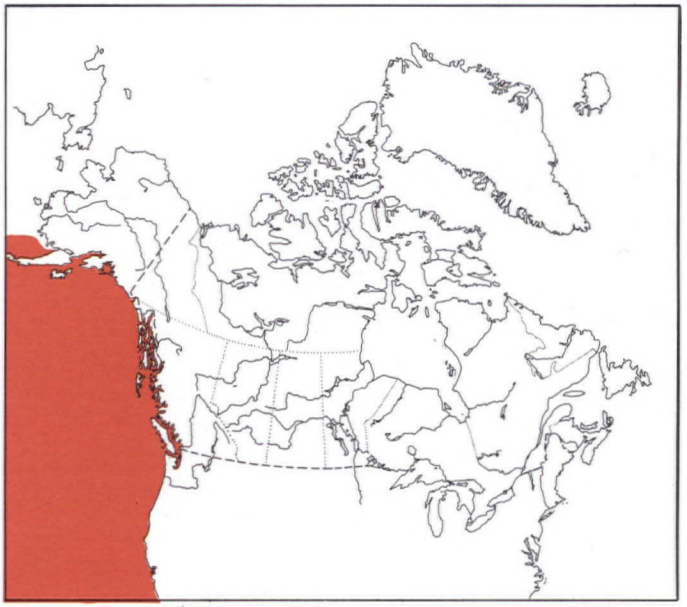
PORPOISES
Phocoenidae

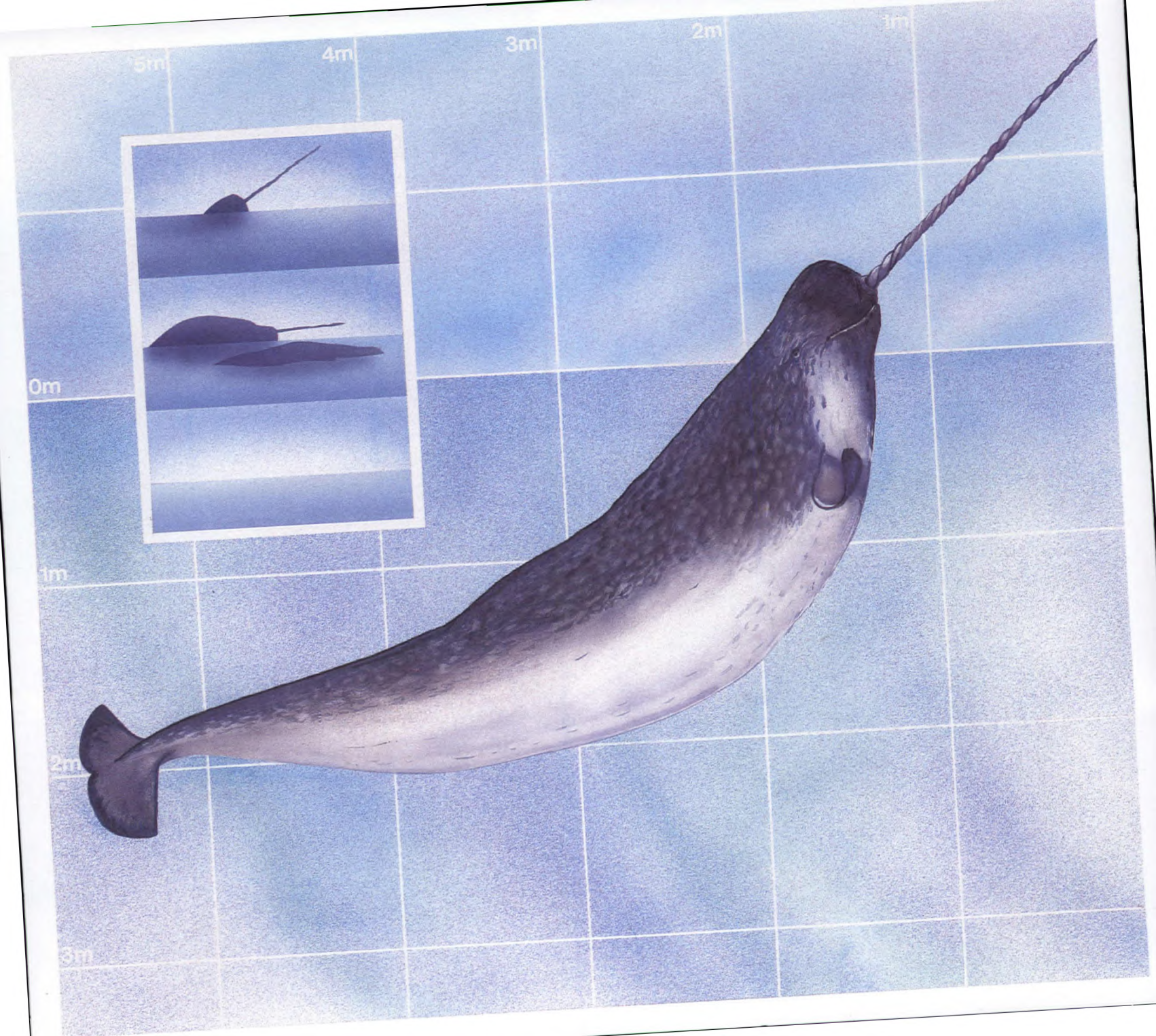
Habitat
North Pacific; seasonal offshore-inshore and north-south movements.

Feeding
Squid, crustaceans and diversity of fish.

Reproduction
Gestation period: about 11 months
Calving season: possibly year-round
One young every 3 years
Lactation period: about 2 years

Behaviour or surface activity
Travels in groups of 10 to 20. Frequently seen in association with Pacific white-sided dolphins or pilot whales. Has a way to break the surface, making a splash or cone of water called "rooster tail"; almost never leaps out of the water but swims in bow waves of moving vessels.
Fast swimmer.

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NARWHAL
(Monodon monoceros)

BELUGA-NARWHAL
Monodontidae

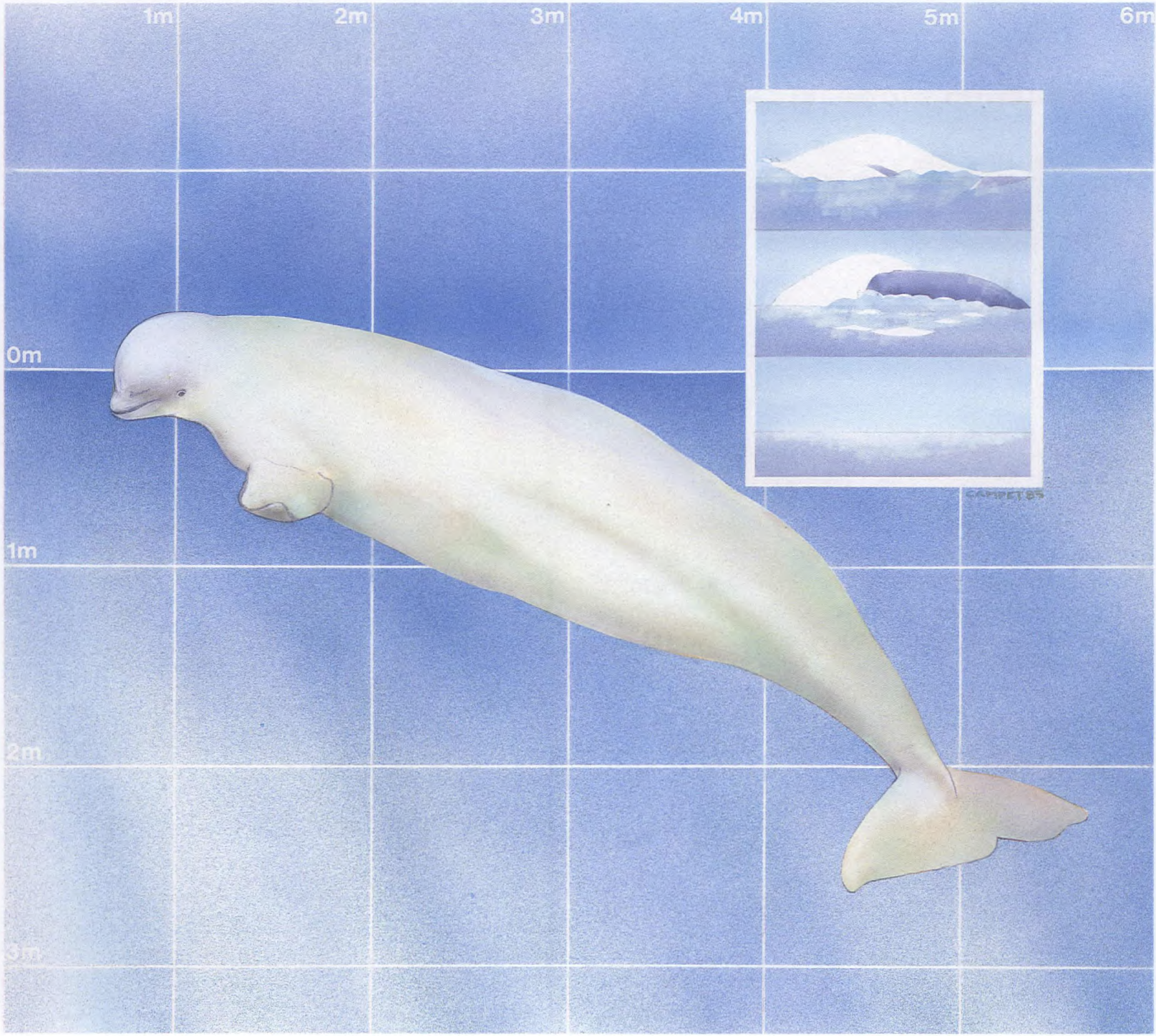
Habitat
GENERAL: arctic waters
SUMMER: in fiords and bays or around pack ice.
WINTER: in deep waters; pack ice of Davis Strait and Hudson Strait.

Feeding
Squid, fish and crabs

Reproduction
Mating season: around April
Gestation period: about 15 months
Calving season: summer (July-August)
One young every 2 years

Behaviour or surface activity
Travels in pods of 10 or more. When surfacing to blow, the head, then the back emerges. The tusk sometimes comes out of the water.

Note
The tusk that the male and occasionally the female have, is 2 to 3 metres long and spirals counter clockwise; this tusk is the only one of the two teeth of the upper jaw that protudes.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BELUGA
(Delphinapterus leucas)

Status
The St. Lawrence Estuary population (350-750 animals) is endangered and fully protected (COSEWIC*). There are many other populations in the Canadian Arctic; some of them are in very low numbers and others are in the order of 5,000 to 10,000 animals.

Habitat
GENERAL: arctic and subarctic; one population is resident of the St. Lawrence Estuary.
SUMMER: shallow waters of estuaries and bays
WINTER: migrates in areas of loose pack or open water.

Feeding
Diversified, including fish, bottom invertebrates and squid.

Reproduction
Sexual maturity: female, 4-5 years; male, 5-8 years
Mating season: spring
Gestation period: 14 1/2 months
Calving season: June and August
One young every 3 years
Lactation period: 2 years

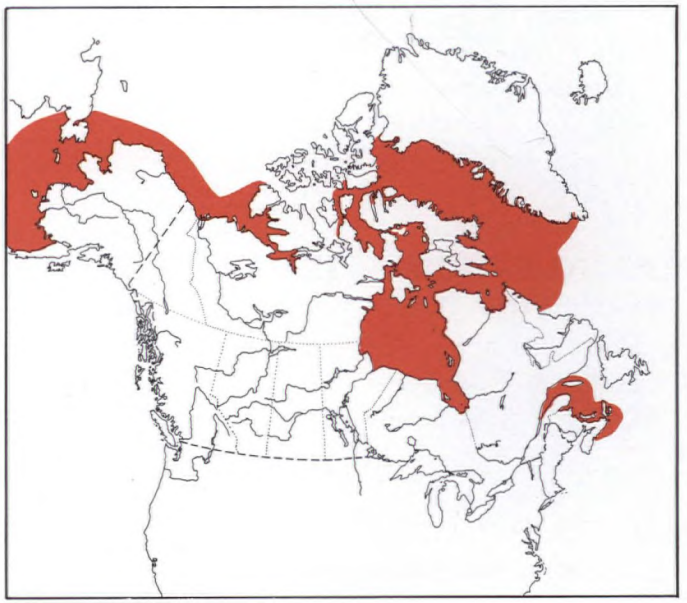
Behaviour or surface activity
Travels in pods of 2 to 10 although groups of up to several hundreds are common. Surfaces 2 to 3 times per minute to breathe, submerges 10 to 15 minutes.

BELUGA-NARWHAL
Monodontidae

Swimming speed
Normal: 5-6 knots
Maximum: 9-10 knots

Note
Adults are white, juveniles are grey, newborns are brown or dark blue. In summer, groups of females and young are separate from the males. The longevity is thought to be up to 30 years.

* *Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.*



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COLLECTION OF WHALE OBSERVATION DATA

Each whale-watching excursion is an opportunity to obtain data on whales' ranges and numbers; the recurring presence in an area of individuals recognized by their distinctive features (colouring, injuries, fins, and so on); and behaviour.

The following form provides examples of data which would be useful to record during whale-watching excursions. Such data can be forwarded to the nearest Department of Fisheries and Oceans office listed on the following page of this brochure.

Pictures of the whales' colouration patterns and other distinctive features are used for the identification of individual animals, particularly for the blue, the humpback, the right and the killer whales. Pictures of certain distinctively marked animals (particular colourations, scars, etc) are useful for all species. Such pictures with information on the date, time, place where they were taken and the author's name and address should be sent to the researchers that have asked for them, either directly or through the nearest Fisheries and Oceans office.

On Canada's west coast, a team of experienced veterinarians, biologists and researchers have established a program for stranded marine mammals to provide assistance to live marine mammals in distress and to make the best use possible of diseased or dead animals, by making tissues samples and test results readily accessible to qualified scientific investigators. Sightings of stranded marine mammals should be reported immediately to the Vancouver Public Aquarium **(604) 685-3364** and/or to the Pacific Biological Station of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Nanaïmo B.C. **(604) 756-7000.**

Research on mortality causes is in progress for the whales, dolphins and seals of the St. Lawrence Gulf and Estuary. Strandings should be reported at **(418) 775-6500** or **(514) 457-3660.**

There is a rescue program for whales accidentally entangled in fishing nets in the Newfoundland and Labrador waters. Net entanglements can be reported 24 hours a day, at **(709) 753-5495** (collect).

For additional information on whales, please contact any of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Government of Canada) offices listed below:

Communications Division
Quebec Region
901 Cap Diamant
Quebec City, Quebec
G1K 7Y7
Tel.: (418) 648-7998

Communications Division
Pacific and Yukon
1090 West Pender Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V6E 2P1
Tel.: (604) 666-0470

Communications Division
Western Region*
501 University Crescent
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3T 2N6
Tel.: (204) 983-5108

Communications Division
Gulf Region
P.O. Box 5030
Moncton, New Brunswick
E1C 9B6
Tel.: (506) 857-7757

Communications Division
Scotia-Fundy Region
P.O. Box 550
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2S7
Tel.: (902) 426-3550

Communications Division
Newfoundland Region
P.O. Box 5667
St. John's, Newfoundland
A1C 5X1
Tel.: (709) 772-0410

* Includes Northwest Territories

MARINE MAMMAL OBSERVATION RECORD

Date _____ Time _____

Length of observation period _____ Location of observation _____

Visibility: Good ☐ Fair ☐ Bad ☐

Identification of species and number of animals observed

BALEEN WHALES

_____ • Blue whale _____

_____ • Fin whale _____

_____ • Sei whale* _____

_____ • Humpback whale _____

_____ • Minke whale _____

_____ • Gray whale _____

_____ • Right whale _____

_____ • Bowhead whale _____

_____

TOOTHED WHALES

_____ • Sperm whale _____

_____ • Killer whale _____

_____ • Pilot whale _____

_____ • White-sided dolphin _____

_____ • White-beaked dolphin _____

_____ • Dall's porpoise _____

_____ • Harbour porpoise _____

_____ • Narwhal _____

_____ • Beluga, adult (white) _____

immature (grey) _____

* Not shown in this guide.

How did you identify the species? It is important to note all the criteria used for the identification (size, shape of the body, of the fins and flukes, the colour and markings...) _____

Special marks on the body of the animal
(colour, scars, wounds, etc)

Drawing of marks

Photos: Yes ☐ No ☐

Whale Behaviour: _____

Swimming Direction

Feeding Resting

Other (jumping out of the water, etc)

Other comments: _____

Name

Address

City Province

Postal Code Country Telephone

fold here

Record completed by:

Name

Address City Province Country

Postal Code Phone

ORDER : CETACEA
SUBORDER : ODONTOCETI
or TOOTHED WHALES

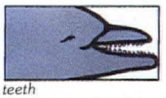
General characteristics of toothed whales:
single external blowhole, teeth, melon.

OCEAN DOLPHIN FAMILY *(Delphinidae)*

streamlined body

dorsal fin large and falcate

melon



teeth
short or prominent beak

single external blowhole

- KILLER WHALE p. **34**-35
- LONG-FINNED PILOT WHALE p. **36**-37
- ATLANTIC WHITE-SIDED DOLPHIN p. **38**-39
- PACIFIC WHITE-SIDED DOLPHIN p. **40**-41
- WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHIN p. **42**-43

(18 species in North America)

PORPOISE FAMILY *(Phocoenidae)*

small sized animals

dorsal fin triangular

rounded head

teeth

single external blowhole

- HARBOUR PORPOISE p. **44**-45
- DALL'S PORPOISE p. **46**-47

(2 species in North America)

SPERM WHALE FAMILY *(Physeteridae)*

massive head

humplike dorsal fin

narrow lower jaw

teeth on lower jaw

«S» shaped blowhole

- SPERM WHALE p. 32-**33**

(2 species in North America)

BELUGA AND NARWHAL FAMILY *(Monodontidae)*

white body for adult belugas;
darkly mottled back
for
narwhals

no dorsal fin

prominent melon

single external blowhole

- NARVAL p. **48**-49
- BELUGA p. **50**-51

(2 species in North America)

Note : BEAKED WHALES FAMILY (Ziphiidae) AND RIVER DOLPHINS (Platanistidae), are not illustrated in this guide : beaked whales are less susceptible to be observed during whale watching tours ; there is no river dolphins in our areas.

See page 4 for relative sizes

Fisheries and Oceans

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