

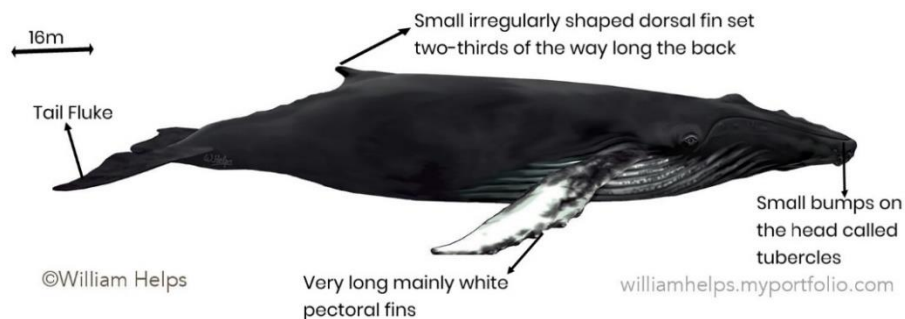


Humpback whale fact sheet

Field identification

Broad and bushy, V-shaped blow up to 3m tall. Humpbacks can blow 3-10 times at 20-30 second intervals between dives. Dives can last 3-7 minutes.

Humpbacks got their name because when they dive, they raise and bend their back, giving a 'hump' like appearance.



Humpbacks in Ireland

Humpbacks can be seen from land along the southwest and south coasts; however, the highest abundance of humpbacks have been recorded off the coast of West cork.

IWDG have been recording humpback whales in Ireland since 1999 using photo identification. This year, we reached a significant milestone in the Irish humpback whale catalogue when Nick Massett recorded the 100th individually recognised humpback whale.

IWDG can recognise individual humpback whales by photographing their unique and naturally occurring permanent markings. When a humpback whale raises its tail (flukes), it provides an opportunity to photograph its underside.

What do humpbacks eat

Humpbacks eat small schooling fish (herring, sand eel, sprat and mackerel) and krill. They have developed specialised feeding techniques such as 'bubble netting'. They make a curtain of bubbles, which concentrates the prey and then lunge through it, swallowing huge mouthfuls of food at a time with their hair like teeth (baleen).

How long can humpbacks live for?

Humpback whales have a life expectancy of up to 50 years. However, scientists think the average age of a humpback is between 30 and 40 years.

