



FC Inshore Cetacean Species Identification

Introduction

This guide outlines the key features that can be used to distinguish between the six most common cetacean species that inhabit Falklands' waters. A number of additional cetacean species may occasionally be seen in coastal waters, for example the fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*), the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), the long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melas*) and the dusky dolphin (*Lagenorhynchus obscurus*). A full list of the species that have been documented to date around the Falklands can be found in Appendix 1. Note that many of these are typical of deeper, oceanic waters, and are unlikely to be encountered along the coast. The six species (or seven species, including two species of minke whale) described in this document are observed regularly in shallow, nearshore waters, and are the focus of this identification guide.

Questions and further information

For any questions about species identification then please contact the Cetaceans Project Officer Caroline Weir who will be happy to help you try and identify your sighting:

Tel: 22247

Email: whales@conservation.org.fk

Useful identification guides

If you wish to learn more about the identification features of various species, some comprehensive field guides (which include all cetacean species globally) include:

- Handbook of Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises by Mark Carwardine. 2019.
- Marine Mammals of the World: A Comprehensive Guide to Their Identification by Thomas A. Jefferson, Marc A. Webber, and Robert L. Pitman. 2015.
- Whales, Dolphins and Seals: A Field Guide to the Marine Mammals of the World by Hadoram Shirihihi and Brett Jarrett. 2006.

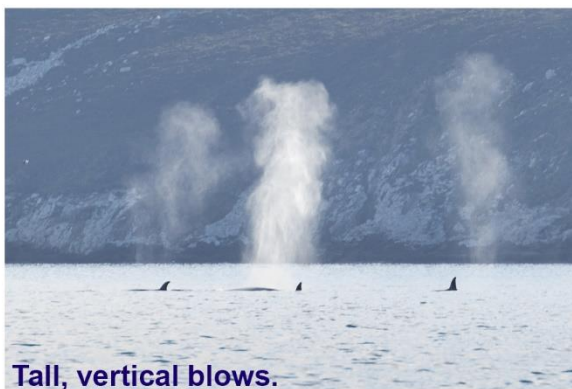
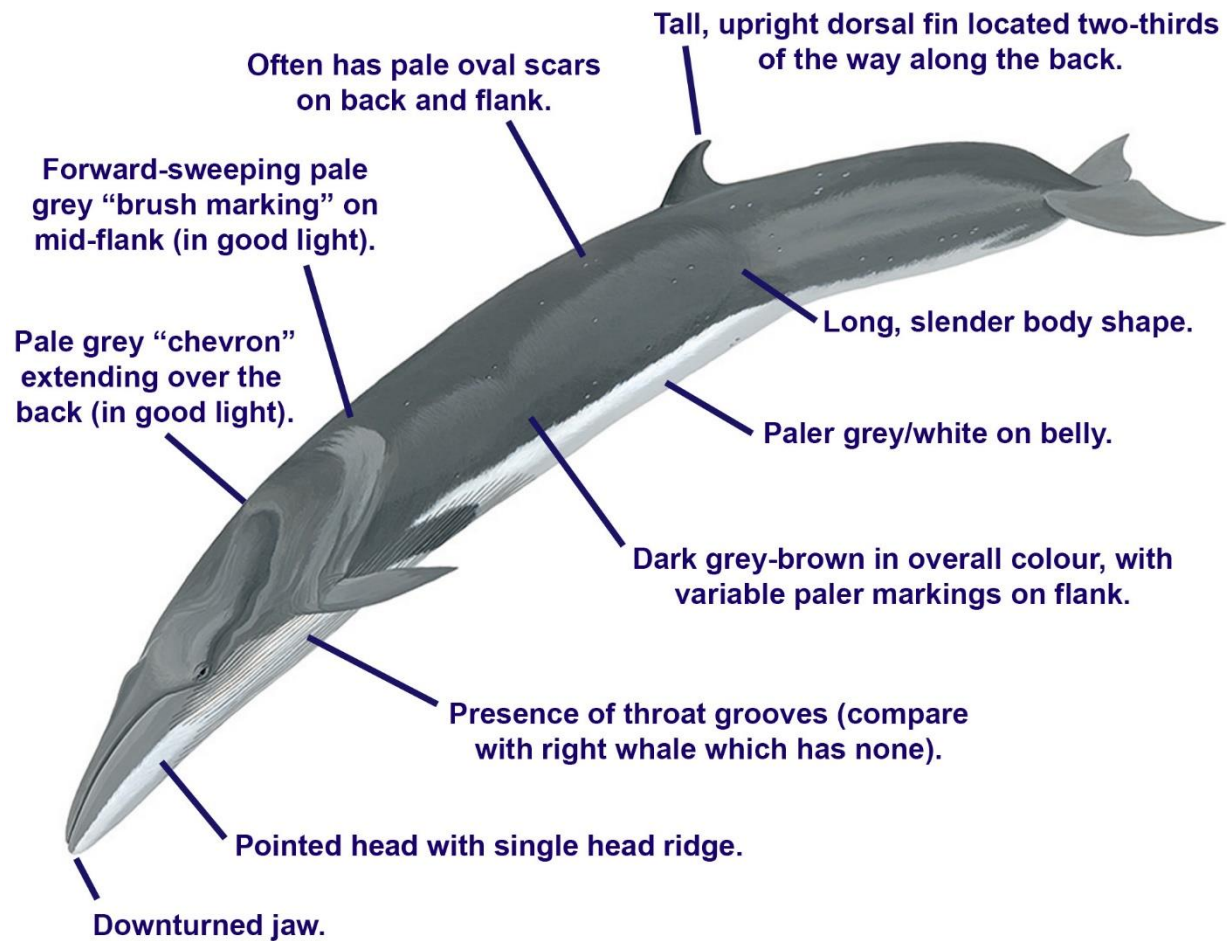


Sei whale *Balaenoptera borealis*

Body length

Adult: average = 15 m (max. 19.5 m)

Newborn: 4.5 m

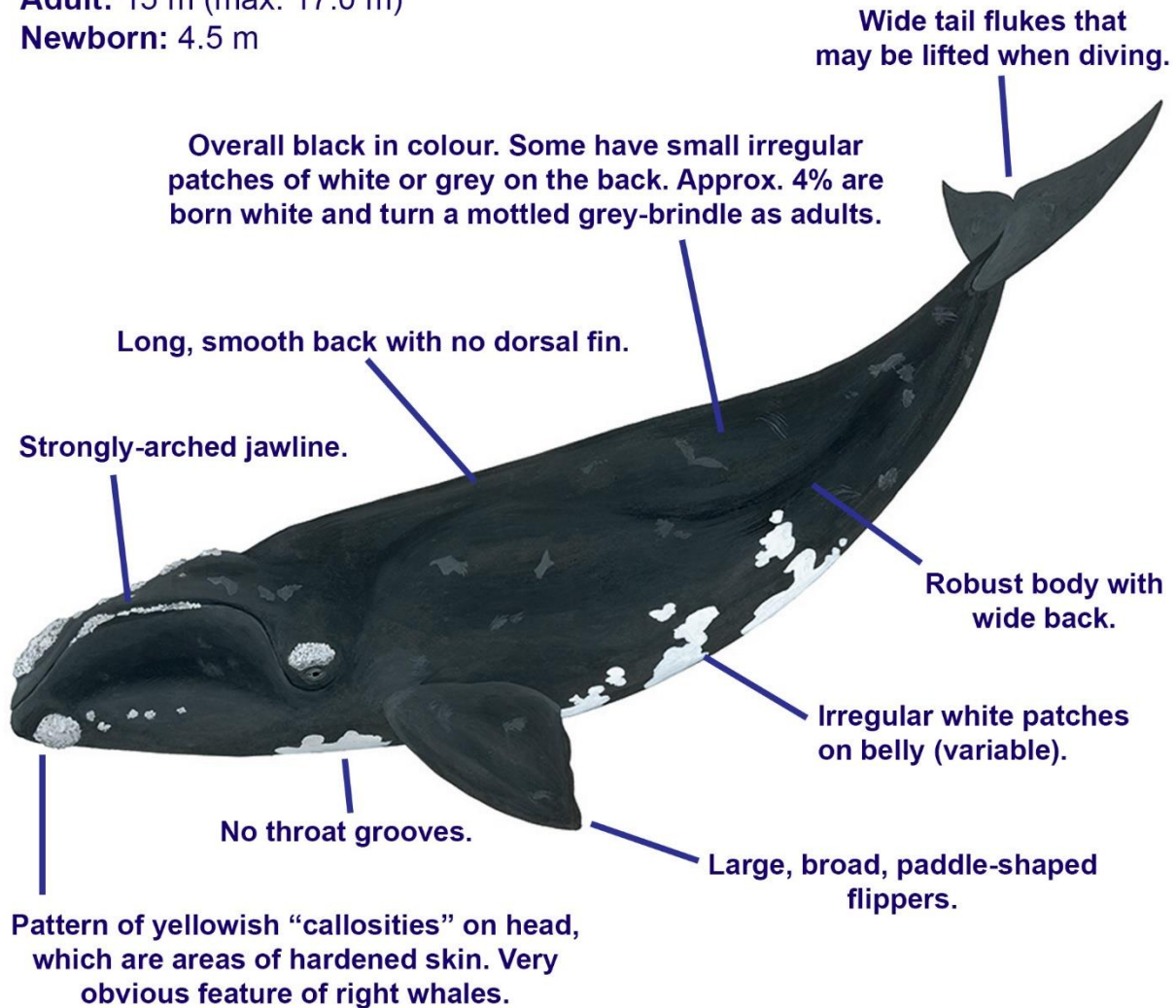


Southern right whale *Eubalaena australis*

Body length

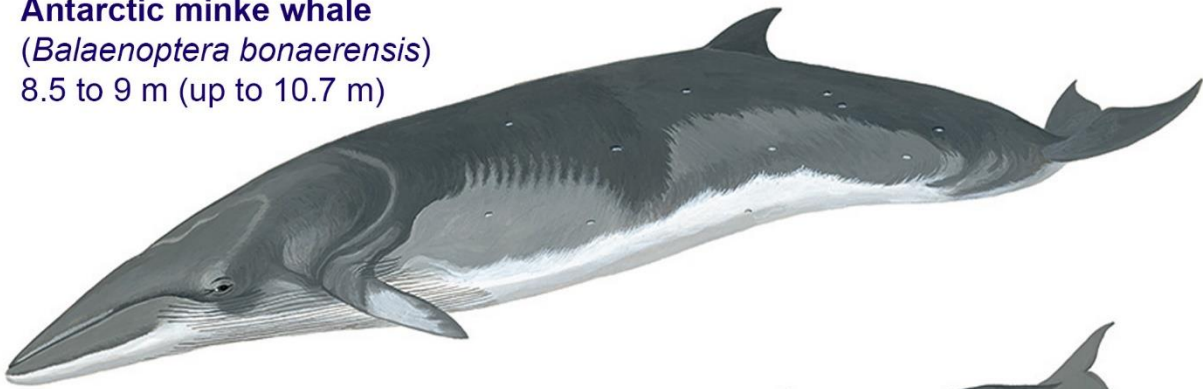
Adult: 15 m (max. 17.0 m)

Newborn: 4.5 m



Minke whales

Antarctic minke whale
(*Balaenoptera bonaerensis*)
8.5 to 9 m (up to 10.7 m)



Dwarf minke whale
(*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)
6.5 to 7 m (up to 7.8 m)

Small size and sleek shape.

Often no (or minimal) visible blow.

Dark grey dorsal surface with pale belly.

Variable lighter grey shades on the flanks which may extend onto the back (visibility depends on light conditions).

Narrow, pointed V-shaped head. Single head ridge. Straight jaw-line. Throat pleats.

Upright, tall, falcate dorsal fin located two-thirds of the way along the back.

Narrow flippers with pointed tips.

The Antarctic minke has uniform light grey flippers, while the dwarf minke has a white flipper patch and white shoulder blaze.



Variable paler grey pigment on flank.



Smooth back with prominent falcate fin.

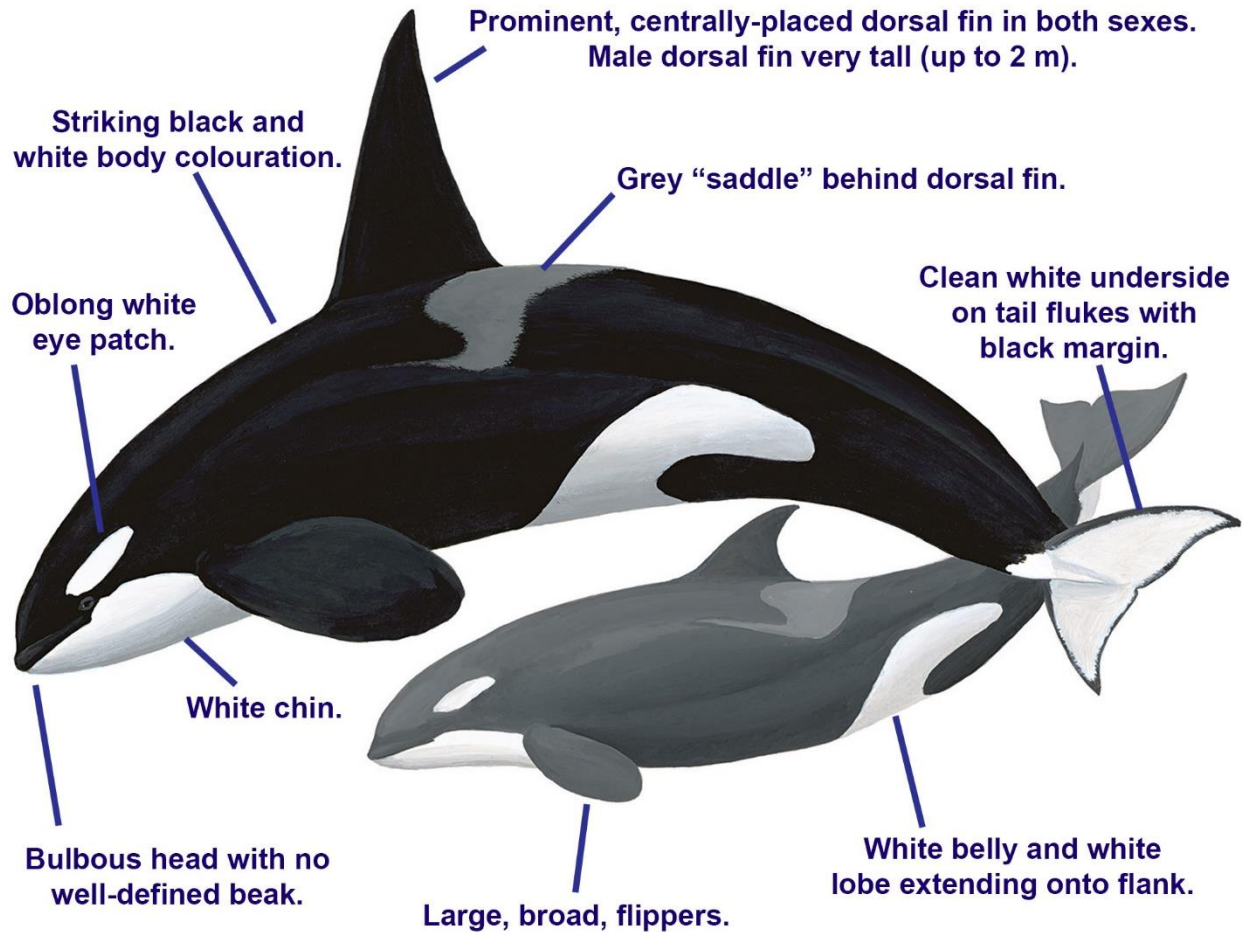
Killer whale *Orcinus orca*

Body length

Adult male: 6 to 8 m (up to 9.8 m)

Adult female: 5 to 7 m (up to 8.5 m)

Newborn: 2.4 m

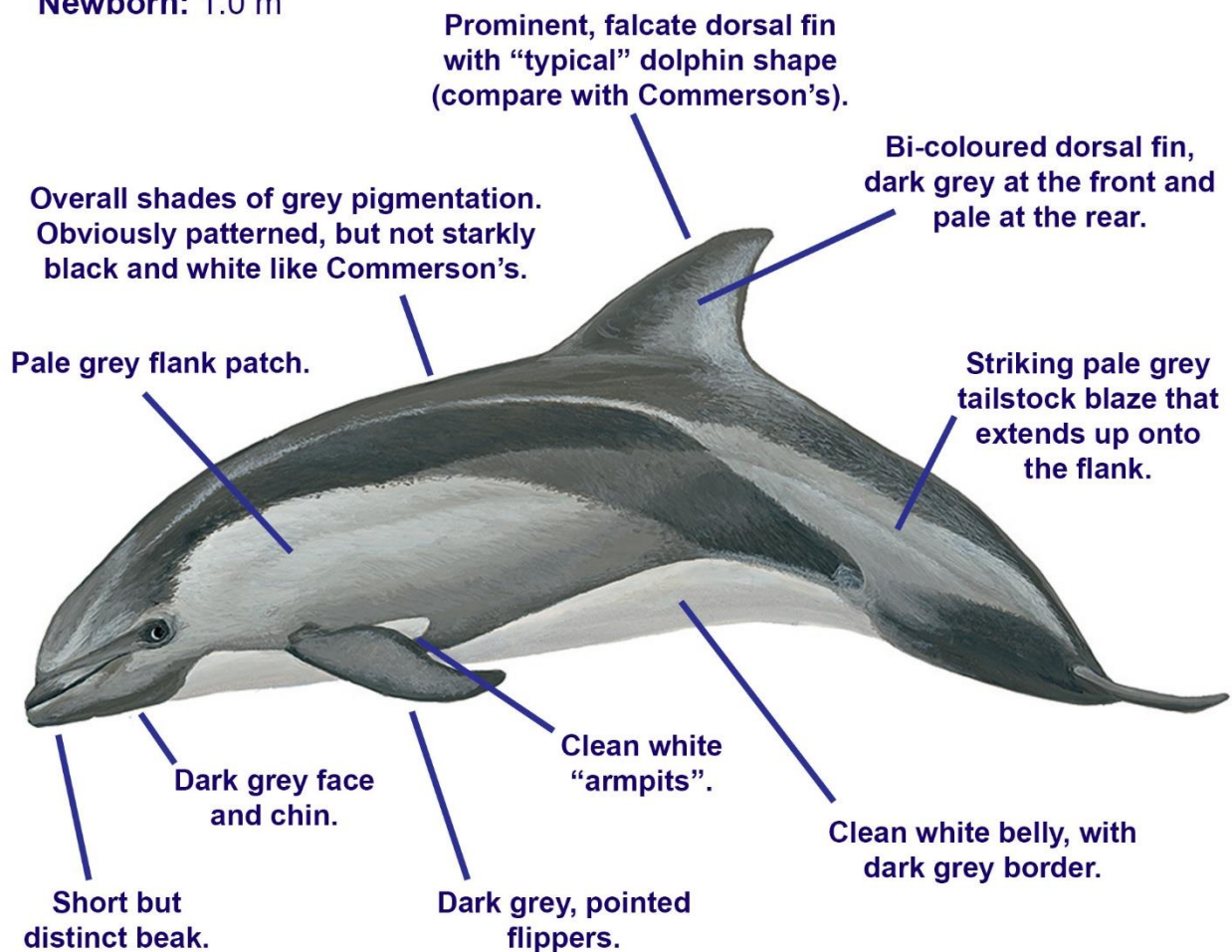


Peale's dolphin *Lagenorhynchus australis*

Body length

Adult: up to 2.2 m

Newborn: 1.0 m

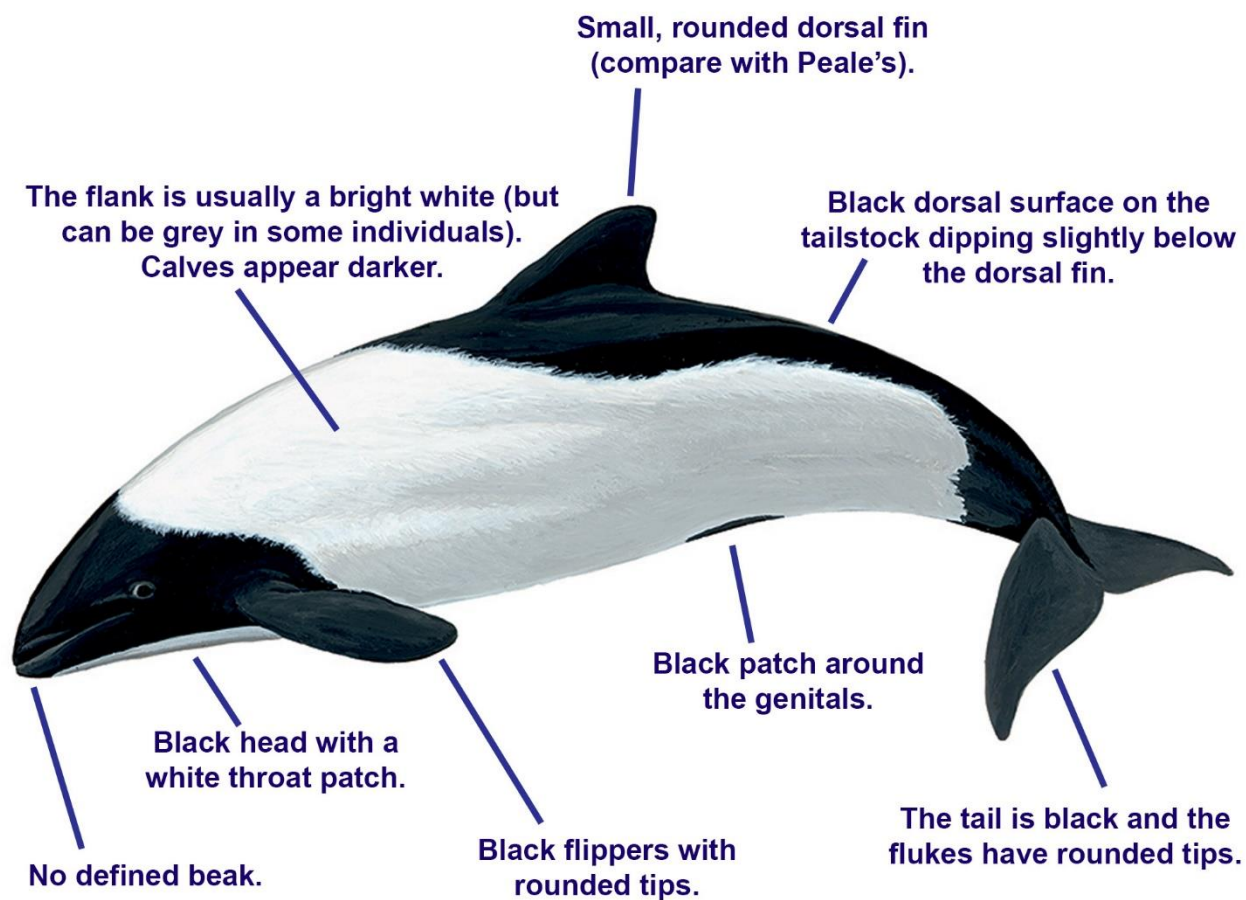


Commerson's dolphin *Cephalorhynchus commersonii*

Body length

Adult: up to 1.5 m

Newborn: 0.65 to 0.75 m



Appendix 1: Cetacean species recorded in Falklands' waters (July 2019)

Family	Species common name	Scientific name	IUCN global status (July 2019)*
Balaenidae	Southern right whale	<i>Eubalaena australis</i>	LC
Neobalaenidae	Pygmy right whale	<i>Caperea marginata</i>	LC
Balaenopteridae	Blue whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	EN
	Fin whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	VU
	Sei whale	<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>	EN
	Minke whale*	<i>Balaenoptera</i> sp.	LC / NT**
	Humpback whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	LC
Physeteridae	Sperm whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>	VU
Ziphiidae	Arnoux's beaked whale	<i>Berardius arnuxii</i>	DD
	Southern bottlenose whale	<i>Hyperoodon planifrons</i>	LC
	Andrews' beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon bowdoini</i>	DD
	Gray's beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon grayi</i>	DD
	Hector's beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon hectori</i>	DD
	Strap-toothed beaked whale	<i>Mesoplodon layardii</i>	DD
	Cuvier's beaked whale	<i>Ziphius cavirostris</i>	LC
Delphinidae	Killer whale	<i>Orcinus orca</i>	DD
	Long-finned pilot whale	<i>Globicephala melas</i>	LC
	False killer whale	<i>Pseudorca crassidens</i>	NT
	Common bottlenose dolphin	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>	LC
	Hourglass dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus cruciger</i>	LC
	Dusky dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus obscurus</i>	LC
	Peale's dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus australis</i>	LC
	Southern right whale dolphin	<i>Lissodelphis peronii</i>	LC
	Commerson's dolphin	<i>Cephalorhynchus commersonii</i>	LC
Phocoenidae	Spectacled porpoise	<i>Phocoena dioptrica</i>	LC
	Burmeister's porpoise	<i>Phocoena spinipinnis</i>	NT

** IUCN Conservation Status definitions: EN = Endangered, VU = Vulnerable, NT = Near Threatened, LC = Least Concern, DD = Data Deficient.

* Both the Antarctic minke whale (*Balaenoptera bonaerensis*; NT) and the dwarf subspecies of the common minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata* subsp.; LC) potentially occur and overlap in the Falklands.