

# Beluga

## *Delphinapterus leucas*



**Range:** Arctic Ocean  
**Size:** ♂:350-550 cm (11-18 ft)  
♀:300-410 cm ( 9.8-13 ft)  
**Weight :** ♂♀ 1100-1600kg  
(2200-3500 lbs)

**Habitat:** Arctic waters, fjords  
**Estrus cycle:** 48 days  
**Estrus length:** n/a  
**Gestation:** 360-420 days  
**Litter:**1

**Weaning :** 24 months  
**Sexual maturity:** ♂: 9 years  
♀: 3 years  
**Social:** usually solitary may form  
loose groups

**Lifestyle:** Aquatic marine  
**Activity:** Diurnal  
**Food:** fish  
**IUCN:** Near Threatened  
**Subspecies :** 2

**Longevity:** captive: 25 years  
wild:

## Order: Cetacea Family: Monodontidae

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The Beluga is one of two species in the family Monodontidae. This family is characterized by the absence of a dorsal fin and either reduced or absent snout. Although the meaning of the family name means “one tooth” the beluga has a total of 32 peg-like teeth. The beluga is unmistakable with its white coloration and missing dorsal fin. The young are born grey and take seven to nine years to attain the adult white coloration. The beluga also has a highly expressive face. Like other cetaceans the beluga possesses a “melon” on the forehead which houses the anatomical apparatus for echo-location. In the beluga the melon is quite large leading to the beluga's distinctive look.

Belugas are migratory moving south to warmer waters during the breeding seasons. They are highly social and live in large same sex pods. They are also very vocal. Their loud calls earned them the nickname of canaries of the sea.

The species is widespread and abundant. They are preyed upon by killer whales and polar bears. They have long been hunted by man.

However the population is stable and it is listed as Least Concern by the IUCN. The beluga was one of the first cetacean to be exhibited in public aquariums and have been bred in captivity.