**Harbour porpoise**

*Phocoena phocoena*

Infraorder: *Cetacea*

Family: *Phocoenidae* (porpoises)

External appearance

The harbour porpoise can grow up to 200 cm in length, and up to 75 kg in weight. Its head is relatively small, with a short, blunt beak.

Distribution

The harbour porpoise lives in the shallow coastal waters of oceans and seas. Porpoises found in the Baltic Sea have usually wandered in from the North Sea. They do not form large pods. The current number of porpoises in the Baltic Sea is estimated to be around 500; in the last 50 years there have been just a few sightings off of the Latvian coast.

Diet

They feed mainly on schooling fish, such as herring, sprat and cod. Less commonly they will eat molluscs. Forages using echolocation.

Development

Usually only one calf is born at a time, which can be up to 85 cm long and weigh up to 10 kg. After the birthing, mother and calf try to avoid other porpoises. Calves nurse for up to 1 year; they begin to feed independently once their teeth grow in.

Harbour porpoises and people

Harbour porpoises have been used as a source of food in Latvian seaside villages for thousands of years. The biggest threat the porpoise faces is entangling and drowning in fishing nets.

Interesting facts

Harbour porpoises do not jump out of the water like other dolphins. Because of its small head and blunt snout, the porpoise is also called a “sea pig”.