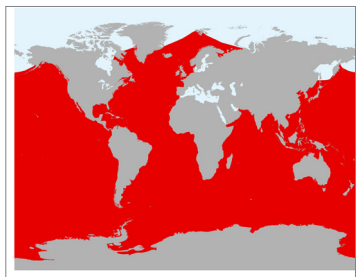




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Geographical range

Species of the Day: Blue Whale

The **Blue Whale**, *Balaenoptera musculus*, is listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. Growing to remarkable lengths of around 30 metres, the Blue Whale is the largest animal ever to have lived on the planet. This giant is found in all oceans, ranging from the tropics to the periphery of drift-ice in polar seas, with a preference for open waters.

Before the advent of fast catcher boats and exploding harpoons, the size and speed of the Blue Whale largely protected it from the commercial whaling industry. However, intensive hunting which started in the late 19th century brought the species to the brink of extinction by the 1960s when it was given international protection. Today, the most significant threat to this species may be the declining availability of krill, its primary food source, whether due to climate change, ocean acidification or other factors.

With hunting of the Blue Whale now prohibited by the International Whaling Commission, there are signs that populations are slowly recovering, although there is still a long way to go before the species is secure.

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