Pilot Whales
There are two species of pilot whales:
Long-finned: Globicephala melas
(Latin globus=world, Greek kephala=head and Greek melas=black)
Short-finned: Globicephala macrorhynchus

Pilot whales are among the most familiar whales because of their global distribution – the long-finned ones in the colder waters and the short-finned ones in more tropical waters.

They have a tendency to come ashore and strand in large numbers.

DoC spokesperson Andrew Lamason stated that “the cause of strandings remained a mystery... it was plausible pilot whales' echo-location was not well-suited to shallow, gently sloping waters as they usually preferred steep areas such as continental shelf edges. Another theory points to pilot whales' highly sociable behaviour - when one whale loses its way and strand, its pod mates may swim to its aid.”

The life span of pilot whales tends to be between 45 years for males and 62 years for females. Overall length is 6.3 meters for males and 5 meters for females with the short-finned whale slightly larger than the long-finned species. Commercial whalers referred to pilot whales as “blackfish”.

They feed mainly on squid and fish such as mackerel.