

# Bryde's whale

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## In news

Recently researchers of Thailand unearthed Bryde's whale skeleton

## Key findings

- Researchers of Thailand have unearthed a rare partially fossilized skeleton belonging to a Bryde's whale believed to be around 5,000 years old at an inland site west of Bangkok
- The skeleton was found by a cyclist, who spotted part of the vertebrae coming out of the ground, in early November.
- As per the experts, this whale skeleton is thought to be the only one in Asia

## About Bryde's whale

- Bryde's whales are one of the most poorly understood baleen whale species.
- Also known as 'tropical whales', due to their preference for waters of 16° Celsius or higher, they are found in both nearshore and open waters between the latitudes of 40° South and 40° North.
- They can be found both inshore and offshore, and tend to be associated with areas of high productivity, such as upwelling areas.
- Historically Bryde's whales have been confused with Sei whales, which are larger and have a more temperate and sub-polar distribution.
- Further confusion is caused by uncertainty about the possible existence of two species of Bryde's whales, which have provisionally been classified as two sub-species with partially overlapping ranges:

1. the smaller Eden's whale (*Balaenoptera edeni edeni*), and
  2. usually larger Bryde's whale (*B. e. brydei*)
- Another species that was formerly confused with Bryde's whales is the Omura's whale (*Balaenoptera omurai*), which was only described in 2003, and can overlap in range with both sub-species of Bryde's whale.
  - Bryde's whales can be easily confused with sei whales. The presence of 3 head ridges confirms a whale's identity as a Bryde's whale (however, be aware that rippling water on the head of other species can be mistaken for accessory head ridges).
  - Fin whale and minke whale can also cause some confusion; size (fin whales are larger and minke whales smaller), head shape, and coloration differences are the best characteristics to use.

#### Food system:

- Bryde's whales predominantly feed on schooling fish (including sardines, anchovies, mackerels and herrings), but they have also been documented to prey on crustaceans like krill, copepods or pelagic red crabs.
- Even squid remains have been detected in some of Bryde's whale stomach contents.
- They are typically associated with tropical or subtropical areas of unusually high productivity – such as the upwelling areas off the coast of Brazil, South Africa, and in the Arabian Sea

#### Conservation status

- IUCN: Data deficient
- The species is listed in Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and Appendix I of CITES.