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A whale with features of fin whale and blue whale

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In August 1965 to the northeast of Kodiak (? Kodiak - Translator) I., Gulf of Alaska, a whale was caught of uncommon colour. At first impression one would have called it a blue whale, but on further inspection it showed a number of characteristics of a fin whale.

This whale was a female of length 19.7 m. The general body colour above was dark-grey with a bluish shading, with light spots in the form of whirls, forming a variegated (marbled) pattern. The number of spots was smaller in the tail flukes. The head was rather darker than the back, but its right side was lighter than the left. On the throat were small white spots, which turned into a narrow white stripe, reaching the flippers, after which it was interrupted and proceeded afresh from the umbilicus to the anus. The rest of the lower part of the thorax was dark-grey with numerous light spots, especially in the rear half of the thorax. The depth of colour of the ventral grooves in the light-grey portions were the same as in blue whales, and in the white - as in fin whales. The tail flukes above and below were uniformly dark grey. The colour of the baleen plates of this animal was unique. A quarter of the right baleen row consisted of light-grey and blue plates, among which five were completely white, the rest of the right baleen row and the whole of the left were dark, almost black in colour.

The height of the dorsal fin of this whale was 2.23% of the zoological length. Such a proportion is characteristic only of the fin whale.

In the table is given the colour of the blue whale, fin whale and the animal in question. In its colour it ends up separating into portions, typical for blue whales or fin whales, but includes portions of an intermediate character. In conclusion, we can suppose that this animal was a hybrid between a fin whale and blue whale.

Among land animals interspecific hybrids are quite commonly met with, where one species occurs at the limits of distribution or within the range of a neighbouring species. This is characteristic for martens and sables, hares and white hares, and also for birds - grouse (especially stone grouse?) and Tetrao, etc. In marine mammals, particularly in whales, such an example has not been observed before.

Long ago it was noted that crosses between different species were incapable of reproducing. We studied carefully the ovaries of this animal. Their measurements and weight were as follows:

right ovary	-	length 33 cm, width 8 cm, wt. 640 g.
left	"	length 31 cm, width 10 cm, wt. 670 g.

In both ovaries we observed scars of corpora lutea of irregularly oval form with a diameter of 10 to 20 mm. Their greater part projected slightly from the surface of the ovarian wall, the rest was set in the ovarian substance. The scars were soft to the touch, the cut surface porous and dull. These features showed that the structures were scars of corpora lutea of ovulation. Not one scar of a corpus luteum of pregnancy was observed. A great number of scars of only c.l. of ovulation in the body of the ovaries possibly indicates that the animal was incapable of reproduction.

Colour characteristics of blue and fin whale and supposed hybrid between them.

Part of body	<u>Blue whale</u>	<u>Hybrid</u>	<u>Fin whale</u>
Head	Dark-grey, almost black	Dark-grey. Right side lighter, but rather darker than in fin whale	Dark-grey, but on the right side abruptly lighter than on the left.
Back	Dark-grey with bluish shading, speckled with white spots forming a marbled pattern, spotted more intensively on the posterior half	Similar to blue whale	Slate-grey, or lead-grey.
Lower thorax	Light-grey with strong spotting (especially from the flippers to the anal aperture)	On the throat a narrow white stripe as far as the flippers, then from the navel to the anus, the rest light-grey (as in blue whale)	The main colour white.
Sides	Somewhat lighter than the back with gradual change to the colour of the lower parts, with spots especially in the posterior half of the thorax	Similar to blue whale	Sides lighter than the back, in the posterior part of the body (from the level of the umbilicus to the end of the tail stock) white-grey with small spots.
Ventral grooves	Depth of grooves darker than convexities	In light-grey sections similar to blue whale, and in white sections - to fin whale	Depth of grooves light-grey.
Baleen row	Whole of dark, almost black, baleen	One quarter of right baleen row light-grey with blue and rarely white baleen plates, the rest as in blue whale	One third to one fifth of the right baleen row white, the rest - dark-grey.
Flippers	Near the tone of the back and sides	Near the tone of back and sides	Near the tone of back and sides.
Tail flukes	Above and below, equally grey or dark-grey in colour	Above and below, equally light-grey in colour	Below pure white, framed by dark-grey border, and above identical in colour to the back.