



Whales

Whales are large, intelligent, aquatic mammals. They breathe air through blowhole(s) into lungs (unlike fish who breathe using gills). Whales have sleek, streamlined bodies that move easily through the water. They are the only mammals, other than manatees (seacows), that live their entire lives in the water, and the only mammals that have adapted to life in the open oceans.

Whales are a widely distributed and diverse group of fully aquatic marine mammals, and their closest living relatives are the hippopotamuses, having diverged about 40 million years ago.

Whales range in size from the 2.6 metres (8.5 ft) and 135 kilograms (298 lb) dwarf sperm whale to the 34 metres (112 ft) and 190 metric tons (210 short tons) blue whale, which is the largest creature on earth. Several species exhibit sexual dimorphism, in that the females are larger than males. They have streamlined bodies and two limbs that are modified into flippers. Though not as flexible or agile as seals, whales can travel at up to 20 knots. Some whales have a well developed sense of "smell", whereas others have well-developed hearing – their hearing, that is adapted for both air and water, is so well developed that some can survive even if they are blind. Some species are well adapted for diving to great depths. They have a layer of fat, or blubber, under the skin to keep warm in the cold water.

Although whales are widespread, most species prefer the colder waters of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, and migrate to the equator to give birth. Male whales typically mate with multiple females every year, but females only mate every two to three years. Calves are typically born in the spring and summer months and females bear all the responsibility for raising them. Mothers of some species fast and nurse their young for a relatively long period of time. Whales produce a variety of vocalisations, notably the songs of the humpback whale.

Once relentlessly hunted for their products, whales are now protected by international law. The North Atlantic right whales nearly became extinct in the twentieth century, with a population low of 450, and the North Pacific grey whale population is ranked Critically Endangered by the IUCN. Besides whaling, they also face threats from by catch and marine pollution. The meat, blubber and baleen of whales have traditionally been used by indigenous peoples of the Arctic. Whales have been depicted in various cultures worldwide, notably by the Inuit and the coastal peoples of Vietnam and Ghana, who sometimes hold whale funerals. Whales occasionally feature in literature and film, as in the great white whale of Herman Melville's Moby Dick. Small whales, such as belugas, are sometimes kept in captivity and trained to perform tricks, but breeding success has been poor and the animals often die within a few months of capture. Whale watching has become a form of tourism around the world.

The brain to body mass ratio in some whales is second only to humans

Whales are known to teach, learn, cooperate, scheme and grieve.



Spyhopping: This is another cetacean activity in which the whale pokes its head out of the water and turns around, perhaps to take a look around.

Small whales, and some larger ones, are known to engage in complex play behaviour.



Breaching: Many whales are very acrobatic, even breaching (jumping) high out of the water and then slapping the water as they come back down. Sometimes they twirl around while breaching. Breaching may be purely for play or may be used to loosen skin parasites or have some social meaning.

Research has suggested that whales possess self-awareness/recognition.



Lobtailing: Some whales stick their tail out of the water into the air, swing it around, and then slap it on the water's surface; this is called lobtailing. It makes a very loud sound. The meaning or purpose of lobtailing is unknown, but may be done as a warning to the rest of the pod of danger.



Logging: Logging is when a whale lies still at the surface of the water, resting, with its tail hanging down. While floating motionless, part of the head, the dorsal fin or parts of the

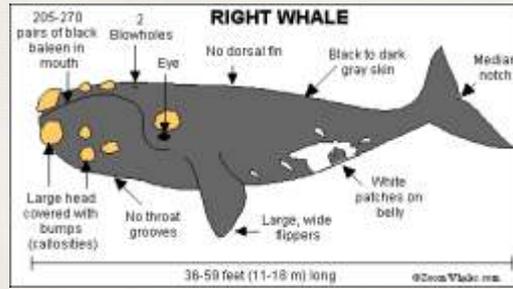
Like all mammals:

- Whales breathe air into lungs,
- Whales have hair (although they have a lot less than land mammals, and have almost none as adults),
- Whales are warm-blooded (they maintain a high body temperature),
- Whales have mammary glands with which they nourish their young,
- Whales have a four-chambered heart.



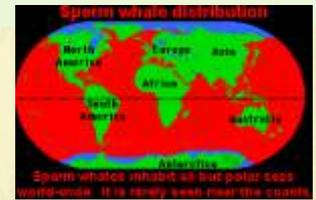
Southern Right Whales

12,000 population
 'Best' Whale to hunt - floated on surface , peaceful, predictable, easy target, good oil
 Baleen used for corsets & buggy whips



Sperm Whale (Moby Dick!)

360,000 population
 Called Sperm whale as emit white oil from Nose...thought to be sperm by whalers
 Spermaceti – is a 'fine' oil
 Last whale to be protected due to Spermaceti & Military applications
 Ambergris – Whale vomit used to make high value perfume
 Dangerous to hunt as they would attack and charge boats
 Longest breath holds at 2.15 hrs and can dive to 3000m
 Makes the loudest noise of any living creature (230 decibels...a jet plane is 160 decibels)



Blue Whales

5000 population
 Largest animal to exist on earth (larger than dinosaurs)
 33 meters long
 Weight 190 tonnes (160 cars)
 Eats 5-6 tonnes/day krill (40 million krill)
 Has a heart the size of car.. you can walk inside it!
 Spout 30 ft or 10 metres in the air



Orca or Killer Whales

200 in NZ and circumnavigate the coast
 Actually a Dolphin....Called 'Killer' whales as they known to hunt whales
 Largest Dolphin at 10m in length with a weight of 15t
 The fin on a male Orca can be over 2m in height
 In Marlborough Sound Orcas feed on Stingrays
 It is the fastest swimming 'whale' at up to 40 km/hr

