

WHALES



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What is a whale?

Whales are large, magnificent, 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 breathe air into lungs,

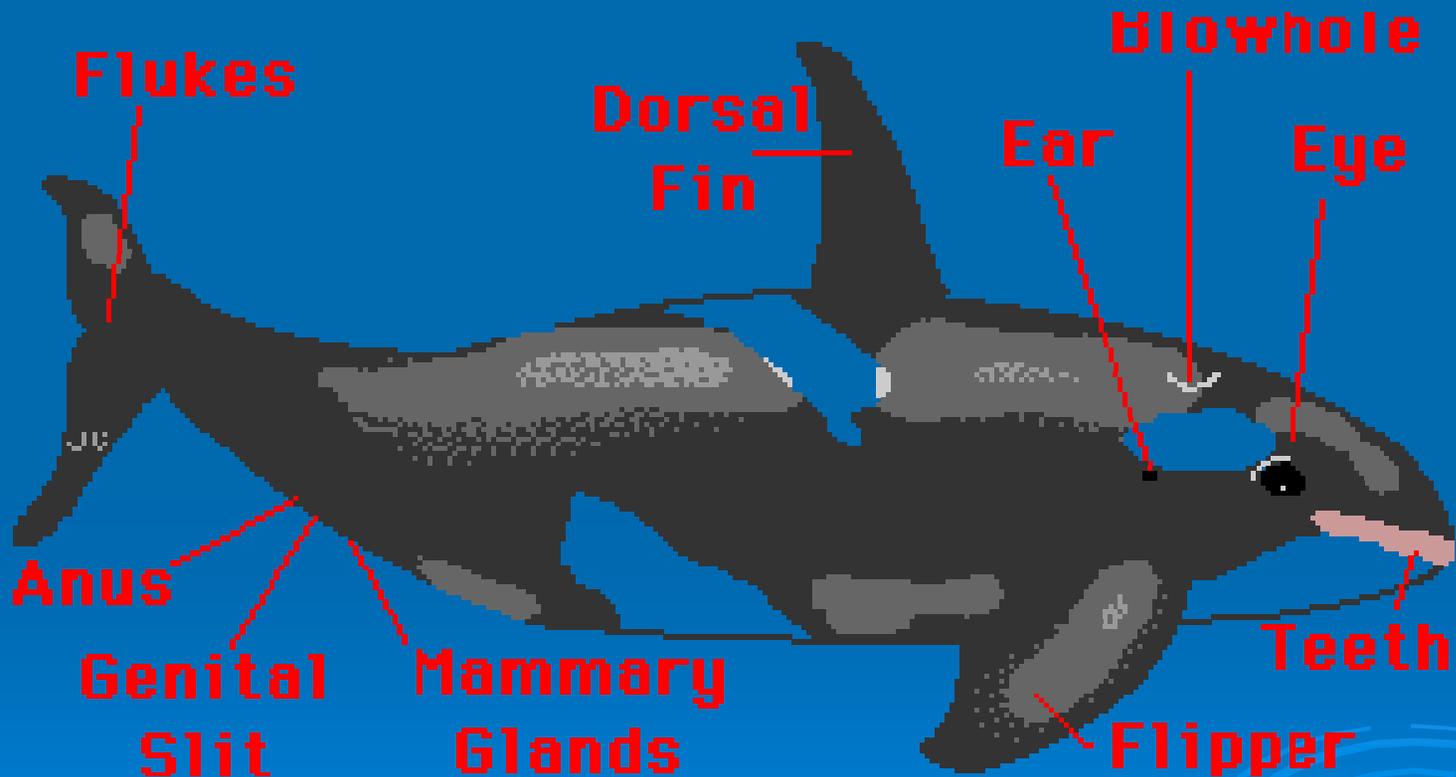
Whales have hair (although they have a lot less than land mammals, and have almost none as adults),

Whales are warm-blooded (they maintain a high body temperature),

Whales have mammary glands with which they use to nourish their young,

Whales have a four-chambered heart.

Features of a Killer Whale



BALEEN WHALES

There are two main groups of whales: baleen whales and toothed whales.

Baleen whales have a flexible material called baleen, instead of teeth. Baleen is made up of keratin, which is the same material found in hair, feathers, horns and fingernails.

Many baleen whales feed by gulping large schools of krill or small fish into their mouths, then forcing water out through the baleen with their tongues. The food becomes trapped inside the baleen and is then swallowed. Some species like the Blue, fin and Humpback whales have pleated throats that expand and allow them to take in larger mouthfuls of water and food.

Baleen whales have two blowholes on top of their head.

Baleen whales: Blue, Fin, Humpback, Grey and Right whales.

TOOTHED WHALES

Toothed whales have teeth. The teeth aren't used for chewing, but to grab prey. Most toothed whales feed on fish and squid, while a few prey on other marine mammals. Sperm whales only have teeth in the lower jaw, while the male Narwhal has only two teeth in the upper jaw. Dolphins, Killer whales and Pilot whales have teeth in both. Toothed whales hunt for prey by using sound. They do this by emitting clicks and pulses of sound and listening for the echo.

Toothed whales have a single blowhole on top of their head.

Toothed whales: Sperm, False Killer, Common Porpoise, Narwhal, Dolphin and Killer whales.



Whale facts:

Blue Whale : has a total of 64 vertebrae.

Southern Right Whale: has a total of 57 vertebrae.

Sperm Whale: has a total of 50 vertebrae.

Bottlenose Dolphin: has a total of 59 vertebrae.

Human: has a total of only 33 vertebrae.

Whales are mammals.

A group of whales is called a pod, school or herd.

Whales do sleep. Half of their brain rests while the other half of the brain remains awake.

Bottlenose Dolphins can stay underwater for around two hours, some of the smaller dolphins only stay underwater for three minutes.

Whale facts:

continuing

Whales give live birth to their young and nurse their calves just like all other mammals do.

The fluke of a whale moves up and down to propel the whale, while fish move their tails from side to side.

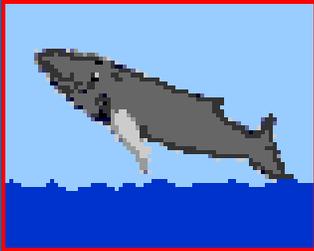
Whales can't extract oxygen from seawater like fish do with their gills. They breathe air like all mammals do.

A tooth of a sperm whale grows up to about 25 cm and weight 1.8 kg.

The biggest whale is the BLUE WHALE (29 m long). The smallest whale is the DWARF SPERM WHALE (2.6 m long as an adult).

The largest toothed whales is the male SPERM WHALES (17-20 m long).

Whale movements

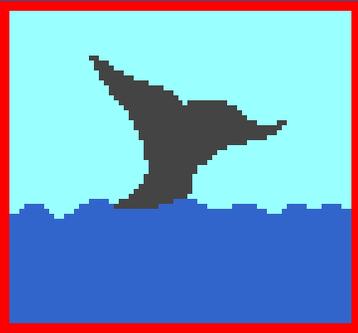


Breaching: Many whales are very acrobatic, even breaching (jumping) high out of the water and then slapping the water as they come back down. Sometimes they twirl around while breaching. Breaching may be purely for play or may be used to loosen skin parasites or have some social meaning.

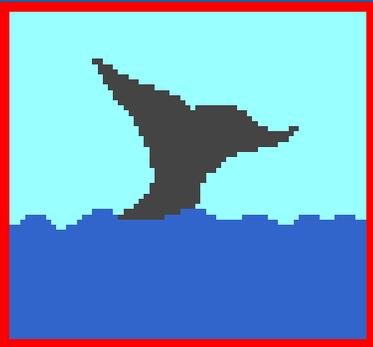


Spyhopping: This is another cetacean activity in which the whale pokes its head out of the water and turns around, perhaps to take a look around.

Whale movements



Logging/Sailing: 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 back are exposed at the surface.



Tail Lobbing: 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 tail lobbing. It makes a very loud sound. The meaning or purpose of tail lobbing is unknown, but may be done as a warning to the rest of the pod of danger.

More facts

BIGGEST BRAIN: The SPERM whales have the biggest brain. It weighs up to 9 kg.

LONGEST TOOTH: The NARWHALES have the longest tooth, up to 2-3 m long.

LONGEST BALEEN: BOWHEAD whales have the longest baleen.

DEEPEST DIVERS: The SPERM whales dives the deepest of all the whales (up to 3 200m).

DEADLIEST: The Killer whales or ORCA are the deadliest whales.

FASTEST: ORCAS and PILOT whales are the fastest whales (up to 48 km).

LOUDEST: The loudest animal on Earth are the BLUE whales. They are louder than a jet.