

KIDS' PAGE

DISCOVER NEW AND EXCITING STUFF FROM THE ROYAL BC MUSEUM

British Columbia is home to 23 species of whales, including dolphins and porpoises. They range in size from the Harbour Porpoise, measuring 2 metres long and weighing 45 kilograms, to the Blue Whale, the largest animal on Earth, which grows to 30 metres long and 160 tonnes. Whales – also known as cetaceans (see-tay-shuns) – are more closely related to you than they are to fish. They are mammals, like cats, dogs and people. They breathe air, they are warm-blooded, they nurse their young with milk, and at some point in their lives, they have hair. A whale has a smooth, streamlined body that moves easily through the water. Instead of arms and hands, it has flippers that helps it balance and steer in the water. A whale also has a powerful tail that propels it through the water at amazing speeds; a whale's tail moves up and down rather than side to side like a fish.

Biologists separate whales into two groups, based on how they catch their food: whales with teeth, and whales that feed using comblike structures called baleen. Toothed whales, such as Killer Whales and Sperm Whales, hunt fish, squid and seals, which they catch with their teeth. Baleen whales feed on tiny marine animals, such as plankton, krill and small fish, which they filter out of the water with their baleen. A baleen whale will take in a huge mouthful of water, then, with its tongue, squeeze the water out through the baleen that hangs from the roof of the mouth. The water escapes, but the small animals in the water are trapped in the fine teeth of the baleen "combs". Now the whale licks the trapped animals off the baleen and swallows them. The largest whales in the world, the Blue Whale and the Fin Whale, feed on tiny creatures that they capture in their baleen.

Eating with baleen

Fill the kitchen sink about half full of water and sprinkle a small amount of dried parsley leaves on the surface (you can use tea leaves or small pieces of paper if you don't have parsley leaves). Take a pair of kitchen tongs and try and pick the parsley leaves up. Now take a fine sieve and capture some of the leaves. If you had to survive by eating something as small as parsley leaves, which tool would you want to have? Some whales use sieve-like baleen for collecting tiny animals in the water.



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Hidden Message Word Search

Find the words in the puzzle, then starting at the upper left-hand corner put the first 37 unused letters in the blanks to find the hidden message. The first unused letter goes in the first space, the second in the second space and so on.

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O O B L B E L U E W H F
A C R L E L S L A R L E
T H E C E A U L I U A R
G E S A A H T B K R A N
I M A L N W S E B O K E
N E A R T H S R D E S X
H U M P B A C K R I R U
M R A N T M U H O C Y I
N I H P L O D P V A P O
B A L E E N R W B F E W
C H X R Z O X M I Y N M
M Y T K P L A N K T O N
    
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BALEEN FLUKES ORCA BLUBBER HUMPBACK PLANKTON
DOLPHIN KRILL PORPOISE FIN OCEAN WHALE

Answer: Blue Whales are the largest animals on earth.

Word Scramble

Unscamble the following words to spell the names of four whales. Then take the letters in the boxes and spell the name of the Fin Whale's favourite food.

PAMBUHKC

MERPS HELAW

LOPHNID

UELBAWEHL

The Fin Whale's favourite food is

Answer: KRILL

Amazing Whale Facts

The tail of a Fin Whale is four metres wide and can generate 200 horsepower.

The heart of a full-grown Blue Whale is as large as a small car and weighs up to 1,800 kg. Your heart is about the size of your fist.

A newborn Blue Whale is 7 metres (23 ft) long and weighs 2,475 kg (5500 lbs). In its first year, a baby Blue Whale drinks 225 litres of milk a day and gains about 90 kg (200 lbs) per day or almost **4 kg per hour**. By the time it is 8 months old, it weighs 22,500 kg (50,000 lbs).

A Blue Whale can eat 8 tonnes of krill a day. That's like eating more than 71,000 hamburgers.

A small child could crawl through the largest blood vessels of a Blue Whale.

The tongue of a Blue Whale weighs as much as an elephant.

A small child could climb down the blowhole of a Blue Whale.

A Dall's Porpoise can reach a speed of 50 km per hour.

Gray Whales have the longest migration of any mammal in the world. Every fall, they travel more than 8,000 kilometres from their feeding grounds off Alaska, to the warm waters of Baja California in Mexico, and then back again every spring.

How Big is a Blue Whale?

To see how big a Blue Whale is, measure 30 metres in your yard, a school yard or park with a measuring tape. Measure your height. How many of you would it take to equal one Blue Whale?

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 m.



Blue Whale



Fin Whale



Sperm Whale



Gray Whale



Killer Whale

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 m.



Nostrils on top of the head

Whales, like all mammals, breathe air, so they have to come to the surface of the water to breathe. When they dive below the surface, they must hold their breath the same as you do when you dive under water. A whale's nostrils are located on the top of its head and are called blowholes. Toothed whales have one blowhole and baleen whales have two. The Sperm Whale is the champion diver of all whales; it can dive to more than 2000 metres below the surface and stay under water for up to 90 minutes!