

Humpback Whales

Humpback whales are very large and can grow up to 19 metres long. They are famous for their magical songs which can be heard from over 20 miles away. Humpbacks are friendly creatures and are popular with whale watchers. Sadly, humpback whales are endangered but numbers have been growing in recent years and there are now 80,000 humpbacks alive today.

Fun Facts

- Another name of humpback whales is 'giant wings'.
- Humpbacks live for about 50 years although they have been known to live to almost 100!
- Humpback whales are air-breathing mammals and can hold their breath for up to 45 minutes!



Appearance

Humpback whales are strange creatures. They have a large, knobby head, a black body and long fins. In fact, they have the longest fins of all marine mammals. Female humpbacks are larger than males and can weigh up to 36,000kg, which is almost the same weight as six elephants!

Life Cycle

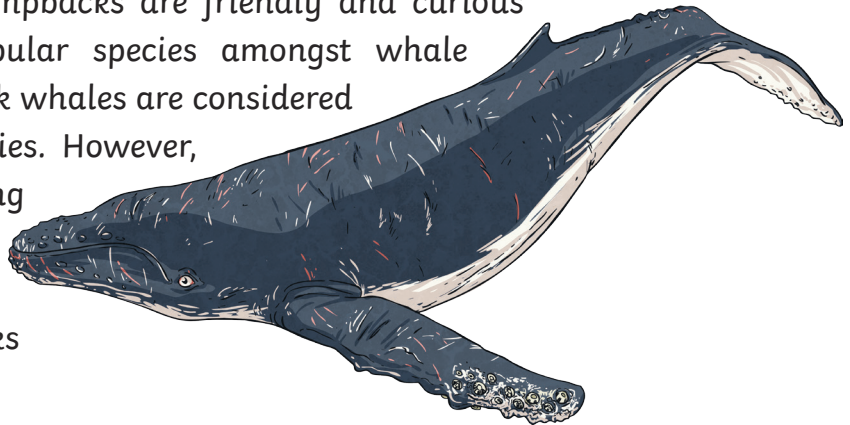
Babies grow inside their mothers for 12 months and when the calves are born, they are about 6 metres in length. Humpback whales tend to live alone or in small groups called pods. Mothers and their calves stay together for up to one year. Humpback whales are found in oceans around the world. They feed in colder waters and then travel to warmer seas in the winter so that they can breed and give birth. They eat mostly small fish and they feed by swallowing large mouthfuls of water.

Behaviour

Humpbacks are famous for their playful behaviour. One of the most wonderful sights is when a humpback leaps out of the water and splashes down with its fins and tail. Male humpbacks sing songs that last for up to 20 minutes. Scientists are not sure why they sing but one idea is that they do it to attract female whales. Humpbacks have been seen playing with and protecting other kinds of sea creatures such as dolphins and even humans!

Humpback Whales

Humpback whales are enormous and adults can grow to lengths of up to 19 metres. They are famous for their magical songs which can be heard from over 20 miles away. Humpbacks are friendly and curious creatures and are a popular species amongst whale watchers. Sadly, humpback whales are considered to be an endangered species. However, numbers have been growing in recent years and it is thought that there are now 80,000 humpbacks alive today!



Appearance

Humpback whales have a distinctive appearance. They have a large, knobby head, a black body and long fins. In fact, they have the longest fins of all marine mammals. Female humpbacks are larger than males and can weigh up to 36,000kg (six times as heavy as some elephants!)

Life Cycle

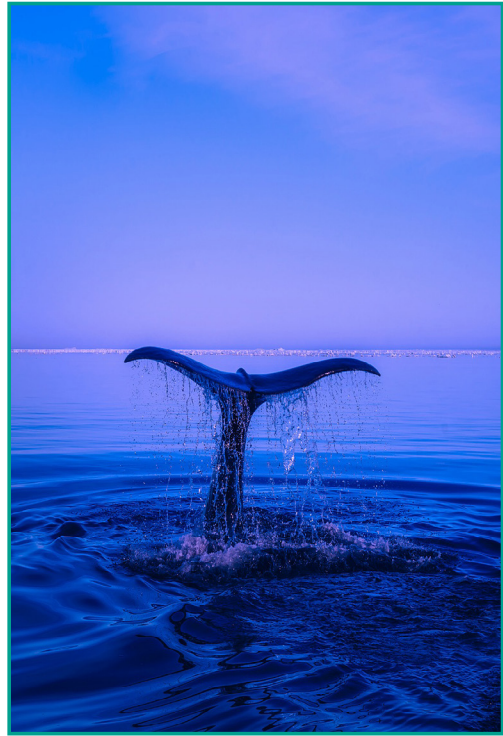
Babies grow inside their mothers for just under 12 months and when calves are born, they measure about 6 metres in length. Humpback whales tend to live alone or in small groups (pods). However, mothers and their calves stay together for up to one year. Humpback whales are found in oceans around the world. They tend to feed in colder waters and then migrate to warmer seas in the winter in order to breed and give birth. Their diet consists mostly of krill (small crustaceans) and small fish and they feed by swallowing large mouthfuls of water which contain the fish.

Fun Facts

- The scientific name for humpback whales is 'megaptera noveangliae' which means 'giant wings'.
- Humpbacks live for about 50 years although they have been known to live to almost 100!
- Humpback whales are air-breathing mammals and can hold their breath for up to 45 minutes!

Behaviour

Humpbacks are famous for their playful behaviour and one of the most awe-inspiring sights is that of a humpback whale leaping out of the water and splashing down with its fins and tail (this is known as breaching). Male humpbacks sing songs that last for up to 20 minutes and are different depending on what ocean they are in. Scientists are not entirely sure why they sing but one thought is that they do it to attract female whales. Humpbacks have been observed interacting with other species and they have even been seen protecting other sea creatures from predators such as sharks and killer whales.



Humpback Whales

Humpback whales are enormous and adults can grow to lengths of up to 19 metres. They are famous for their haunting, magical songs which can be heard from over 20 miles away. Despite their large size, humpbacks are friendly and inquisitive and are a popular species for whale watchers to observe. Sadly, due to an increase in the whaling industry during the 20th century, humpback whales are still considered to be an endangered species. However, numbers have been growing in recent years and it is thought that there are currently 80,000 humpbacks alive today!

Appearance

Humpback whales have a distinctive and unique appearance. They have a large, knobby head, a black **dorsal** and long **pectoral fins**. In fact, they have the longest fins of all marine mammals and their scientific name is 'megaptera noveangliae' meaning 'giant wings'. As is the case with most whales, female humpbacks are larger than males and can weigh up to 36,000kg; this is six times as heavy as some elephants!



Life Cycle

The **gestation** period of humpbacks is just under 12 months and when calves are born, they measure approximately 6 metres in length. Humpback whales tend to live alone or in small groups (pods) with the exception of mothers and their calves who stay together for up to one year. Humpbacks live for approximately 50 years although they have been known to live to almost double that age. Humpback whales are found in oceans around the world. They tend to feed in colder, polar waters and then migrate to warmer, tropical seas in the winter in order to breed and give birth. Their diet consists mostly of krill (small crustaceans) and small fish and they feed by swallowing large mouthfuls of water which contain their prey.

Behaviour

Humpbacks are famous for their acrobatic and playful behaviour and one of the most awe-inspiring sights is that of a humpback whale **breaching**. Male humpbacks sing songs that last for up to 20 minutes and differ depending on what ocean they are in. Scientists are not entirely sure why they sing but one theory is that they do it to attract female whales. Humpbacks have been observed interacting with other species and they have even been seen protecting other **cetacea** from predators such as sharks and killer whales.

Glossary

Dorsal: The upper side of an animal or mammal.

Pectoral fins: Fins on the side of a fish/whale used to control movement and speed.

Gestation: The period during which a baby grows inside its mother.

Breaching: When a whale jumps out of the water and splashes its fin and tail back down on the surface.

Cetacea: A group of aquatic mammals including whales, dolphins and porpoises.

