

Animals of the World: Mammals

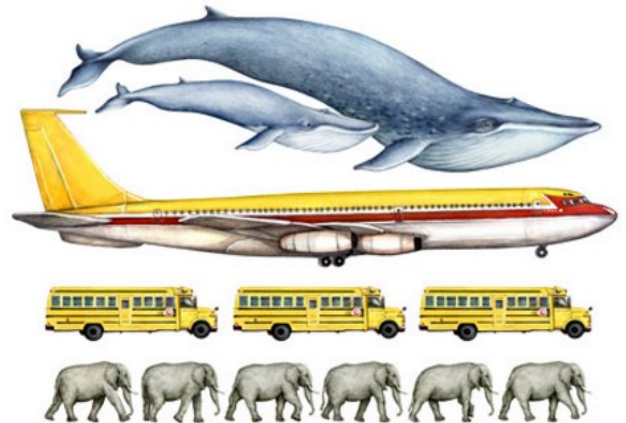


THE WHALE



Whales are large mammals adapted to aquatic life. They belong to the order of cetaceans, which includes dolphins and killer whales. Studies show that cetaceans are descendants of land animals that returned to inhabit the oceans, after living on earth millions of years to survive.

These marine animals are known for their enormous size; most are larger than an elephant. For example, the blue whale is the largest animal in the world, exceeding 20 meters long and 100 tons in weight, much larger than the great dinosaurs of the Jurassic period.



Whales are divided into two major types: bearded and toothed. They differ from each other by what they eat and by their physical characteristics.

Bearded whales are the most common. They do not have teeth since they have a complex water filtration system, through which they capture food. The food they get in the water is small crustaceans and krill. They have two nostrils to breathe through when they surface.

Toothed whales have very sharp teeth. They are carnivorous and use their teeth when hunting their prey. Unlike bearded whales, these whales have only one nostril to breathe.



Whales inhabit all the oceans of planet Earth. They travel on long migratory trips. They travel from the coldest oceans where they feed to the warmer seas where they breed, and back. Although they usually live in the deepest parts of the seas, they occasionally approach the coast in search of food.

The highest concentration of whales is in the Arctic, near Greenland, Russia, Canada, or Norway. They also gather in warmer waters, such as the Gulf of California and southern Chile.

Although they are aquatic animals, whales have to surface to breathe, like any other mammal. They use their nostril, located on the upper part of their body, to breathe. They can stay underwater for an hour.



Anatomically speaking, their tails are horizontal, to ascend to the surface quickly. Whales use their dorsal and pectoral fins to move and maintain balance underwater.

Whales communicate with each other through sounds made with different frequencies. These sounds, which some consider songs, are used by the males to attract females and reproduce. Their sense of sight and smell are limited, so their sounds are useful. These songs can last up to half an hour.

Due to their enormous size, whales do not have predators. Whales don't need any defensive skills and roam freely through the world's oceans. The only danger that whales face is illegal fishing to sell their meat and fat.



Name _____

Date _____

THE WHALE

Answer the questions.

1. Read carefully and match.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Whales are | 1. bearded and serrated. |
| b. Whales live | 2. large aquatic mammals. |
| c. Whales eat | 3. on the surface. |
| d. Whales breathe | 4. in the Earth's oceans. |
| e. 2 types of whale are | 5. krill and small crustaceans. |

2. Toothed whales use their teeth for _____

- a. breeding.
- b. breathing.
- c. sleeping.
- d. hunting.



3. Whales are the same as killer whales and dolphins but larger.

- a. True
- b. False

4. Whales live _____

- a. anywhere in the world where the waters are warm.
- b. millions of years.
- c. in the Jurassic period.
- d. in all the oceans of the planet.

5. Whales are mammals and have to breathe to live. They use __

- a. their eyes.
- b. their nostril.
- c. their fins.
- d. their mouth.



Name _____

Date _____

6. The sounds of whales are used to _____

- a. communicate with each other.
- b. find food.
- c. build its house.
- d. sleep.



7. Whales have large predators, so they are endangered.

- a. True
- b. False

8. How do whales move through the water?

- a. They use their dorsal and pectoral fins.
- b. They produce an oil to move faster.
- c. They use a special song to scare off possible predators.
- d. They move at night when they see better and there is less light.

9. Bearded whales are the most common, despite _____

- a. its large size and numerous predators.
- b. not having any teeth
- c. not producing any sound.
- d. singing for long periods of time.

10. Whales can _____

- a. exceed 20 meters long and 100 tons in weight.
- b. exceed 200 meters long and 10 tons in weight.
- c. exceed 100 meters long and 200 tons in weight.
- d. exceed 10 meters long and 20 tons in weight.

