

Humpback Whale

Humpback whales travel for great distances through the world's oceans. They are the noisiest of all the whales and are known for their amazing 'songs' that they produce underwater. These songs are made of different sounds including moans, cries, howls, squeaks and gurgles. Some experts believe humpbacks sing to protect their territory or to communicate with others.

Humpback whales travel in pods of 2 - 15 individuals. They are found near coastlines and feed on tiny shrimp-like krill, plankton, and small fish. These whales feed in cold waters during the summer months and migrate to the tropical waters in the winter. During the winter they fast and live off their layer of blubber. Mothers and their calves swim close together and often touch one another with their flippers. Calves feed off their mother's milk for almost a year but do not stop growing until they are ten years old.

Adults range in length from 12–16 metres and weigh approximately 36,000 kilograms. They have long pectoral fins and a knobby head. Females are a bit larger in length.

Humpbacks are strong swimmers and are known for their acrobatic behaviour. They can often be seen breaching, leaping and flipper-slapping on the surface of the water. Scientists aren't sure why they do this but it could be a way of cleaning pests from their skin or simply just to have fun!



Quick facts

Type: Mammal

Diet: Omnivore

Group name: Pod

Status: Endangered

Questions

1. What is a group of whales called? _____
2. What do humpback whales eat? _____
3. Are males or females bigger? _____
4. Name three sounds that humpbacks make _____
5. How much do humpback whales weigh? _____
6. How long do calves feed off their mother's milk? _____
7. When does a calf stop growing? _____
8. Think of two other animals that eat both meat and plants
