

Ocean 11

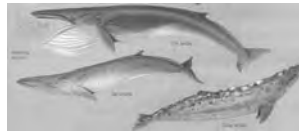
Whales 1

Whales

Whales belong to the mammalian order Cetacea. There are about 80 species that inhabit all oceans, as well as a few larger rivers. They are the best adapted of all aquatic mammals. Smaller porpoises are less than 2 metres long and weigh only a few tens of kilograms.

The great blue whale can be up to 30 metres long and weigh more than 100 tons. The body is elongate and superficially looks like a fish, but the tail has horizontal flukes. Neither the tail, nor the dorsal fin is supported by a bony skeleton. The two paddle-like front limbs are called flippers or pectoral fins and are supported by short arm bones and many extra finger bones.

The external ear openings are small holes on either side of the head. The nostrils are situated on top of the head instead of near the front, as in most mammals. Their skin is smooth and somewhat rubbery to the touch.



There are two living suborders: whales with baleen and whales with teeth.

The baleen consists of a series of blades or plates formed from keratin, a material similar to human fingernails. The fingered inner edges of these plates form a sieve or mat against which prey organisms become trapped, as seawater is forced out of the mouth.

In the narwhal, one tooth of males becomes a highly developed tusk, protruding outside the mouth.

Baleen



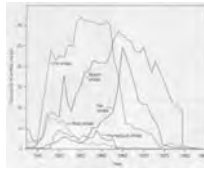
Baleen



Table 10.1. North Atlantic Whales, 1960-1984

Year	Number of Whales	Age	Percentage of Whales
1960	50	1980-200	81.0%
1961	90	1920-200	93.0%
1962	1,000	1950-200	52.0%
1963	500	1940-200	62.2%
1964	700	1930-200	69.0%
1965	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1966	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1967	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1968	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1969	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1970	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1971	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1972	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1973	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1974	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1975	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1976	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1977	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1978	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1979	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1980	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1981	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1982	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1983	1,000	1940-200	62.2%
1984	1,000	1940-200	62.2%

Whale Catches 1945-1985



Whale Migration

Some whales spend the spring off the coast of New England, where they eat plenty of plankton.

In the early summer, they head north to the breeding and nursery area in the Bay of Fundy and in areas south of Nova Scotia.

In the winter, some of the adult females migrate to the coastal waters off the southern United States. They particularly like the shallow waters from Georgia to Florida. Very few juveniles or males migrate to this region.

Often, females are alone early in the season. The calves are generally born between December and March. This is the only known area for calving for some whales. It is unknown where the non-pregnant females go.

Video: Whales

34 minutes



Video: Whale Rescue

44 minutes



Next: Whale 2