



Humpback Whale in the Silver Banks, Dominican Republic
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The humpback whale is a favourite of whale watchers because of its amazing acrobatic displays and its curious nature. Humpbacks are also famous for their hauntingly beautiful songs - individual ballads that they use to communicate and attract mates.

No two humpbacks are alike - individuals can be identified by the unique pattern on the underside of their tail flukes, just like you can be identified by your unique fingerprints!

These magnificent whales live in all oceans of the world, and generally migrate between cool summer feeding grounds and warm winter breeding grounds, clocking up to 10,000 miles (16,093 km) per year round trip in some cases.

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Megaptera novaeangliae

Class	👉	Mammalia
Order	👉	Cetacea
Suborder	👉	Mysticeti
Family	👉	Balaenopteridae
Genus	👉	<i>Megaptera</i>
Species	👉	<i>novaeangliae</i>

DID YOU KNOW ?

Mysticeti comes from the Greek word *mystax* which means "mustache". This refers to the baleen plates humpbacks and other baleen whales have instead of teeth like toothed whales. They hang in rows from the upper jaw like curtains. Baleen plates are made up of keratin - the same stuff as your fingernails!

humpback whale ▶ *Megaptera novaeangliae*

▶ High five this ...humpbacks have the longest flippers of any cetacean, measuring up to one third of their total body length. That's 4.5 meters (14.8 feet) long!

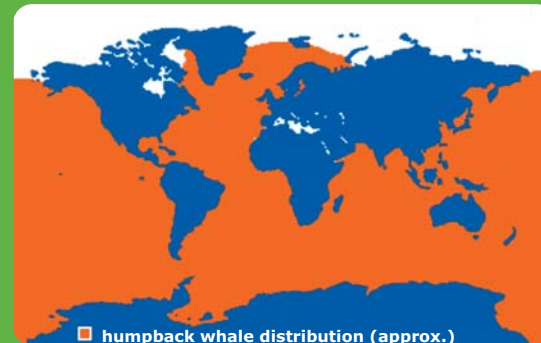
▶ The head of a humpback whale is covered with fleshy tubercles, each with at least one stiff hair.

▶ Before people discovered how to make plastics, they used baleen. In the 19th century, baleen was used in ladies corsets, umbrellas and hair brushes because it was stiff, but flexible too.



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Peek-a-boo! When whales raise and hold their heads straight out of the water while their body remains vertical this is called Spynopping !



■ humpback whale distribution (approx.)



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Going down! It is easy to see from this photo how the humpback got its name... for its arching back as it dives !

Humpback whales migrate the furthest distances of any known mammal. A population that feeds off the Antarctic Peninsula has now been found to breed off Columbia, just north of the equator. This is a one-way migration of over 5,000 miles...



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