

KIDS CORNER

BELUGA WHALE

This document aims to teach you about the beluga whale.

This presentation has the following structure:

- Slide 1 - What is a Beluga Whale?
- Slide 2 - Beluga Whale Facts
- Slide 3 - Beluga Whale Facts
- Slide 4 - Beluga Whale Facts
- Slide 5 - Threats to the Beluga Whale
- Slide 6 - Australian Curriculum Mapping



KIDS CORNER

BELUGA WHALE

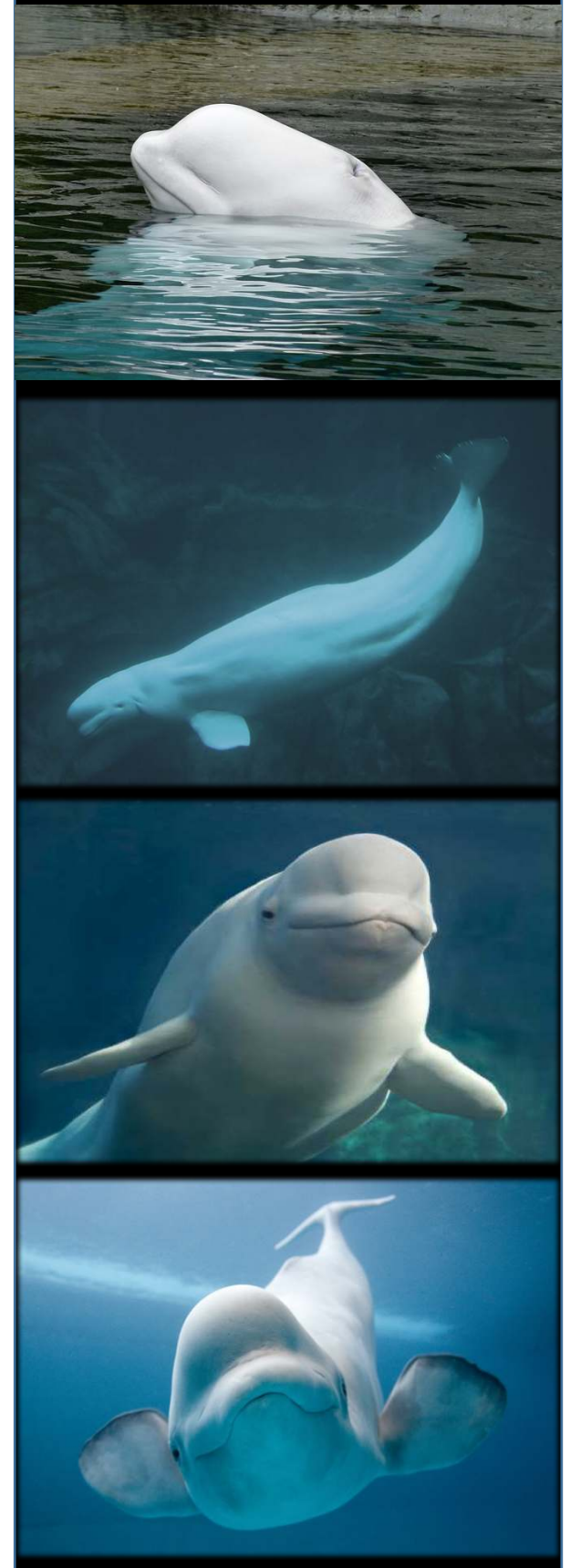
What is a Beluga Whale?

The beluga whale, or white whale, is an Arctic and sub-Arctic cetacean.

Belugas are sometimes referred to as 'melonheads' due to the bulbous structure that occupies the whale's forehead. The fatty organ is believed to aid in echolocation (a process in which animals use echoes of their calls to locate and identify objects), and it can be observed changing shape during whale vocalizations.

Another nickname belugas have earned for themselves is the 'sea canary', due to their rich and varied vocal range.

Belugas are highly social creatures and generally live together in small groups known as pods. These vocal communicators are often found in the Arctic Ocean's coastal waters travelling, foraging and socialising in both small and large pods.



KIDS CORNER

BELUGA WHALE

Beluga Whale Facts

- 1.) Scientists have documented at least eleven distinct beluga whale sounds, including high-pitched whistles, clicks, mews, bleats, chirps, and bell-like tones.
- 2.) Beluga whales living in captivity have been reported to mimic the speech of their human handlers. Noc, a beluga whale who lived at the National Marine Mammal Foundation in San Diego for 30 years, was one of the first belugas observed to exhibit this type of behaviour. Noc managed to convince a human diver to climb out of the whale's tank when he heard what he thought was another person instructing him to leave. It turned out that the sound had actually been Noc mimicking the word "out".
- 3.) The word beluga comes from the Russian word "bielo" meaning white. However, these white whales are born dark grey. It can take up to eight years before they turn completely white.

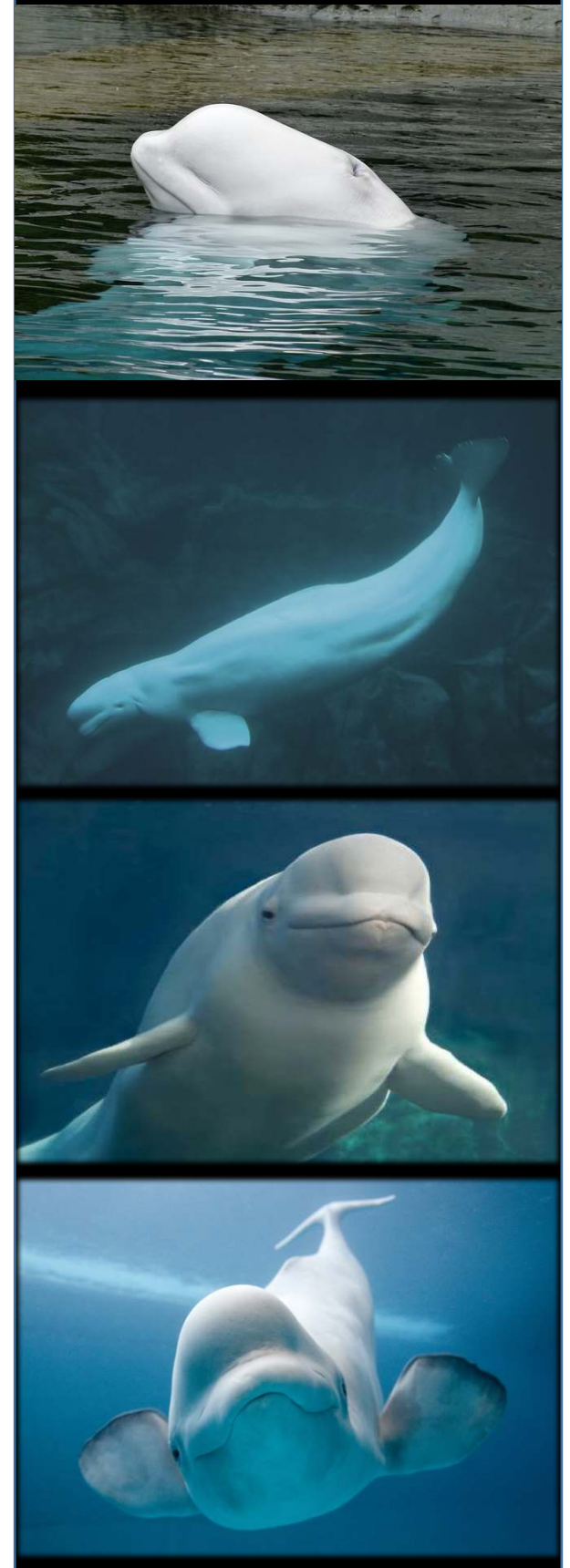


KIDS CORNER

BELUGA WHALE

Beluga Whale Facts

- 4.) The average gestation period (the period between conception and birth) for beluga whales lasts between 14 -15 months. Female whales give birth to a single calf once every three years on average, and their newborns are around five feet long, usually nursing from their mothers for up to two years.
- 5.) Despite being a 'toothed whale', beluga whales do not chew their food; instead, they swallow their prey whole.
- 6.) The vertebrae in a beluga's neck is not fused together, giving it the unusual ability to turn its head up, down and side-to-side. The adaptation is thought to help them target their prey in areas that are full of ice or silt.
- 7.) Beluga whales are also able to swim backwards.
- 8.) In 2009, a captive beluga whale rescued a distressed participant of a free diving competition by pushing her to the surface.



KIDS CORNER

BELUGA WHALE

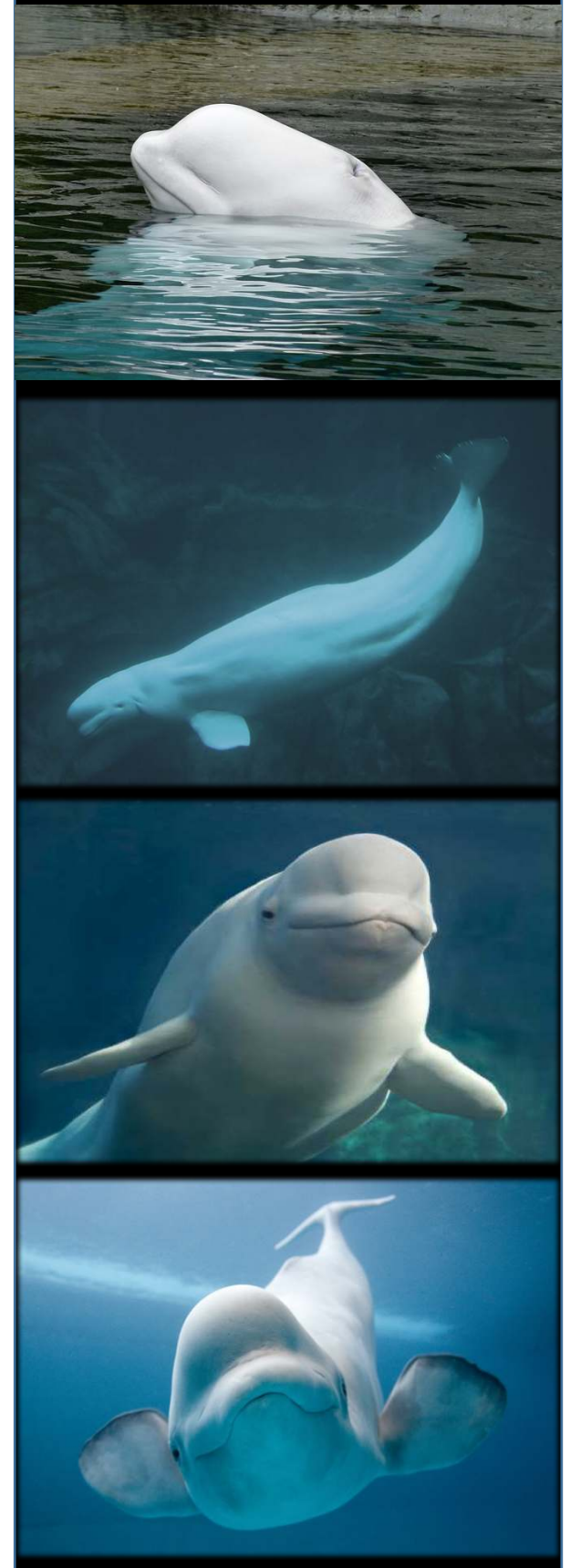
Threats to the Beluga Whale

The beluga whale is currently listed as 'Near Threatened' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Polar bears and killer whales are known predators of belugas, but like with all whales, belugas are most negatively affected by human activity. This includes captivity, increased development, shipping, oil and gas production and transport, indirect and direct adverse effects from commercial fishing, pollution, and habitat destruction and alteration.

Hunting for human consumption is currently the biggest known threat to belugas across certain portions of their range. The most immediate concerns relate to continuing harvests from small and depleted subpopulations. The beluga has a tendency to stay, or habitually return to a common area, making them highly vulnerable to overexploitation.

An increasing concern in marine habitats is noise, which can cause damage to a whale's hearing and damage its ability to communicate, navigate, and locate prey. Climate change will likely increase the scale and distribution of these activities.



KIDS CORNER

BELUGA WHALE

Australian Curriculum Mapping

GRADE 5 HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (ACHASSK113): The environmental and human influences on the location and characteristics of a place and the management of spaces within them.

GRADE 6 SCIENCE (ACSSU094): The growth and survival of living things are affected by the physical conditions of their environment.

YEAR 7 SCIENCE (ACSSU112): Interactions between organisms, including the effects of human activities can be represented by food chains and food webs.

YEAR 9 SCIENCE (ACSSU176): Ecosystems consist of communities of interdependent organisms and abiotic components of the environment; matter and energy flow through these systems.

SUSTAINABILITY (01.9): Sustainable futures result from actions designed to preserve and/or restore the quality and uniqueness of environments.



KIDS CORNER

BELUGA WHALE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please visit www.mygreenworld.org or email info@mygreenworld.org to get in touch with us.

Download our mobile game app, World of the Wild, and see how you can participate in virtual wildlife conservation.

