

In Conclusion...

Did you know that there are fewer than 300 North Atlantic right whales left on the planet? These whales mate and reproduce off the coast of Georgia every winter. Most people will never get to see a live right whale because over-hunting and pollution have killed most of the population.

It's easy to sit back and think, "What a shame," when bad things happen, but a *woulda, coulda, shoulda* attitude won't save our endangered whales. Please try to do your part to help **all** of these amazing and majestic mammals. Feel free to copy this booklet and share it with your friends. It is also available online at <http://www.huelsman-bell.com/actnow.pdf>, so bookmark and forward the address. For more information, you can contact Alissa at lissy38@hotmail.com. Thanks for helping to save Earth's largest children!

Additional Sources:

<http://www.epa.gov>

<http://www.gadnr.org>

<http://www.wikipedia.org>

<http://www.consumerreports.org>



All images by Alissa Huelsman-Bell. Photographs taken at Stellwagen Bank, Massachusetts. ©2006



Save the whales!

Act Now!

A Limited Time Offer



Ten simple things you can do to help whales

(Even if you live nowhere near them!)

By Alissa Huelsman-Bell

Why?

That's probably the question that is foremost in your mind right now. *Why should I help whales? Why should I care? What's so great about a big dumb whale anyway?*

There are a lot of different ways to look at these questions. From an aesthetic perspective, whales, despite their large size, are very graceful and beautiful creatures. Many people find great enjoyment in observing whales. From an economic perspective, whales can generate money for our economy. Whale watching has taken off over the last few years and provided jobs, increased tourism, and generally contributed to commerce in many places around the world. From a scientific perspective, studying whales helps scientists expand their understanding of the marine environment, of communication among various species, and of the impact that human actions have on oceans. Whales are, in many ways, a sort of litmus test for the health of our oceans.

Another way to look at why whales are important is a philosophical one. Why do humans care about gorillas or dolphins or panda bears? Because they are cute and cuddly? Perhaps we seek to find something of ourselves in those animal faces. Whales are no



Example of a humpback whale's use of tools—the bubble net entraps small fish, causing them to ball together

Whale Watching



To see the whales for yourself, why not enjoy a whale watching excursion on your next vacation?

Whales can be found all over the world. Their migration patterns vary depending on the type of whale and the season. Humpbacks generally head for colder waters such as Alaska and Massachusetts for the summer because the food sources are abundant at that time of year. Mating and calving take place in winter in warmer ocean waters such as those in Hawaii and the Caribbean. At either time of year, you are likely to encounter surface behavior including breaching, or jumping out of the water.

Visit some of the sites below for more information, or conduct your own search.

- Gloucester, Massachusetts:
<http://www.seethewhales.com>
- Monterey, California:
<http://www.montereybaywhalewatch.com>
- Holualoa, Hawaii:
<http://www.ilovewhales.com>
- Juneau, Alaska:
<http://www.orcaenterprises.com>
- Washington State:
<http://www.gowhalewatch.com>



Humpback calf on its back, waving pectoral fins in the air



#10

Educate yourself and become an advocate for whales.

- <http://www.whalecenter.org>
- <http://www.oceanalliance.org>
- <http://stellwagen.nos.noaa.gov/welcome.html>
- <http://www.acsonline.org/index.html>
- <http://csiwhalesalive.org/>
- <http://www.marinemammalcenter.org/>
- <http://nmml.afsc.noaa.gov/>
- <https://whales.org/>
- <http://www.rightwhaleweb.org/>
- <http://www.nmsfocean.org/>
- <http://www.coastalstudies.org/>
- <http://www.wdes.org/>
- <http://www.iwcoffice.org/>



Humpback's blowhole

different. When considering the enormity of these animals, it's hard for humans not to feel very small. Whales are gentle giants of the seas—ancient, inscrutable, and seemingly ageless. They are generally peaceful creatures who seek nothing more than a meal, a mate, and a quiet life. How are they so different from us?

A recent study (<http://www.cnn.com/2006/TECH/science/11/27/humpback.whales.brains.reut/index.html>) found that humpback whales have the same types of brain cells that are found in humans and higher mammals like apes and dolphins. This finding leads researchers to believe that the humpbacks are smarter than originally thought. Anyone who has ever seen whales in their natural environment can tell you that these animals are intelligent. Perhaps there is a certain amount of respect and awe we feel for creatures who demonstrate a “higher” intelligence somewhat like our own.

Maybe we care for whales because if we don't, we risk losing some part of ourselves that makes us human. As cohabitants on this big blue planet, it is our duty and responsibility to look after our neighbors, regardless of how similar or different they may be. It is true that 90% of the species that have lived on Earth are now extinct, so it is likely that the whales will one day be no more. However, the same likelihood exists that human beings may also one day be an endangered species. We can't keep Mother Nature from exerting her will, but we can certainly appreciate and care for the creatures she has entrusted to us during our short stay on Earth. So, my question to you is, **“Why not?”**



Once fish are “ensnared” in the bubble net, the whale comes up for a big gulp!



Random Whale Facts

- Whales and dolphins are all members of the cetacean order. This large group is divided into baleen whales and toothed whales.
 - To feed, baleen whales such as blues, humpbacks, and fin whales gulp a huge mouthful of water and small fish or krill, close their mouths, and force the water back out while baleen acts like a filter, keeping the fish inside. Baleen whales have two blowholes.
 - Toothed whales like orcas (killer whales), belugas, and sperm whales are predatory and will catch larger prey such as fish, squid, and seals with their teeth. Toothed whales have one blowhole.
- Blue whales are believed to be the largest animals that ever inhabited Earth. They can grow up to 100 feet in length. When calves are born, they are between 23—27 feet long. Babies drink about 100 gallons of their mother's milk a day, leading to an average gain of 200 pounds per diem!
- Only male humpback whales sing songs.
- The St. Lawrence River is so polluted with toxins such as mercury and lead that the beluga whales who live there are considered toxic waste when they perish. Visit <http://www.whales-online.net> for details.
- Scientists have acquired and studied blubber samples from whales across the globe, and they have found that there is not one single marine environment on this planet that is not contaminated with some kind of pollution. It's scary to think that humans are largely responsible!



Humpback mom teaches her calf how to breach

#9



Buy organic food.

Food farmed using organic methods is not only good for your body, it's good for the environment too. Organic crops are grown without use of artificial fertilizers, pesticides, or other dangerous additives. This is good news for whales because it means fewer harmful chemicals are being dumped into water sources that lead to the oceans.

Whenever you can, try to buy food from local sources. The shorter the distance the food travels, the less pollution created in the transport process. Many major grocery chains such as Wal-Mart, Kroger, and Publix carry a variety of organic products. Check out organic food from the following producers:

<http://www.localharvest.org>

<http://www.horizonorganic.com>

<http://organicvalley.coop>

<http://www.earthboundfarm.com>

<http://wellnessgrocer.com>



Humpback calf breaching



#8

Participate in trash clean up in your city.

Doing something that gives back to your community is a great way to make yourself feel good, and you give something back to the community! Cleaning up a local waterway, or even just your neighborhood, can help whales thousands of miles away. The hard part is having a solid plan and plenty of volunteers to help. While you can do your part by picking up trash whenever you see it, you can't really put a dent into pollution without lots of help. Check with your local government to see if any clean-ups are scheduled for your area. If not, use the links below to learn how to organize your own.

<http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/river/pdf/rivercleanup.pdf>

<http://www.riversalive.org/Rivers%20Alive%20cleanup%20guide.pdf>



Breaching humpback

#1



Dispose of all trash properly.

Cigarette butts and fast food containers, as well as all other trash, should be placed in trash bins. Large amounts of trash generated on land ends up in water sources that feed into the ocean. Not only does garbage pose a problem because of its long biodegradation time, but plastic trash often becomes food for sea creatures like whales. Below is a list of biodegradation times of common types of trash that make their way into our oceans.

- Paper: 2-5 months
- Rope: 3-14 months
- Cigarette filters: 1 to 12 years
- Tetrapaks, milk cartons: 5 years
- Plastic bags: 10-20 years
- Plastic 6-pack holder rings: 450 years
- Styrofoam cup: 1-100 years

Also, never throw trash into storm drains. These drains deposit directly into sources that make their way to the ocean.



Humpback whale surface feeding



#2

Reduce, reuse, and recycle!

Less pollution is an absolute necessity for the recovery of marine mammals such as humpbacks and the highly endangered right whales that visit the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina.

Choosing items with little or no excess packaging is healthier for the environment. When purchasing disposable items, try to find things that can be recycled.

Most sanitation services provide recycling of glass, aluminum, newspaper, and plastics numbers 1 and 2. Often these services allow customers to mix media in recycle bins. Also, many grocery stores are starting to recycle used plastic grocery bags. All you have to do is collect and drop them off the next time you shop!

Once you get into the habit of recycling, it becomes second nature. If you don't do it already, please try!



Breaching humpback whale

#7



Cut your six-pack rings before throwing them in the trash.

Not only do six-pack rings hurt animals on land, but they can also harm marine animals like whales. Like all kinds of trash, six-pack rings can end up in oceans too. Again, these plastics pose a threat similar to that of balloons. Rings can entangle, introduce infection, accumulate in the stomach, and choke whales. Be sure to cut six-pack rings before throwing them away. And on a different but related topic, try not to use Styrofoam unless you plan to recycle it. This stuff is not only harsh on the environment (manufacture creates by-products that lead to global warming), but it also ends up getting eaten by various animals.

Read about the giant trash vortex in the Pacific Ocean:

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/TECH/science/11/06/plastic.trash.vortex.reut/index.html>



Another double breach—mom and calf



#6

Encourage law makers to reduce our dependency on oil and other fossil fuels.

We need to enact laws that force car makers to develop and use alternative fuel sources. Off-shore oil and gas platforms are big sources of water pollution. Renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and geothermal power do not pollute at all. If we can put alternative energy sources into the hands of consumers and producers alike, we will put a major dent in pollution and help break the cycle.

A lot of people are wary of contacting lawmakers because it sounds complicated and a little scary. It's really not; in fact, it's easier than you think. If you are not sure how to reach your legislators, visit <http://www.house.gov> for your representative and <http://www.senate.gov> for your senators' contact information. You can call or email. It only takes a few moments to make contact either way, and the effects may be crucial to saving whales.



Endangered fin whale—second largest animal that ever lived!

#3



Eat seafood from sustainable sources.

In addition to health worries about poisons such as mercury in fish, it's important to monitor the type of fish you eat for the health of the environment. Certain types of fish are more abundant and readily available than others. These are the ones you should look for when buying fish at the store or ordering in restaurants.

Buy fish from companies that use fishing gear that is safer for marine mammals. Fishing entanglements are one of the biggest causes of whale deaths. Check out the links below for more information.

<http://www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp>

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/TECH/science/11/02/>



A full breaching minke whale!



#4

Avoid helium balloons.

One of the biggest pollution-related threats to whales is helium balloons. It's always fun to have balloons at birthday parties and other celebrations. Sometimes, balloons are released accidentally. Sometimes groups organize a mass release of helium balloons for celebratory purposes. Where do you think the balloons go? Often, they end up in water sources that eventually lead to the oceans.

Whales such as humpbacks are naturally curious and will readily eat balloons that land on their ocean dinner tables. Once these plastics become lodged in the whales' stomachs, they can fool the whale into thinking he's full while he slowly dies of starvation. Helium balloons are incredibly dangerous to marine life.

Find other ways to celebrate, or at least ensure that all helium balloons are disposed of safely for the whales' sakes!



Breaching humpback



#5

Avoid using harmful pesticides and fertilizer in your yard.

It's important to remember that virtually everything that goes into a storm drain, septic tank, or generally into the ground water will eventually make its way into nearby streams and rivers. From there, pollutants are carried to the ocean and deposited.

Most pesticides and fertilizers contain phosphorus and other chemicals that are harmful to marine life. Some alternative solutions may be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.organicgardenpests.com>

<http://www.extremelygreen.com>

<http://www.planetnatural.com>

<http://www.ecocentricsolutions.com>



Humpback calf floating on its back