



Comeback Whale

What are blue whales?

- Blue whales are the world's largest animal.
- Like all whales, they are mammals, not fish. They mostly eat krill and live around Antarctica.

Illustration: A blue whale in the ocean.

Huge Rise in Blue Whale Numbers

The blue whale is making a comeback! Scientists are thrilled by how many blue whales they've seen.

Scientists have been working with the British Antarctic **Survey**. In 23 days, they saw 55 blue whales!

They've been counting the whales around South Georgia, an island near Antarctica.

"We are thrilled to see so many whales visiting South Georgia to feed again," scientist Dr Jennifer Jackson said.

Blue whales are the world's largest animal. They can grow to be as long as two and a half buses. They also weigh around the same as 40 African elephants!

However, they are **endangered**. It is rare to see them in the wild. This is because people used to hunt them for their meat and **blubber**.

Since 1966, hunting blue or humpback whales has been banned. Another ban on **commercial** whaling began in 1986.

Since then, the number of blue whales has gone up. Scientists were still amazed to see so many around South Georgia.

"It is clear that protection from whaling has worked," Dr Jackson said.

South Georgia is a popular site for many whales. This is because it has a lot of krill. These are small animals that whales eat.

The same survey also saw 790 humpback whales. Scientists believe they are "close to full recovery," in the area near South Georgia.

While this is great news, blue whales are still at risk and need protecting.

Glossary

survey	An investigation to find the numbers of animals in an area.
endangered	An animal species at risk of being wiped out.
blubber	The fat of sea mammals, such as whales or seals.
commercial	Activities concerned with buying, selling or making money.

Questions

1. 'The blue whale is making a comeback!'

What does the phrase 'making a comeback' mean in this sentence? Tick one.

- ☐ to head back home
- ☐ to turn around in a circle
- ☐ to return to an old position or numbers
- ☐ to take something back

2. 'Scientists are **thrilled** by how many blue whales they've seen.'

Tick the word which is closest in meaning to 'thrilled' in this news story.

- ☐ curious
- ☐ interested
- ☐ miserable
- ☐ overjoyed

3. Find and copy two things blue whales were hunted for.

1. _____

2. _____

4. What has happened to the number of blue whales since the ban on hunting them?

5. Why do you think governments stopped people from hunting whales?

6. Tick the headline that best summarises this news story.

- ☐ 790 Humpback Whales Spotted
- ☐ Blue Whales No Longer in Any Danger
- ☐ Krill at Risk from Blue Whales
- ☐ Scientists See an Increase in Blue Whale Numbers

Answers

1. 'The blue whale is making a comeback!'

What does the phrase 'making a comeback' mean in this sentence? Tick one.

- ☐ to head back home
- ☐ to turn around in a circle
- ☒ **to return to an old position or numbers**
- ☐ to take something back

2. 'Scientists are **thrilled** by how many blue whales they've seen.'

Tick the word which is closest in meaning to 'thrilled' in this news story.

- ☐ curious
- ☐ interested
- ☐ miserable
- ☒ **overjoyed**

3. Find and copy two things blue whales were hunted for.

Accept their meat and their blubber.

4. What has happened to the number of blue whales since the ban on hunting them?

Since the ban on hunting them, blue whale numbers have gone up.

5. Why do you think governments stopped people from hunting whales?

Accept any reasonable answer which refers to the news story, e.g. I think they stopped people from hunting whales because they were worried that some whales had become endangered.

6. Tick the headline that best summarises this news story.

- ☐ 790 Humpback Whales Spotted
- ☐ Blue Whales No Longer in Any Danger
- ☐ Krill at Risk from Blue Whales
- ☒ **Scientists See an Increase in Blue Whale Numbers**