**Blue Whales\*\***

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| **Blue whales** are the largest mammals that ever lived, but they are also an endangered species. Due to aggressive hunting and environmental changes, these ocean-dwellers could become **extinct**. [Balaenoptera musculus](https://www.bing.com/search?q=Blue+whale&filters=sid%3a84fbcd29-e175-5118-d536-e7e70efb6f47&form=ENTLNK), or the **blue** **whales** dominate the oceans, reaching lengths of 100 feet and weighing up to 200 tons.  null **What Is the Blue Whale?**Did you know that there is a living thing on Earth today that is heavier than the biggest dinosaur and as long as a full-size basketball court? This incredible animal is the blue whale! They have a thick layer of fatty blubber to keep them warm. Because they're mammals, blue whales can't breathe underwater and have to come to the top of the water to breathe air. One of the reasons, the blue whale is coming extinct because when fishermen drag along their nets and blue whales get tangled in them an can't get air to breathe and by the time the fishermen pull up the nets it's too late. Blue whales eat enormous amount of krill, a tiny animal similar to shrimp. When blue whales eat, they first take a giant gulp of water that's full of krill. Their tongue pushes the water out, while baleen plates (pieces of fringe in their mouth) hold the krill in. Blue whales live in colder waters during the summer and swim to warmer waters in the winter. Today there are between 10,000 and 25,000 blue whales in the world's oceans. These may seem like big numbers, but blue whales are endangered. Since the late 1800s, several hundred thousand have died because of activities by people. [**Why are The Blue Whales Becoming Extinct?**](https://www.answers.com/Q/Why_are_The_Blue_Whales_Becoming_Extinct)Blue Whale populations have declined significantly due to extensive and uncontrolled hunting. Blue whale hunting was banned in 1966.**What is Whaling?****Whaling** is hunting and killing whales. The speed and weight of blue whales made it hard for whalers to catch them at first. But in the early 1900s, whalers designed new weapons and tools, and they began catching thousands of blue whales every year. Whaling became a big business, where people wanted whale oil to use for soap, candles, lamps, and margarine. They used other parts for meat and fertilizer. In 1966, the International Whaling Commission made it illegal to hunt blue whales. Whaling is illegal today, but blue whales face other threats. They are: * Boats - Blue whales can be killed or injured if they are hit by boats
* Recently, three blue whales died in a very short period of time near California after being hit by boats.
* Noise pollution - Blue whales make loud noises to communicate with each other from very far away.
* Unfortunately, people also make a lot of noise with their boats and when drilling for oil and gas. It may be harder for blue whales to hear each other because of anthropogenic noise.
* Bycatch - Blue whales can be hurt when they get tangled up in fishing lines used to catch other kinds of fish.
* Climate change - Warmer temperatures in the ocean may affect the number of krill blue whales have to eat.
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Answer the following questions:

1. How many whales are swimming in the oceans today?

2. Are whales warm-blooded or cold-blooded? Find the word or phrase that tells you.

3. Whales have a thick layer of fat. What is it called?

4. Blue whales feed on tiny creatures called: a prawns c seaweed b krill d ants

5. How do whales feed?

6. Why do whales swim to the surface of the water?

7. Explain what aggressive hunting means?

8. Find the phrase that means the number of blue whales in the world has fallen.

9. What does Whaling mean?

10. What was whale oil used for?

11. Although whale hunting is illegal there are still other human caused dangers to whales. Can you describe two of them?