

Whale and Krill Tower Game

Explore baleen whales and the huge amounts of krill that support them!

Materials Needed:

Jenga type tower game or similar stacking blocks, bowhead whale cutout (or draw your own), scissors, tape.

✂ Print or trace this bowhead whale:

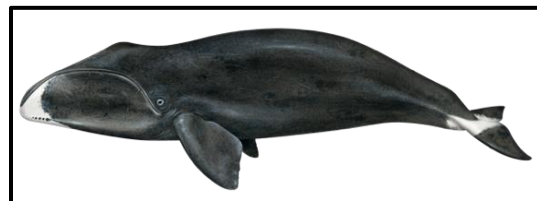


Image: NOAA.



Krill. Image: NOAA / Roger Hewitt.

Did You Know?

Baleen whales eat huge amounts of tiny ocean animals called *zooplankton*, such as krill, every day. They filter water through baleen plates in their mouths to capture food.

Instructions:

Stack the tower together. Cut out and tape the whale to the last piece in the top row. Imagine each block is food (krill) that is going to support the whale. Take turns removing one block at a time. How many krill can you take out of the food tower before it can no longer support the whale? What happens when there are not enough krill? Do whales need to eat a lot of krill?



The largest animal in the world, the adult blue whale, eats several million krill every day. The biggest animals on the planet depend on the tiniest animals to survive!



Blue whale. Image: NOAA / Marjorie Foster.

Activity adapted from:

www.cisanctuary.org/ocean-acidification/PDFs-WorkshopPage/Whale%20Jenga%20A%20Food%20Web%20Game_October_2015.pdf

Discover Baleen Whales



Humpback whale feeding. Image: NOAA.

Some whales don't have teeth! They feed by filtering the water and catching small prey with bony plates, called *baleen*, in their mouths. Their favorite food is tiny shrimp-like animals called krill, but they also eat copepods (tiny crustaceans) and small fish.

Watch a video of a blue whale feeding on krill, from National Geographic:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbxSBDopVyw

Many species of baleen whales live or migrate in Alaska waters, including bowhead whales, grey whales, humpback whales, North Pacific right whales, and blue whales. *Note: Images are not to scale. All images from NOAA.*



Gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*)



Humpback whale
(*Megaptera novaeangliae*)



North Pacific right whale (*Eubalaena japonica*)



Blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*)

Like many marine mammals, whales communicate through sound, which travels well in water. Some whale species are known for their elaborate song patterns. Whales of the same species can have many different songs!

Listen to bowhead whale songs recorded in Alaska:

www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150108-unique-whale-songs-discovered

Listen to humpback whale songs: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXaxWKzTaRc

Coming Soon: In Spring 2021, the UA Museum of the North will suspend a bowhead whale skeleton in the lobby! Learn more at:

uaf.edu/museum/exhibits/listing/2021/bowhead.php