

LEVELED BOOK • H

Blue Whales: Giant Mammals



Written by Susan Lennox

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Focus Question

Why is the ocean a perfect home for the blue whale?



Table of Contents

A Whale of an Animal 4

Look Out for the Spout 5

Listen for the Song 7

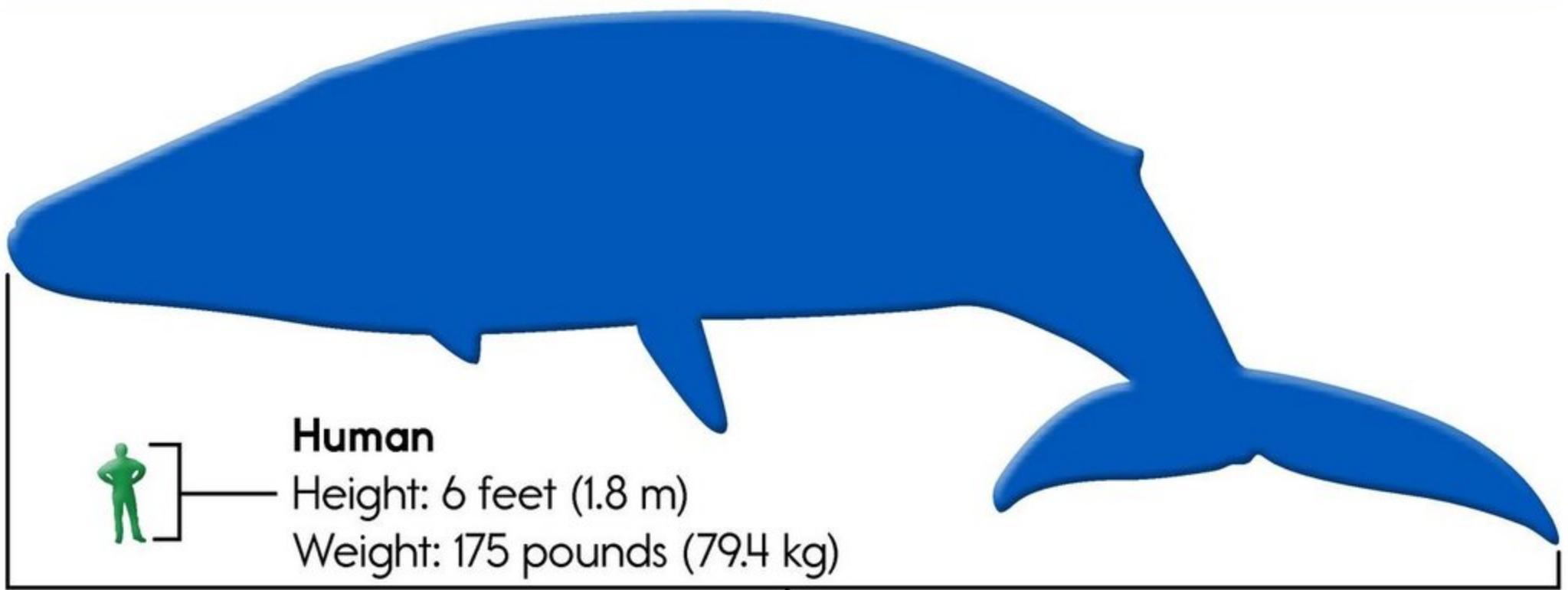
Filling Up on Small Stuff 8

Great Big Babies 13

The Biggest Animals 15

Glossary 16

How Big Is It?



Blue whale

Length: 100 feet (30.5 m), Weight: 200 tons (181.4 mt)

A Whale of an Animal

The blue whale is the biggest animal on Earth.

It is longer than three school buses.

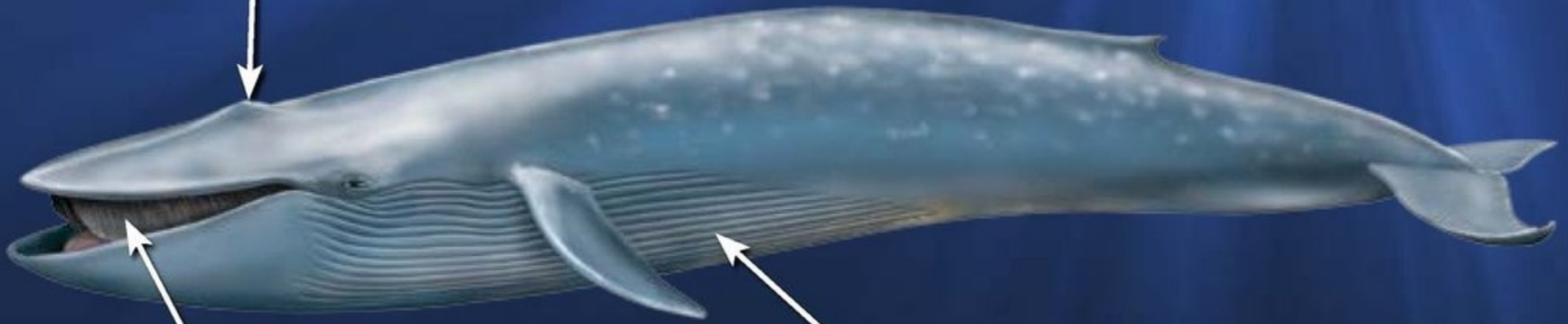
It is as heavy as thirty-three elephants!



A blue whale's water spout can shoot as high as a two-story house!

What Makes a Blue Whale a Mammal?

A blue whale breathes air through blowholes on the top of its head.



A blue whale has baleen—hairlike structures inside its upper jaw.

A blue whale has a layer of fat, called *blubber*, that helps keep it warm.

All mammals

- breathe air
- have hair on their bodies at some stage in their development
- are warm-blooded
- produce milk to feed their babies

Look Out for the Spout

A blue whale has two holes on top of its head.

The whale uses the holes to **breathe**.




A blue whale's holes are like the holes in a person's nose.

The blue whale swims to
the **surface** of the ocean.
Water and air shoot up
from the holes!

Where Blue Whales Live



 = Blue whale range

Listen for the Song

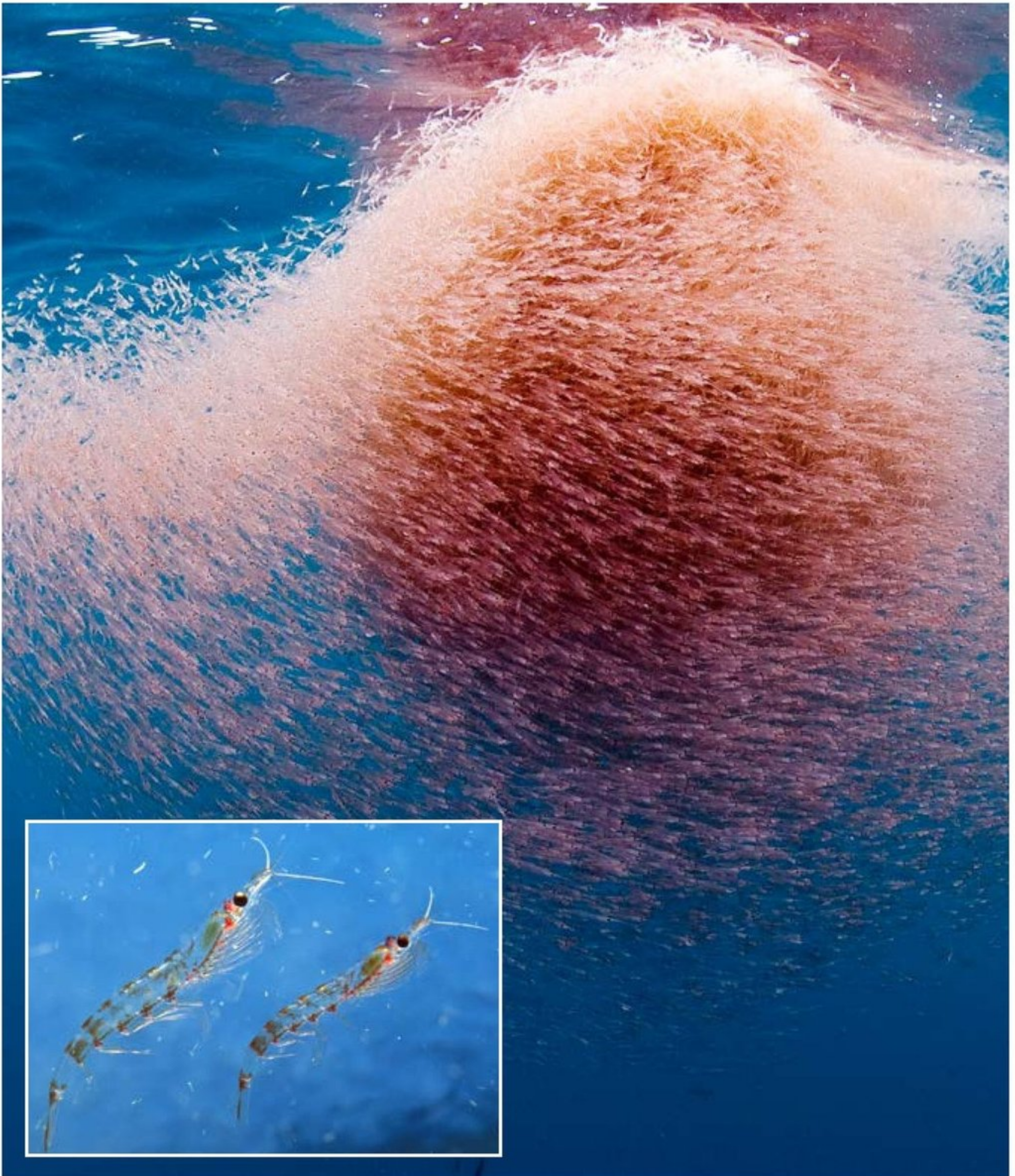
Blue whales sing as they swim.

Whale songs are low and loud.

The song can be heard far away.



A blue whale's body is as long as a basketball court.



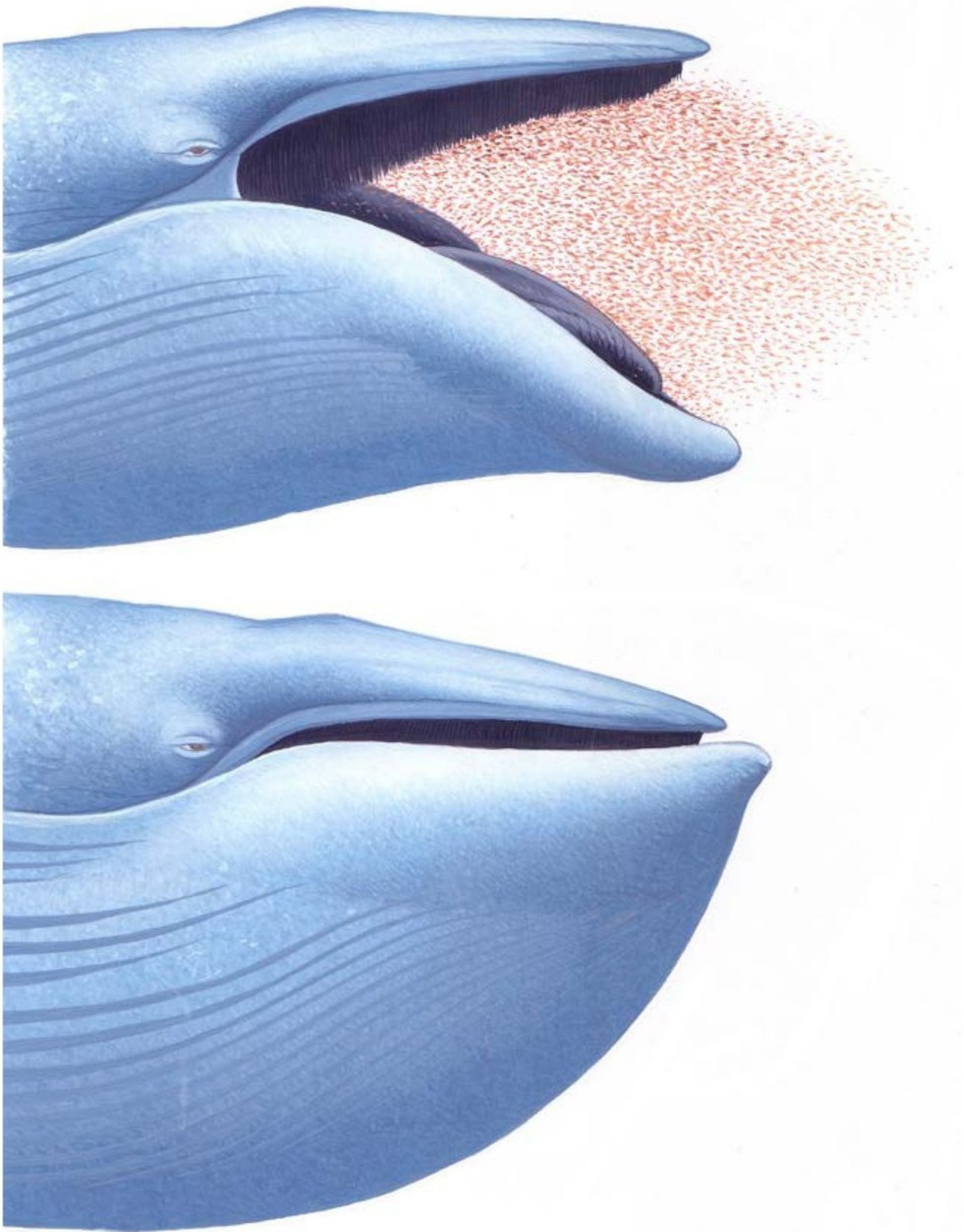
Krill is the blue whale's main food. Krill often swim in large groups near the water's surface.

Filling Up on Small Stuff

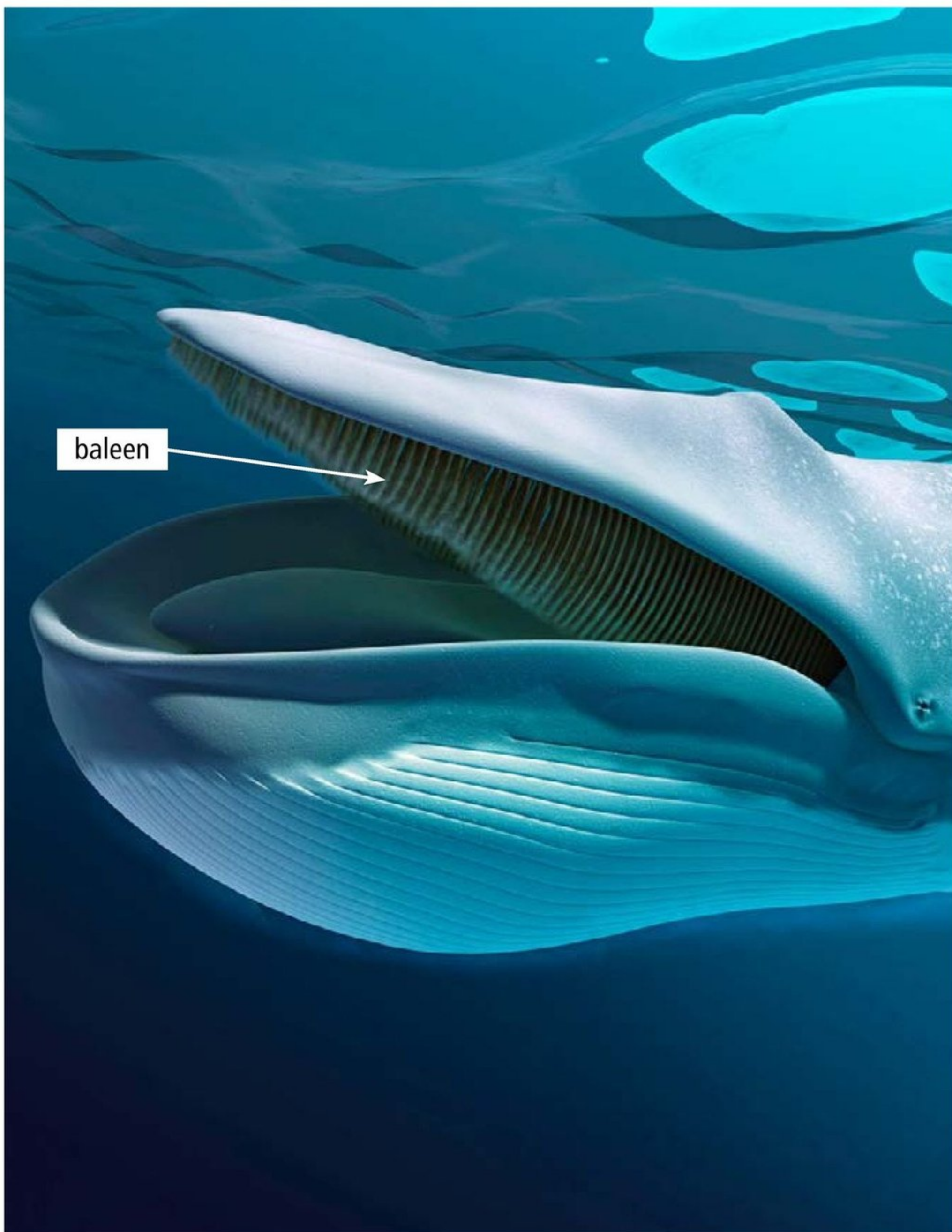
Blue whales eat tiny animals and plants.

Blue whales dive to find food.

A whale opens its mouth.
Tiny animals and plants flow
in with the water.



A blue whale eats about forty million krill each day.

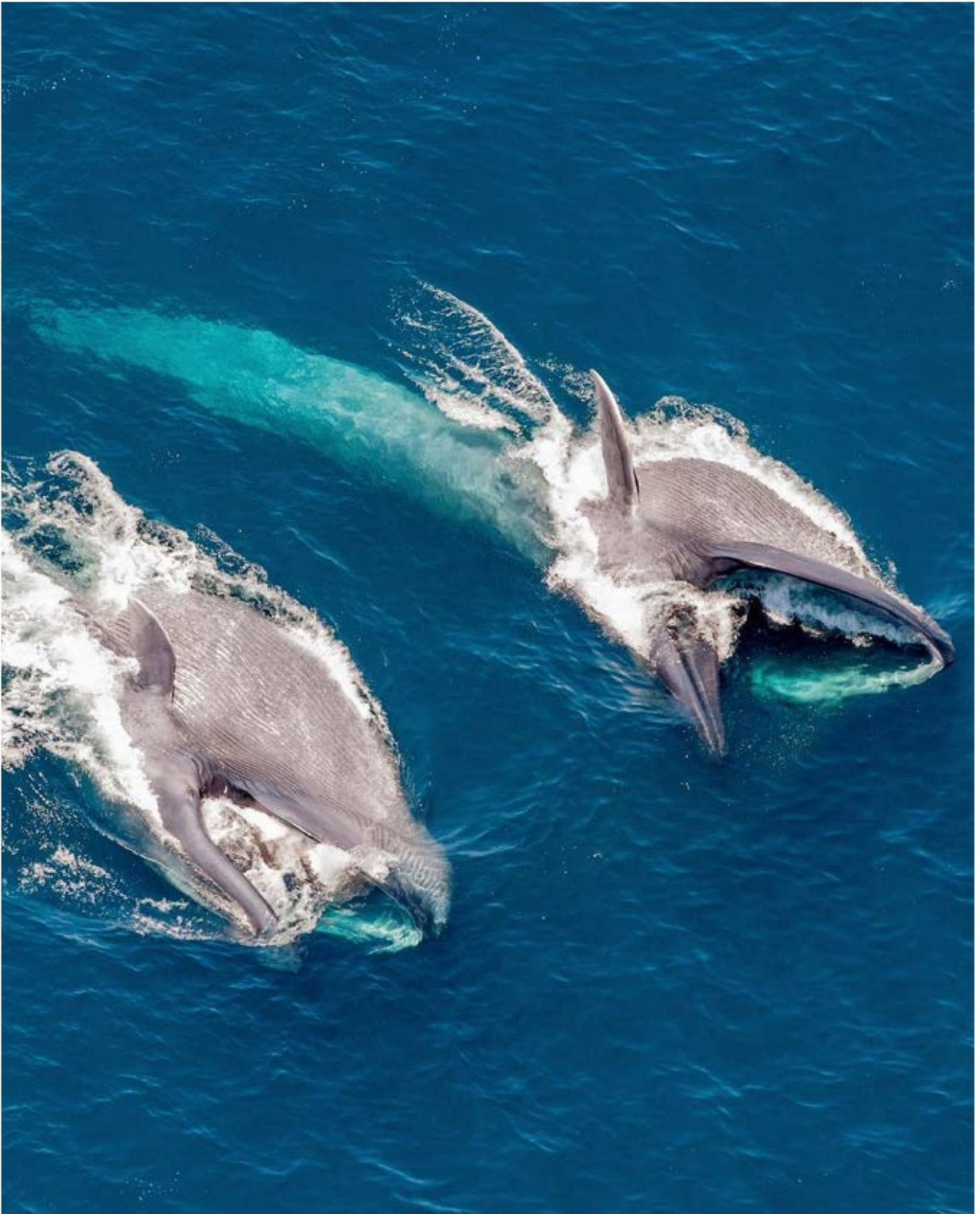


Blue whales have baleen instead of teeth.

A blue whale has **baleen**
in its mouth.

Baleen is like stiff hair.

The water goes out through
the baleen.
The food stays inside.



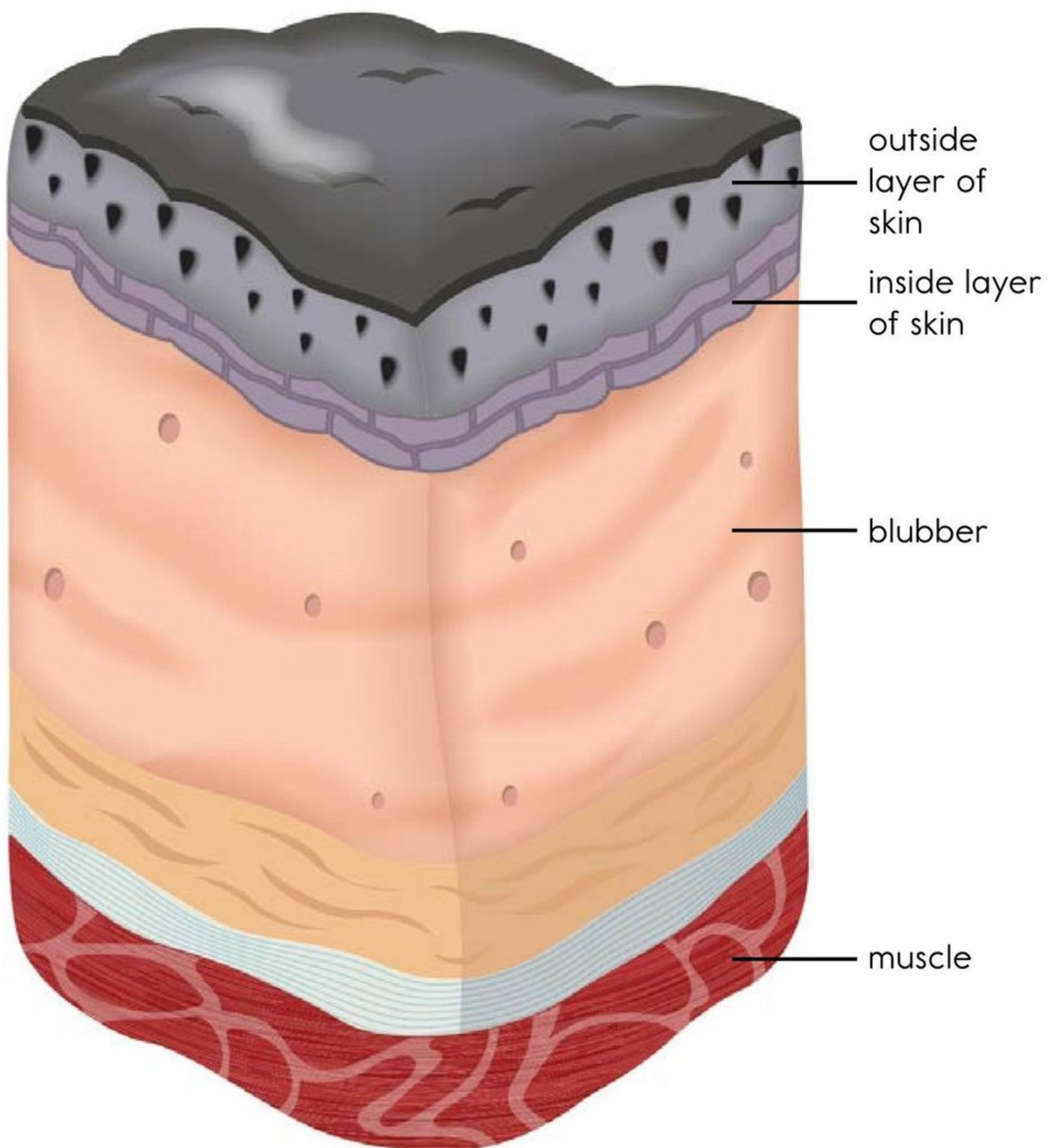
Baleen keeps food in the whale's mouth and lets out water.

Blue whales eat a lot.

The food helps them grow **blubber**.

Blubber is a kind of fat.

It keeps the whales warm
in cold water.



Blubber keeps blue whales warm. It also helps them float better and swim faster.



Blue whale babies weigh more than a car when they are born.

Great Big Babies

A baby blue whale is a **calf**.

A calf drinks a lot of milk each day.

It grows larger every hour.

A blue whale mother has one calf at a time.

The calf stays with her for a year.

Then it swims off to live on its own.



A blue whale mother takes her calf to the surface for air as soon as it is born.



Blue whales only look blue under the water. On the surface, they are blue-gray.

The Biggest Animals

Blue whales are huge **mammals**.

They are the biggest animals on Earth.

Glossary

baleen (<i>n.</i>)	a material in the mouth of certain whales that filters food from ocean water (p. 10)
blubber (<i>n.</i>)	fat under the skin that keeps marine mammals warm (p. 12)
breathe (<i>v.</i>)	to take in and let out air through the nose or mouth (p. 5)
calf (<i>n.</i>)	a young cow, elephant, whale, or other large mammal (p. 13)
mammals (<i>n.</i>)	a warm-blooded animal with a backbone and hair or fur that nurses its young and has babies that are born live (p. 15)
surface (<i>n.</i>)	the part of the ocean or land that touches the air above it (p. 6)

Words to Know	
baleen	calf
blubber	mammals
breathe	surface

Cover: A blue whale breaks the water’s surface in the Sea of Cortez, in Mexico.

Title page: A blue whale leaps to the surface of the ocean off the coast of San Diego, California.

Page 3: A blue whale gets ready for a deep dive by raising its tail.

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