

Beluga whale sounds

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CARING TOGETHER FOR BELUGA WHALES

• BELUGA WHALES 101 •

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Belugas are in the scientific suborder *Cetartocata* (toothed whales).



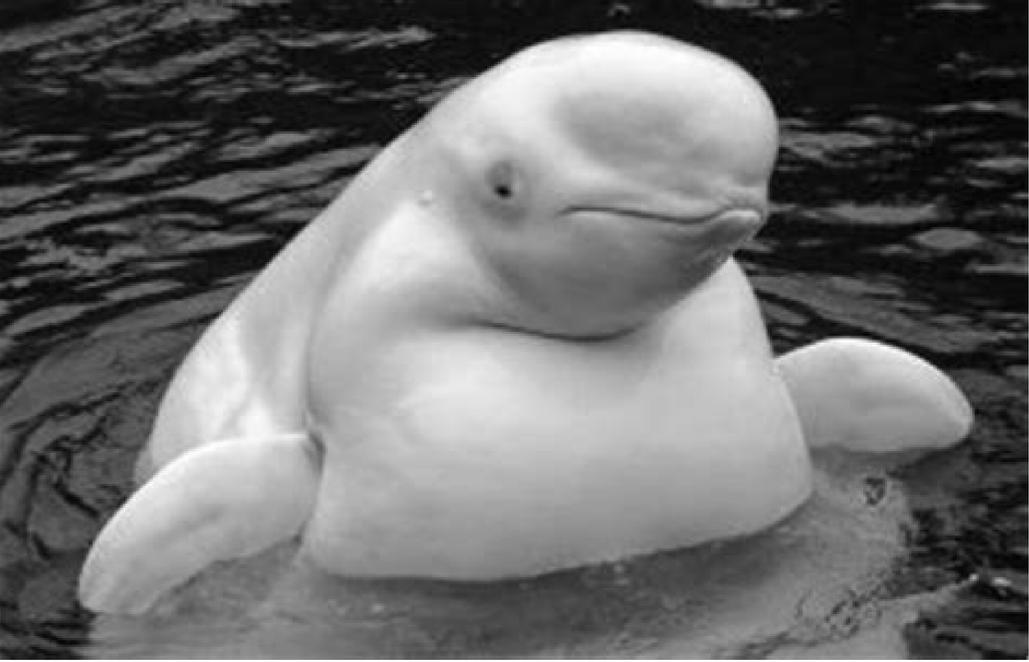
Belugas are classified in the leucos species, a name from the Greek word for "white," leukos, referring to the color of adult belugas.



Average adult males are 12 - 15 feet in length, weighing 1,600-2,500 pounds.



Nicknamed the "sea canary," the beluga makes more than 11 different types of sounds, including chirps and whistles.



Beluga whale sounds like a human. Animal sounds beluga whale. Beluga whale mimics sounds. What noise do beluga whales make. Beluga whale sounds mp3. What sounds does a beluga whale make. Beluga whale making sounds. Beluga whale sounds underwater.

Beluga whale spy-hopping. Photo courtesy of Robyn Angliss, NOAA, National Marine Mammal Laboratory. Beluga whales are toothed cetaceans that are easily identified by a white, stocky body and a protruding forehead called a melon. These whales, which are actually born a blue-gray color, can grow to about 4.5 m (15 ft) and weigh over 3,000 lbs. The males are slightly larger than the females. Belugas are primarily found in the very cold waters of the arctic and subarctic regions of the northern hemisphere, generally near pack ice or in open water. Although some populations are migratory seeking warmer waters in the summer, many are year-round residents of the Arctic. In addition, there is a sub-Arctic group that is a year-round resident of the St. Lawrence River Estuary. Lacking a dorsal fin, these whales are able to maneuver easily under floating ice (See How do marine animals use sound to navigate?). Beluga whales are the only cetaceans that do not have fused neck bones and as a result, they are able to move their heads from side to side and up-and-down. Group of belugas in St. Lawrence, Canada. Courtesy of Peter Scheifele, Department of Animal Science at University of Connecticut. Belugas are widely known for their diverse and frequent vocalizations and have been given the nickname, "sea canaries." These sounds are used for echolocation and for communication with other individuals. (See How do marine mammals communicate using sound?) Originating in the air sacs of the head, these vocalizations sound like a variety of whistles, squeals, chirps and clicks. It is even possible to hear these sounds above water or through the hull of a boat. Belugas emit non-echolocation calls with an average frequency range from 2.0 to 5.9 kHz. Additionally, a captive beluga produced echolocation sounds between 40 and 60 kHz in one location and between 100 and 120 kHz after it was transported to another location. Beluga whales swim together in their typical echelon formation. Beluga whales are very social marine mammals of our arctic seas, and we've only recently begun to understand how they communicate with each other. It turns out that they have quite a bit to say! 1. Beluga Whales Have Three Types Of Sounds Belugas make three categories (mp3) of vocalizations: whistles, calls, and echolocation clicks (mp3). The echolocation clicks heard as buzzing while hunting (likely salmon). Beluga whale calf. Credit: NOAA Fisheries Permit # 204652. Beluga Whales Use Sound To "See" Underwater Beluga whales use sound to "see" underwater using a process called "echolocation" similar to bats and some cave birds. This allows them to hunt, avoid obstacles, and find each other. While hunting, these echolocation clicks bounce back off of their prey and provide an audible "view" of their target. While researching beluga populations, scientists listen and use echolocation signals to identify feeding areas within their habitats. Beluga whales in Cook Inlet, Alaska. Photo: NOAA Fisheries. Permit # 204653. Beluga Whales Use Sound To Talk To Each Other Beluga whales use sound to talk to each other while moving about. While we have distinguished three categories of sounds encompassing their many types of vocalizations, we're still far from understanding the breadth of their communication skills. Beluga whales and calf swimming. Credit: NOAA Fisheries Permit #204654. Beluga Whales Alert Each Other Of Predators It is believed that beluga whales communicate to each other when a predator, such as a killer whale (orca), is nearby. It is still unclear how belugas communicate this information, though observers and acoustic monitoring continue to search for an answer to this question. 5. Where We Record Belugas, There Are Belugas Researchers are using passive monitoring of beluga whale vocalizations to better understand where a small, endangered population of belugas are in Cook Inlet throughout the year. These acoustic studies will help researchers determine which critical habitat areas require better protections from noise pollution and other potential threats. They also help managers strike the ever-difficult balance with human recreational and commercial uses near Anchorage, Alaska. A view of Alaska's shores from the port side - a cloud hangs over the mountains. Credit: NOAA Fisheries Pink salmon. Credit: NOAA A pod of killer whales in Alaska waters. © 1996-2014. Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates Image caption. Beluga whales are known as "canaries of the sea" because of their frequent, high-pitched calls. Researchers in the US have been shocked to discover a beluga whale whose vocalisations were remarkably close to human speech. While dolphins have been taught to mimic the pattern and durations of sounds in human speech, no animal has spontaneously tried such mimicry. But researchers heard a nine-year-old whale named NOC make sounds octaves below normal, in clipped bursts. The researchers outline in Current Biology just how NOC did it. The first mystery, though, was reporting out where the sound was coming from. When a diver at the National Marine Mammal Foundation in California surfaced saying, "Who told me to get out?" the researchers there knew they had another example on their hands. The whales are known as "canaries of the sea" for their high-pitched chirps, but while a number of anecdotal reports have described whales making human-like speech, none had ever been recorded. Once they identified NOC as the culprit, they caught it on tape. They found that vocal bursts averaged about three per second, with pauses reminiscent of human speech. Analysis of the recordings showed that the frequencies within them were spread out into "harmonics" in a way very unlike whales' normal vocalisations and more like those of humans. Media caption, Recording of whale named NOC making 'human-like sounds' They then rewarded NOC for the speech-like sounds to teach him to make them on command and fitted him with a pressure transducer within his nasal cavity, where sounds are produced, to monitor just what was going on. They found that he was able to rapidly change the pressure within his nasal cavity to produce the sounds. To amplify the comparatively low-frequency parts of the vocalisations, he over-inflated what is known as the vestibular sac in his blowhole - which normally acts to stop water entering the lungs. In short, the mimicry was no easy task for NOC. "Our observations suggest that the whale had to modify its vocal mechanics in order to make the speech-like sounds," said Sam Ridgway, president of the National Marine Mammal Foundation and lead author on the paper. "The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. Beluga whales are listed as a near threatened species worldwide, with some populations listed as endangered by the governments that oversee their natural habitats. These endangered populations, found in Cook Inlet, Alaska and the St. Lawrence River Estuaries, Canada, are exposed to high volumes of ship traffic. More ships in a concentrated area means more noise exposure for the animals that inhabit these waters. This is a dire problem for highly acoustic animals like beluga whales, which are known as the "canaries of the sea" because of the large variety of sounds they produce. Marine mammals that rely on acoustic communication and sound production to survive, like the beluga whale, may not be able to communicate successfully if their communication is drowned out by shipping noise. The equivalent in humans would be like trying to call a friend's name across a large, busy highway. Sometimes your friend may hear you; sometimes they may not. Adult belugas are capable of increasing the loudness of their sounds to compensate for noisy waters. However, vocal development research here at Oceanographic and at our partner institution the Vancouver Aquarium, indicates that newborn beluga calf vocalizations are much quieter than the sounds produced by adults, so calves may not have this ability until they are older. This means that calf vocalizations may get lost in the noise, making it difficult for them to call their mothers or other social group members. Calves within one of these endangered beluga populations, the St Lawrence River Estuary, are mysteriously dying, and noise pollution (overabundance of human-made sounds in the seas) is one of the various factors believed to play a role. If a beluga calf becomes briefly separated from their mother, and is unable to be heard when it calls because of increased shipping noise, then a momentary separation could potentially become deadly for the calf. The goal of conducting research in managed-care facilities is multi-faceted. First, it is important to understand the animals we have in our care, in order to better understand how to enrich their lives. Second, it is important to connect this research with efforts in the wild because it is sometimes difficult for scientists to answer important questions about a species from research of wild animals as the environments these animals live in can make it difficult for them to be studied. At Oceanographic, studying the calf's vocal development is imperative in understanding how belugas communicate in early life, and, as part of a global conservation effort, information gathered regarding this calf's vocalizations can be used to aid scientists in understanding the impact of human-made noise on mother-calf communication in the wild. We began the study in August of 2016, two months prior to the birth of the calf, by recording the vocalizations of the adult belugas using a hydrophone (or underwater microphone). These earlier recordings will allow us to determine if any vocal changes occurred in the months prior to Yulka giving birth to her calf, as such changes might be part of a recognition system between the calf and his mother. Vocalizations of Kairo, Kyli's father When the calf was born, we began recording the calf's vocalizations along with the adult vocals. Such recordings will allow us to gather information about how the beluga mother and calf communicate, and in particular, how the calf's vocalizations develop over time. We want to answer questions like the following: How many call types does the calf produce initially, and when does the calf begin to produce new call types? When and why are certain beluga calls produced? What is the structure of the calf call types compared to adults? And, importantly for conservation purposes, how much quieter are calf vocalizations when compared to adults? For how long do they continue to be quieter? Vocalizations of Kyli the calf Our knowledge of calf calls from this and a previous study at the Vancouver Aquarium, Canada, is enabling us to identify beluga calves' calls from recordings of wild groups in various levels of noise. This parallel ongoing study, in the busy St Lawrence River Estuary is asking, "are calf vocalizations masked by human-made sounds in the sea?". Research with belugas under managed care allows scientists to draw parallels with wild belugas and ask the right kinds of questions in the wild.

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