

KINGDOM OF THE BLUE WHALE: FOR TEACHERS

LESSON STARTER BLUE WHALE FUN FACTS

The Blue Whale is the largest creature to ever inhabit the Earth – larger than any of the great dinosaurs.

Blue Whales are longer than a basketball court.

The length of a Blue Whale is equivalent to two bumper-to-bumper school buses.

Blue Whales have a mouth big enough to hold 100 people.

Blue Whales have no teeth - but eat 4 ton of seafood a day, the equivalent of 64,000 hamburgers.

Blue Whales can weigh up to 200 tons - ie heavier than 25 fully-grown Asian elephants combined.

A Blue Whale's heart is the size of a small car.

A Blue Whale's arteries are so big that a human could crawl through them.

The Blue Whale is one of the loudest creatures on the planet.

The Blue Whale call is louder than a jet engine.

Blue Whale - 188 decibels

Jet engine - 140 decibels

Blue Whales can communicate with other whales up to 1,600 kilometres away.

Blue Whales dive for 10 to 20-minute intervals.

Blue Whales feed at depths of up to 100 metres.

Blue Whales spend almost all of their lives underwater and surface for only seconds at a time to fill their bathtub sized lungs.

Blue Whales cruise at about 10 kilometres an hour.

If alarmed, Blue Whales can reach speeds of 32 kilometres an hour.

Blue Whales can travel 160 kilometres in one day.

Blue Whales release a 10 metres spray from their blowhole taller than a two-story building.

Every Blue Whale is born with dorsal patterns, or distinct markings on their back like a fingerprint that never changes. Marine Biologists use these markings to identify them.

Kingdom Of The Blue Whale Film Producer Sue Houghton - shares some of her thoughts and a special moment she encountered while making this film:

What are some of the most significant challenges you faced while filming Kingdom Of The Blue Whale?

The first, most daunting challenge is, of course, the blue whales themselves. They might be the largest creatures to ever live on our planet, but their numbers are now few, they swim very fast, they're usually too deep for us - coming to the surface for only a few seconds to breathe -- which is the zone where we can effectively photograph them. They are the same colour as their ocean home, and filmmakers are generally not allowed to even approach them - only scientists armed with permits. The reason we were able to film underwater is that we worked closely with the scientists on the Expedition, and they included in their permits a limited amount of underwater photography for research purposes.

What was your favourite or most amusing moment while filming?

One day, I stayed on the main vessel for some personal space and to work with the ship's Chilean engineer on a plan for something. We were looking out to see on the stern deck and suddenly what seemed like the cab of a semi-trailer truck shot out of the water just feet from where we were standing. Rivers of water sluiced from its head - it was a blue whale, having a look at us, very unusual behaviour for a blue, as they do not normally "spy-hop" like other whales. Naturally I did not have a camera in my hand and my cameraman saw it from far away from one of the small boats, but did not have a long lens to get the shot. It is always that way!

You have filmed a number of wildlife films; what makes Kingdom Of The Blue Whale stand out to you?

I was not much of a "whale junkie" before this film, honestly. I was even slightly grumpy before we started given the enormous restrictions placed by scientific permits for filming and the difficulty I knew we would encounter just to find blue whales. I knew expectations were high, and it seemed pretty daunting. But after meeting many blue whales, marvelling at how they live their lives, learning where they go and what they do in their "secret" spots, I feel really, really privileged and lucky. And even now, when I watch the film that has taken nearly 18 months to complete, I get emotional when I see the whales. They are so special, each one is an individual - and they allowed us into their private world, for a few moments.

You were able to capture the largest species to ever inhabit the planet on film. How did it feel to get so close to them while filming?

Words can't describe the feeling. Lucky would be the closest.

What are you hoping people will take away from the special?

I want people to realize that we share Earth with many other living beings, and that there are areas of our shared planet that they need to claim as their own. We cannot assume that our human needs supersede those of all other living things. Blue whales once ruled the seas - they are so huge that once they are fully grown, they have no natural predators. Then we figured out how to kill them with the arrival of steam - powered boats and high-speed weapons to kill them, and quickly haul them aboard for their oil, blubber and whalebone. We might not hunt them for their products anymore, but we do continue to kill their cousins, minke and fin whales. Soon, they will be threatened as well. Today blue whales face more insidious - but still lethal - human engineered enemies. Cargo ships kill them because they often feed in the shipping lanes. All we have to do is slow down our tankers. Most of all, I hope viewers will recognize that these creatures are gentle giants that deserve to be protected and given sanctuary in the oceans that should belong to them.