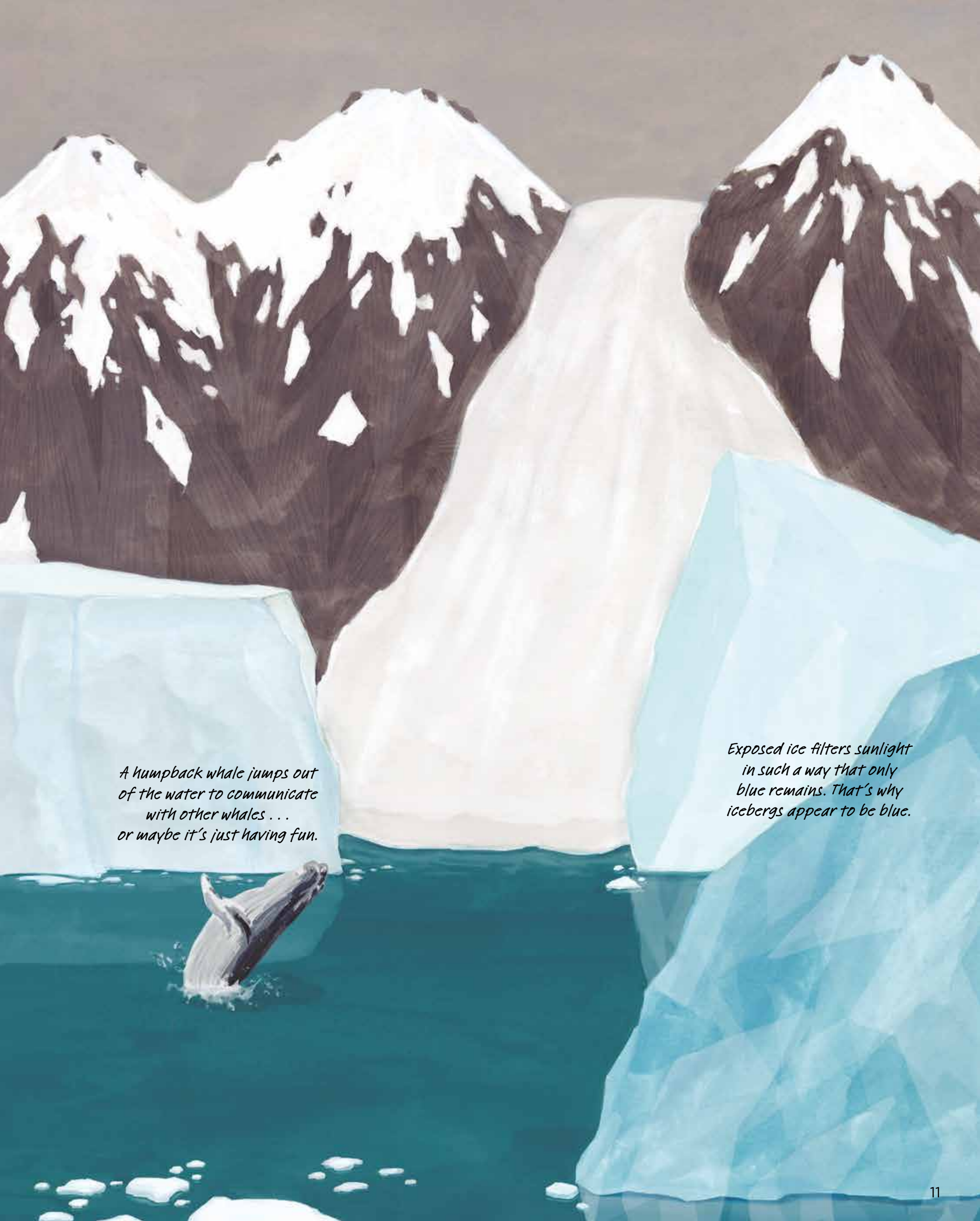


We Arrive in Antarctica

Kelp Gull

Finally, we are at the Antarctic itself. After several days at sea, we have reached the continent. The ice is piling up into giant walls and there are icebergs floating all around us. Only 1 percent of the Antarctic is free of ice. Some icebergs are miles thick and others are tiny. Although it is two in the morning, the sun is already shining. It is only dark in summer for three hours a day.





A humpback whale jumps out of the water to communicate with other whales . . . or maybe it's just having fun.

Exposed ice filters sunlight in such a way that only blue remains. That's why icebergs appear to be blue.

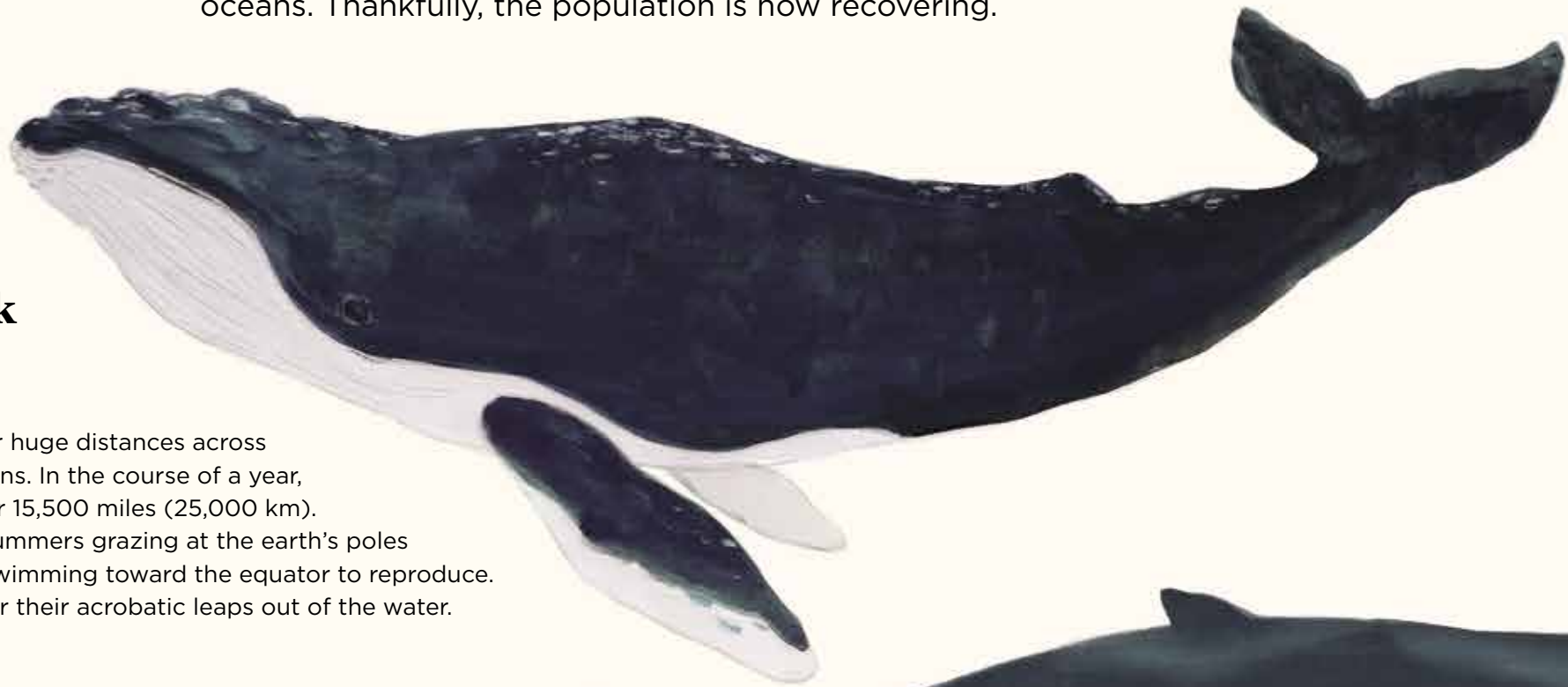
Whales

Several whale species spend their summertime in the Antarctic. We saw each and every one of them on our trip. It was only a few years ago that whales could be hunted without any restrictions. And because of that they almost completely disappeared from the oceans. Thankfully, the population is now recovering.

Humpback Whale

60 feet (18 m)

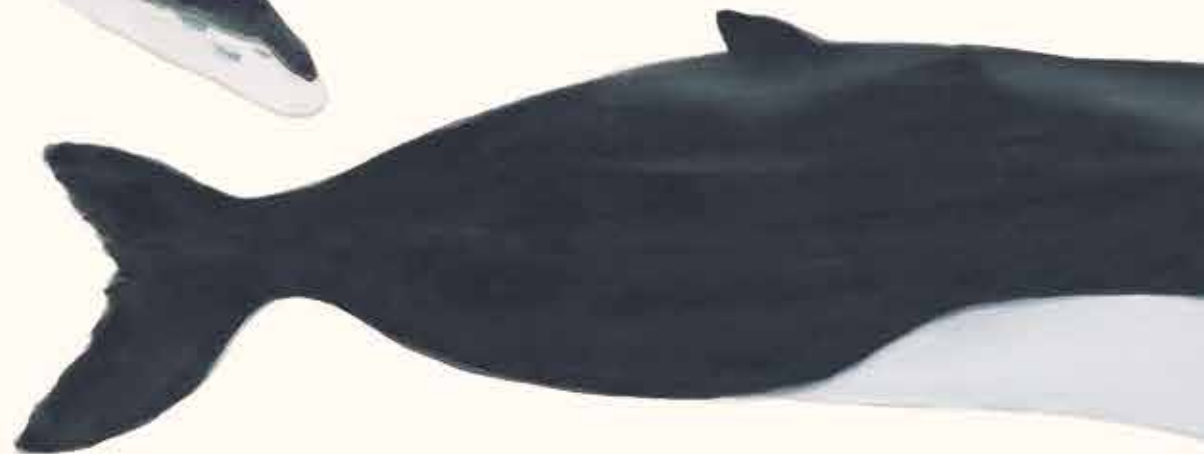
These whales cover huge distances across all the world's oceans. In the course of a year, they can travel over 15,500 miles (25,000 km). They spend their summers grazing at the earth's poles and their winters swimming toward the equator to reproduce. They are famous for their acrobatic leaps out of the water.



Finback Whale

90 feet (27 m)

The finback is the second biggest member of the whale family and, with a top speed of just over 30 mph (48 km/h), one of the fastest. It lives in small groups out in the open sea.



Blue Whale

109 feet (33 m)

Blue whales are the largest animals that have ever existed on earth. They are even bigger than the dinosaurs and can weigh up to 200 tons (181.4 MT). Their heart alone weighs around 440 pounds (200 kg). Yet, although blue whales are gigantic, they feed on krill, the tiniest of animals, easily polishing off around 6,600 pounds (3,000 kg) a day!

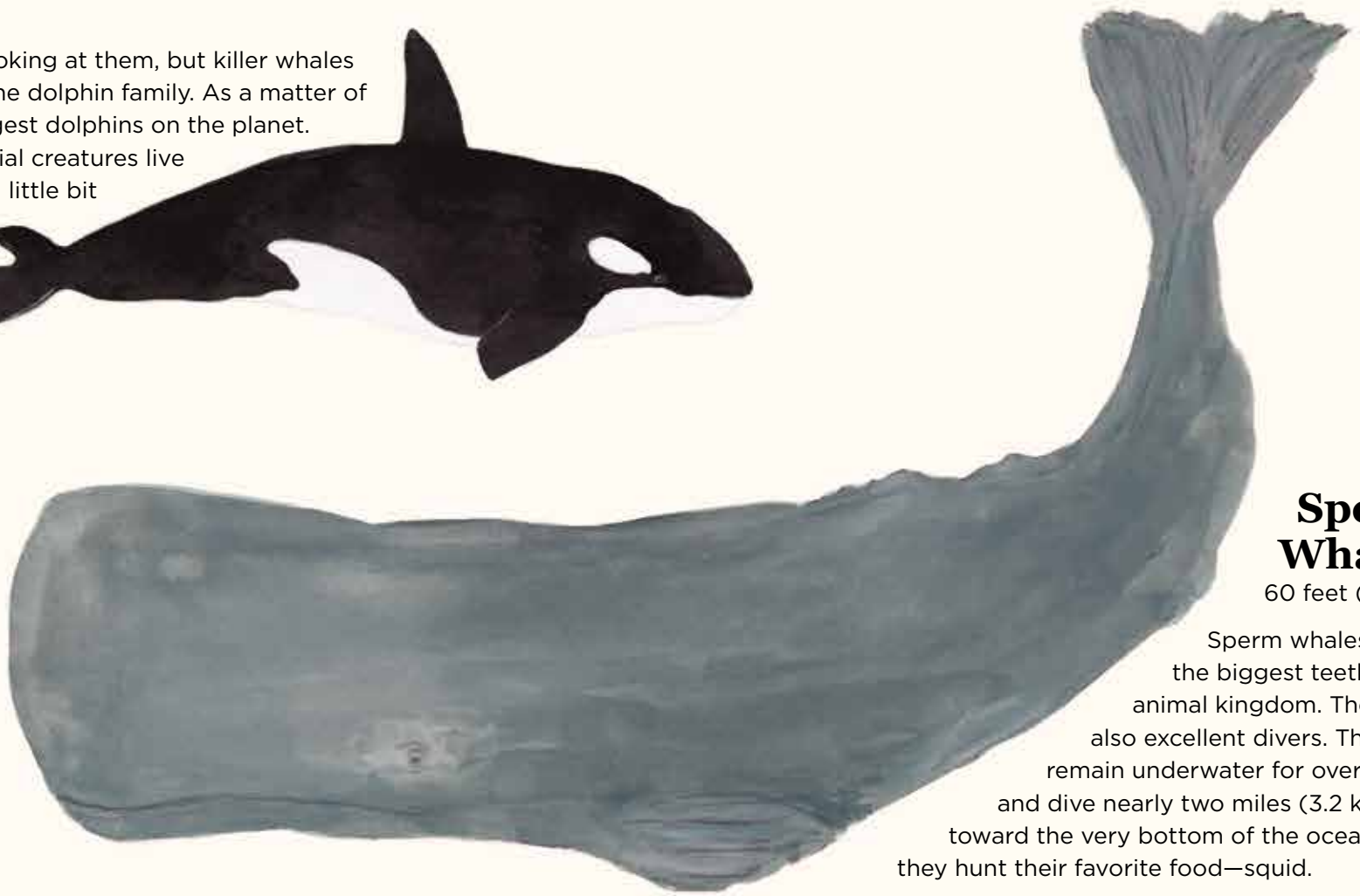
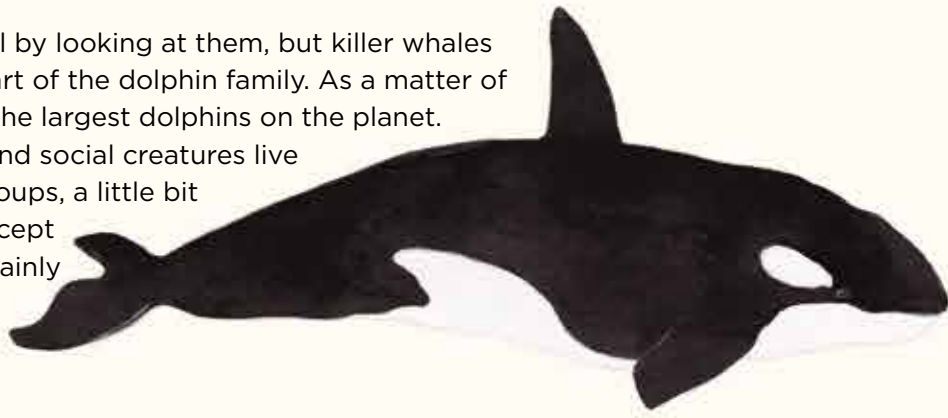


Killer Whale

30 feet (9 m)

You cannot tell by looking at them, but killer whales are actually part of the dolphin family. As a matter of fact, they are the largest dolphins on the planet.

These clever and social creatures live and hunt in groups, a little bit like wolves, except at sea. They mainly feed on fish, penguins, and seals.



Sperm Whale

60 feet (18 m)

Sperm whales have the biggest teeth in the animal kingdom. They are also excellent divers. They can remain underwater for over an hour and dive nearly two miles (3.2 km) deep toward the very bottom of the ocean, where they hunt their favorite food—squid.



Here is our diver, Maria. In comparison to her, you can get a good idea of the size of the whales.

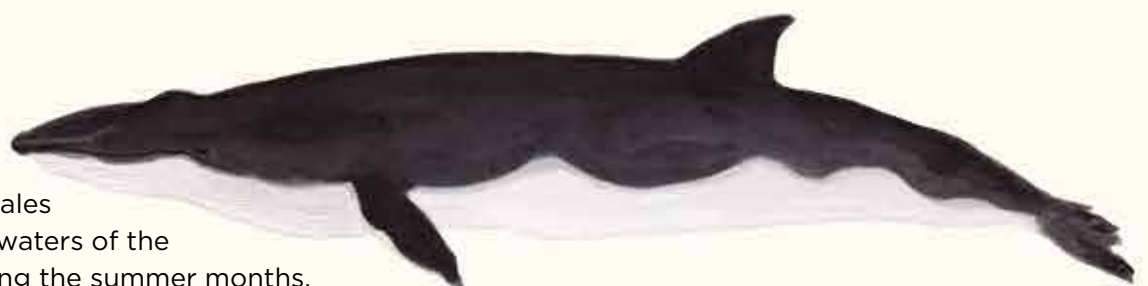


Antarctic Minke Whale

33 feet (10 m)

Compared to the rest of the whale family, these whales are quite small. They can be found throughout the waters of the Southern Hemisphere but gather in Antarctica during the summer months.

The Arctic minke whale, which is a distant cousin, spends its time in the Northern Hemisphere.



Penguins

Penguins are, without a doubt, part of the seabird family, but they are unable to fly. They are, however, excellent swimmers and divers who use their wings like oars in the water. They feed on krill, small fish, and squid. Their plumage and the fat under their skin protect them from the cold. In addition, their blood and bones have evolved in such a way that they are able to dive to great depths for minutes on end.

Gentoo Penguin

35 inches (89 cm)

The gentoo penguin can be easily identified by its red beak and white markings above its eyes. Oh, and by its honking call, which sounds almost like a donkey's. At 22 mph (35 km/h), it is the fastest swimmer of all the penguins. Up until a few years ago, the gentoo only lived on Antarctica's surrounding islands, but due to global warming they have relocated onto the Antarctic Peninsula.



A four-month-old emperor penguin chick with down fluff.



Emperor Penguin

47 inches (119 cm)

Emperor penguins are the largest penguins and the only ones to spend winter in the Antarctic and raise their young there during this time. This species lives in colonies in the region's interior, up to 60 miles (97 km) away from the sea. An emperor penguin can dive as deep as 1,800 feet (550 m) and remain under water for a full twenty minutes!

Macaroni Penguin

28 inches (71 cm)

There are several penguin types that are crested, but only this gold-crested penguin lives in the Antarctic. It sports strikingly long, golden feathers above its eyes. Although macaroni penguins have the largest population of all the penguin species, their numbers are dwindling due to fishing, ocean warming, and pollution.



King Penguin

35 inches (89 cm)

King penguins look a bit like emperor penguins, but they are slightly smaller than their relatives and do not live in the Antarctic but on the surrounding islands.



Chinstrap Penguin

30 inches (76 cm)

Its distinguishing feature is the black stripe above its throat, which gives the species its name. Chinstrap penguins live in enormous colonies of up to a million breeding pairs.

Adélie Penguin

26 inches (66 cm)

The emperor and adélie penguins are the only penguin species that inhabit the whole of the Southern Continent. All the other species live on the Antarctic Peninsula. Adélie penguins build their nests out of rocks. But not with just any old stone.

They carefully select each rock and use only the best ones to make their nests.

This is how an Adélie penguin develops: the chick is still covered in down fluff after hatching, but from then onward it begins to grow feathers.

