



Whale Tails

Humpback whales have individual patterns on their tails—just like human fingerprints, no two whale tails are exactly alike! Play a game to reinforce this concept.

Scientists use these tail patterns to identify individual whales and track their behavior and migration patterns. Let children play whales and scientists, with this observation game. Give each child a whale and have children color in the tail with a pattern, using features such as stripes or spots. Let children each give their whale a name and write it on the back. Display all the whales and assign each child a different one to study, encouraging children to look at the tail pattern closely and memorize the whale's name. Then string the whales with yarn to make necklaces. Have each child wear the whale he or she originally made (tie the necklaces loosely). Throughout the day, encourage children to look at each other's necklaces and try to find the whale they studied. Once children think they've found the correct tail pattern, they can ask the whale's name. The wearer can turn the necklace over to reveal the name.

Standards

- Knows that differences exist among individuals of the same kind of animal
- Knows that learning can come from careful observations

There's a Whale in My Pond!

Students write fictional letters about whales after reading *Dear Mr. Blueberry*, by Simon James (Macmillan, 1991).

In this charming book, Emily discovers a whale in her backyard pond and writes letters to her science teacher asking what she should do. Mr. Blueberry is happy to respond, although he has trouble believing there's really a whale in Emily's backyard! After reading, pair children up to send their own whale letters. Give children a supply of whale patterns to use as stationery, and have one child write as the student and the other write back as the teacher. The student starts by writing a note to the teacher, telling the partner where he or she found a whale

(at the playground, in the library) and leaving the note in the partner's cubby. The partner then writes back with any whale advice. When finished, compile their letters in order and staple together for a whale of a tale!

Standards

- Uses reading strategies to understand a variety of literary texts, such as picture books
- Writes in a variety of forms, such as friendly letters and responses to literature

Save the Whales

Create posters promoting environmental awareness.

Polluted oceans can be dangerous places for whales and other marine life. Following are a few tips children can share. On copies of the whale pattern, have children research and write information about protecting marine life, and display these on a hallway bulletin board. For more information, visit www.savethewhales.org.

- ✓ Never release balloons outdoors. They can fall into the ocean and be mistaken for food because they resemble jellyfish.
- ✓ Always cut apart the rings in plastic six-pack can holders before throwing them away. Animals can get tangled in the rings.

Standards

- Knows sources and causes of pollution, such as water pollution
- Knows how people affect the environment in negative and positive ways



Book Links

Amos & Boris by William Steig (Puffin, 1971). This classic story tells about the friendship between a tiny mouse and a great big whale.

Baby Whales Drink Milk by Barbara Juster Esbensen (HarperCollins, 1994). This book describes the humpback whale, emphasizing its likeness to other mammals.

The Snail and the Whale by Julia Donaldson (Macmillan, 2003). A tiny snail and a humpback whale travel together through the sea.