



Song of the Humpback

Herman Melville, the writer of the famous whale story Moby Dick, wrote that humpback whales were "the most lighthearted of all the whales". A favorite of whale watchers everywhere, they swim in ocean areas close to land and are active at the surface, often jumping out of the water and coming down with a great splash. They are intelligent animals and can be seen working together as they hunt schools of small fish. And, if you listen closely, you might even hear one singing.

Recording Gentle Giants

Marine biologist Jim Darling has studied the songs of humpback whales for 25 years. While recording whale songs on a boat near Hawaii, he invited author Douglas Chadwick to experience diving with a humpback. In the water, the way Chadwick heard the whale's songs changed completely. "Suddenly, I no longer heard the whale's voice in my ears. I felt it inside my head and bones". He clearly sensed the whale's silent awareness of him. The 13-meter-long giant looked him over curiously, but never harmed him.

The whale then swam under the boat. It pointed its head down to the ocean floor and, with flippers extended out to its sides, began to sing. Up in the boat, Darling recorded the whale's song. Such songs may be long and complex, lasting for 30 minutes or more; they are perhaps the longest songs sung by any animal.





Why Do They Sing?

Darling says that only male humpbacks sing, but for unknown reasons. It was previously thought that they sang to attract females, but scientists showed this was incorrect when they played recordings of whale songs in the ocean and no females came around. Another idea is that male humpbacks compete with each other using songs, just as other male animals do using antlers, or tusks.

In addition to their long and mysterious songs, humpbacks make a variety of other sounds as they interact each day. When alarmed by enemies such as killer whales, or when the feeding is especially good, the sounds they produce can be louder than an airplane engine.

A Brighter Future

During the days of heavy whale hunting, the world humpback population was reduced from an estimated 125,000 to around 6,000 animals. Thanks to laws against hunting, humpbacks now number perhaps 30,000 animals, although the constantly moving humpbacks are very difficult to count. However, it now seems that this mysterious singer will continue to sing for years to come.

Long-distance travelers: In summer months, North Pacific humpbacks feed in the cold waters of Russia, Alaska, and Canada. In winter, three groups travel south to Central America, Hawaii, and the western Pacific. A single journey may take them more than 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles)—the longest migration of any mammal.





Task 1: Reading Comprehension

Read the text and choose the correct answer (A, B, C, or D).

1. According to Herman Melville, humpback whales are...

- A) the largest animals in the ocean.
- B) the most cheerful among all whales.
- C) dangerous to whale watchers.
- D) unable to swim close to the shore.

2. What did Douglas Chadwick notice while diving with a humpback?

- A) He could only hear the song with his ears.
- B) The whale tried to attack him.
- C) He felt the vibrations of the song in his body.
- D) The whale was 30 meters long.

3. Scientists proved that whale songs are NOT used to...

- A) compete with other males.
- B) communicate during feeding.
- C) attract female whales.
- D) show awareness of humans.



4. Whale sounds can become extremely loud when...

- A) they are migrating to Hawaii.
- B) they feel threatened by predators.
- C) they are looking for their young.
- D) they are swimming under boats.



5. Why is it hard for scientists to provide an exact number of humpback whales?

- A) Because the whales are always on the move.
- B) Because whale hunting is still legal.
- C) Because they only live in Canada.
- D) Because they only sing for 30 minutes





Task 1: Use of English (Vocabulary & Phrasal Verbs)

Read the text below and choose the correct word (A, B, C, or D) for each gap.

Humpback whales are fascinating marine mammals. When scientists played recordings of whale songs in the ocean, no females (1) _____ around. This showed that the songs were not for attracting mates, so researchers had to look for (2) _____ explanation for this behaviour. If you dive near a humpback, it might carefully (3) _____ you over, but it will never harm you. The survival of these gentle giants, like many other ocean species, completely depends (4) _____ the health of the marine ecosystem. Clean oceans and coral reefs (5) _____ up a vital part of their habitat.

	A	B	C	D
1	came	went	turned	looked
2	another	other	others	the other
3	look	take	watch	examine
4	on	of	from	in
5	make	take	build	set

Task 2: Use of English (Grammar & Conditionals)

Read the text below and choose the correct form (A, B, C, or D) for each gap.

Whale watching is a popular activity. If you (6) _____ to Hawaii in winter, you might hear a humpback singing. These animals are highly intelligent and communicate constantly. If a whale (7) _____ alarmed by enemies like killer whales, the sounds it produces can be louder than an airplane. In the past, hunting severely reduced their numbers. If international laws hadn't stopped the hunting years ago, the humpback whale population (8) _____ completely. Fortunately, they are protected now. If we continue to keep the oceans safe, these magnificent creatures (9) _____ to thrive. However, we must be careful. If human activities, like reckless fishing, break (10) _____ their natural habitats, the whales will suffer again.



	A	B	C	D
6	go	will go	went	have gone
7	is	will be	would be	was
8	would disappear	will disappear	had disappeared	would have disappeared
9	will continue	continue	would continue	continued
10	apart	down	out	off