



Investigation 3: On the Trail of a Whale

Humpback Whale Photo Gallery



Whale song: Is thought to be a male breeding song that is prominent in their wintering grounds. It is called a song because it is a long, complex vocalization that repeats in a predictable pattern. Whale song recordings from Glacier Bay have been heard only in the fall, when perhaps the hormonal changes that spur whales to migrate are beginning to occur.

Wheeze Blows: The sound of a whale breathing can be audible for long distances, especially when whales wheeze blow, or exhale in a way that is especially forceful and noisy. The reasons why whales wheeze blow are not always clear, but in some cases they may wheeze blow as a sign of disturbance (e.g., in response to another whale, a nearby vessel, etc.)

Feeding call: The feeding call is a stereotyped vocalization typically used during humpback whale coordinated group feeding. In the Glacier Bay area, it typically occurs 15-20 seconds before a group of whales all surface together after a foraging dive. This specialized call is common in some localities but rare in others. It may be used for group coordination, (ready, set, go!) or to scare/concentrate the schooling fish that are their prey.

Contact call: Some of their most typical calls are simple ones that probably serve as “contact calls” among whales. These sounds don’t occur in any obvious pattern or sequence.

Bubblenet: Humpbacks produce bubbles in a variety of shapes and sizes - with functions that remain mostly a mystery. Circular bubble-nets are produced to encircle and trap the whale’s prey, small schooling fish. The whale dives below a school of fish and blows a circular trail of bubbles that break apart as they rise to the surface, trapping the fish inside. The whale surfaces through the middle of the net and captures the fish as they are trapped between the whale’s mouth, the bubbles and the surface.



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Whale Vocalizations Table

Name: _____

Whale Vocalization	Description of Sound	Why is the Whale making this sound?
Whale Song		
Wheeze Blows		
Feeding Call		
Contact Call (moo)		
Bubblenet and Vocals		