

# Humpback Highway

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In news- Each year, an estimated 40,000 humpback whales leave the freezing waters of Antarctica on the world's longest mammal migration and it is called "humpback highway".

## About Humpback whales-

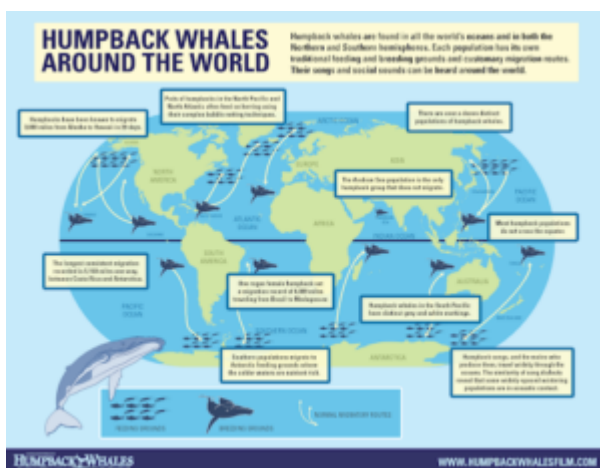
- Humpbacks are mainly black or grey with white undersides to their flukes, flippers and bellies.
- They are 15m long. One of the most noticeable characteristics of humpback whales is **their long flippers.**
- They live in all oceans around the world.
- They are extremely active, often slapping their flippers and flukes on the surface of the sea. They also breach more than any other baleen whales.
- They often **feed in large groups and are famous for their "song."**
- **Male humpbacks produce a long series of calls that are normally heard during the winter breeding season,** although songs have been recorded in the summer. The whales may repeat the same song for several hours.
- Humpback songs appear to be shared by all singing members in the same area of the ocean: as the song changes, all members sing the new song.
- The same song is sung in spite of the great distance between groups in the population (up to 5000km). This sharing of songs may occur when groups intermingle during migration or in shared summer feeding grounds.
- They travel great distances every year and have one of the longest migrations of any mammal on the planet.
- Some populations swim 5,000 miles from tropical breeding grounds to colder, more productive feeding grounds.

## Habitat & Ecology-

- Humpback whales make extensive seasonal migrations

between high latitude summer feeding grounds and low latitude wintering grounds.

- **Winters are spent mating and calving in warm subtropical waters**, with an annual migration back to colder waters to feed.
- In the northern hemisphere, humpback whales are found in the north Pacific, from South-East Alaska, Prince William Sound, and British Columbia and migrate seasonally to Hawaii, the Gulf of California, Mexico and Costa Rica.
- Humpbacks from the Western Aleutians and Bering Sea migrate to the northern Marianas, Taiwan (China), Japan, the Philippines and Korea.
- In the North-West Atlantic, humpbacks are found in summer feeding areas off Iceland, southern Greenland, Norway, Svalbard and the eastern seaboard of Canada and the United States.
- This population migrates south to the Caribbean and south from the southern Bahamas to Grenada, the Grenadines and Venezuela.



## Diet-

- Humpbacks **are baleen whales, which means they filter their food through baleen plates.**
- They strain krill, anchovies, cod, sardines, mackerel, capelin, and other schooling fish from the waters. **Some**

**humpbacks have been observed creating “bubble nets”** to catch their prey.

- The whales dive deep then swim up in a spiral pattern, while releasing a **steady stream of bubbles from their blowholes**. As the bubbles rise they form a “net” that surrounds the whales’ prey.
- The whales swim up through the centre of the bubble net and feed on the prey trapped inside.