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CANADA

TODAY / D'AUJOURD'HUI

The whale is the largest animal in the world — quite possibly the largest that ever lived. Its heart weighs a thousand pounds and its brain can weigh as much as twenty pounds; its arteries are as broad as fire hoses and are protected from the ocean chill by blubber two feet thick. Some species are over one hundred feet long and weigh over one hundred tons. It is, like man, a mammal and its ancestors once had four feet and lived on land. It is related, very remotely, to the camel.

There are two distinct types of whales: those with teeth (the meat eaters), which tend to be the smaller and which include the dolphin, the porpoise, the beluga or white whale, the narwhal (which has a twisted tusk), the killer and the sperm; and the larger whales, the true leviathans of the deep, which strain their food from the water through rows of whalebone or baleen. These include the blues, the fins, the sei, Bryde's whale, the minke, the humpback, the grey and the right whale.

The blue is the largest, the fin next. The right whale is almost gone; the grey, hunted almost to oblivion, is not hunted now and making a comeback. The fin, which once numbered half a million, now number some 80,000. By official proclamation eight species are in danger of extinction. Two million whales have been killed in the last fifty years. The peak was reached in 1962 when 67,000 were slaughtered. This year the number will be about 37,000, a fall in destruction caused not by restraint so much as by the diminishing number of whales. Still there is some restraint.

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Whales

