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### FAST FACTS

**NAME:** Beluga Whale

**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Delphinapterus leucas*

**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 1,360 to 1,497 kg

**AVERAGE SIZE:** approximately 4 to 6 m

**AVERAGE LIFESPAN:** 35 to 50 years

**DID YOU KNOW?** Unlike most whales, the beluga has seven neck vertebrae that are not fused – this makes for a flexible neck that can turn the head in all directions.

### PHYSIOLOGY

The beluga is a medium-size toothed whale shaped like a spindle, wider in the middle and tapering toward the ends. Having adapted to its environment, belugas have no dorsal back fins, which allow them to move easily under floating ice. They are white and have a thick layer of blubber to insulate them in cold waters. Belugas swim both in shallow and deep waters.

The adult male beluga whales are approximately 4 to 5 metres with a maximum length of 6 metres, while adult females are approximately 2 to 3 metres with a maximum length of 5 metres. Females tend to be significantly smaller than males on the eastern side of the Atlantic Ocean.

### HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

Like many other whales, belugas make sounds to locate objects, such as prey, and to orient themselves in the vast ocean. They use a wide range of squeaks, chirps, whistles, clicks and other vocalizations that can even be heard through the bottom of boats. They can also produce low frequency sounds that humans cannot hear.

Belugas tend to eat about 2.5% to 3% of their body weight per day, which is approximately 18 to 27 kilograms. They eat octopus, squid, crabs, shrimp, clams, snails, sandworms and fishes such as, cod, herring and flounder.

Mating happens in the spring. Females have calves every two to three years. They migrate to warmer, shallower waters to calve. The young are dark gray, but they become lighter in colour with age. The mother's milk is squirted in the calf's mouth.

### RANGE

Belugas live mostly in the Arctic. They migrate south as the ice pack builds up in the fall. During the summer, belugas spent time in the Mackenzie River, NWT, then, they migrate south to the Bering Sea area in the winter.