

"Do people still hunt whales?" I wanted to know.
"What happens to the babies without mommies?"

"No", said Dan, "Whales have been protected from hunting for about 50 years now, and their numbers are growing every year. We are really happy about that."

"OK, so I'm also happy our whales are safe and that there's a festival for them, but I still think we should have a Cat Festival as well".

Activity suggestions:

Why did people hunt whales?

Do we still hunt whales?

What do whales eat?

Do they eat when they are in Hermanus?

What do they come here to do every year?

Do we have a Cat Festival?



A Whale Coast Conservation Youth Environment Programme Project



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A CAT FESTIVAL



BY STRIPES
THE ECO-CAT

All I hear my humans talk about is festivals. There is a Food and Wine Festival, a Flower Festival and a Whale Festival. Really? Whales have a festival?

"What's so special about whales that they have a festival", I asked. "I'm pretty special so why don't I have a cat festival".

"I know", said my Dan human, "but whales are endangered and cats are not. And neither are humans, for that matter."

"What does 'endangered' mean" I wanted to know, "and why are whales endangered?"

"Endangered means there are not many whales left in the world," said Dan. "Before people discovered oil in the ground, they hunted whales for the oil in their fat. Whales have very thick layers of fat under their skins to keep them warm in the cold sea and to give them energy."

Dan continued "We are very lucky that we get to see them here in Walker Bay. Southern Right Whales come to visit us every winter and spring for a little romance and to have their babies."

"People travel to Hermanus from all across the world to see them. If we are really lucky we can see a whale jumping clean out of the water - we call that breaching. People have also recorded their underwater songs. This is how they communicate with each other and if you go to the Whale Museum at the Old Harbour you can hear a recording."

"The whales must eat a lot of pellets to make them so fat", I said.

Dan laughed. "No, Stripes, the whales don't eat pellets. They eat tiny little sea creatures called krill that they find in the cold seas near the Antarctic - that's near the South Pole. They don't eat anything while they are here in Hermanus."

"Really? Don't they get hungry? And what about the babies?" I was getting quite worried and feeling a little hungry myself.

"That's what all the fat is for, Stripes. It stores lots of energy for the mommy whales to make milk for their babies. Did you know a baby whale can drink about 600 litres of milk a day? That's more than a human family uses in a whole year."