

Belugas

Age/Grade Range

- Ages: 5-6

Group Size

- Up to 30 students

Time

- Set-up: 35 minutes
- Activity: 1 hr

Materials

- Long strips of cloth to blindfold the kids
- Maktak (optional)
- Dried meat (optional)
- A drawing or picture of a beluga

Set-Up

- Gather materials to show the kids and clear a large space in which to play the game.



NWT SCIENCE FOCUS

Topics

- Ecology and Animals

Objective

- Play a fun game.
- Learn all about belugas.



Beluga Facts

Ask if they've ever seen a beluga before (there's one at the Prince of Whales museum), try to get them to guess how big a baby beluga is, what they eat, what eats them. You can get about five youth to lay on the floor to show how big an adult beluga can be. If you have it, pass around the fake maktak and dried meat to show them.

- Belugas are about 1.5 meters long when they are born
- Adult male belugas are 4.5 meters on average.
- They eat arctic cod, shrimp, squid, and sea worms
- They need to eat about 1000 arctic cod a day!
- Their only predators are killer whales, polar bears, and humans.
- They can also get sick from pollution and DDT that is in the water, or they can catch infectious diseases.
- Beluga whales are the only whales that can turn their heads (use their necks)
- They use echolocation to find food and air holes because their eyesight isn't excellent.
- There is an organ in their head called a melon, which they use for echolocation.
- They communicate with clicks and whistles; they sound like birds.
- Some people call them melonheads or sea canaries.
- Belugas can swim backwards.
- A new layer is added to their teeth every year, and scientists can use these rings to figure out how old the whale is (like tree rings)

Beluga Echolocation Game

- This game is best for a bigger group (more than 15).
- Begin with the students in a circle that represents the boundaries of the ocean or ice.
- Four (or however many blindfolds you have) people are beluga whales.
- Select 7 or 8 students to be fish in the center of the circle.
- The remaining students' job is to keep the belugas in the ocean by gently redirecting any beluga that comes near and to remain quiet. If you don't have enough people, let all of the kids be fish and just give them imaginary boundaries to stay within. The adult supervisors can make sure the belugas don't run into things.
- When the belugas say 'BELUGA,' everyone who is a fish has to reply 'FISH.' The belugas use their hearing to try to tag the fish while they are blindfolded.
- The fish can move about anywhere inside the ocean, trying not to get tagged by a beluga. Any fish that is tagged joins the boundary.
- After 5 minutes or when there are only a few fish left, let other kids be the belugas.
- Adjust the size of the ocean as needed. Make the circle smaller or add another beluga if they have a hard time catching fish.
- Make sure that the belugas send out their signal often, the fish respond loudly, and the others aren't responding to confuse them.

