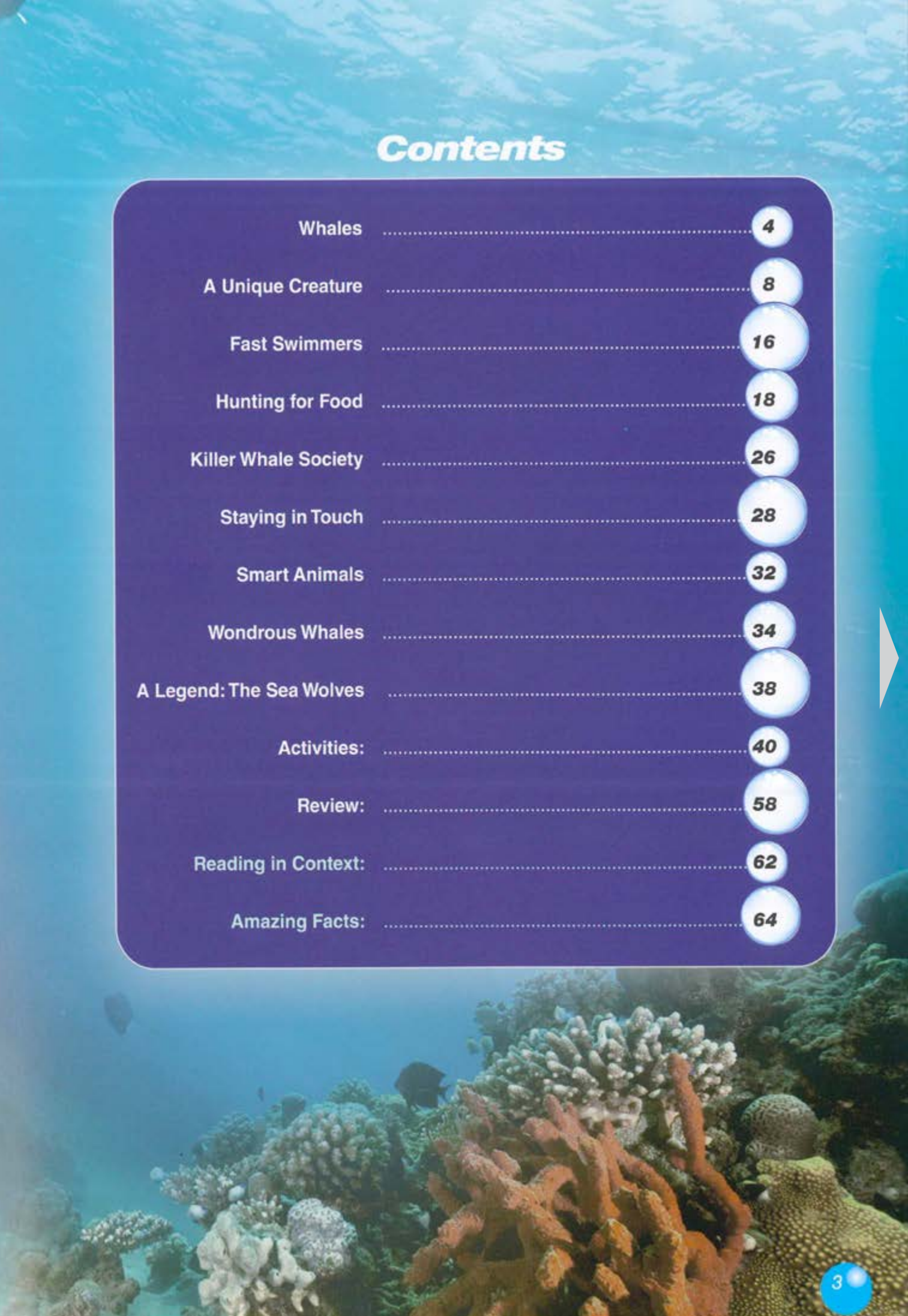




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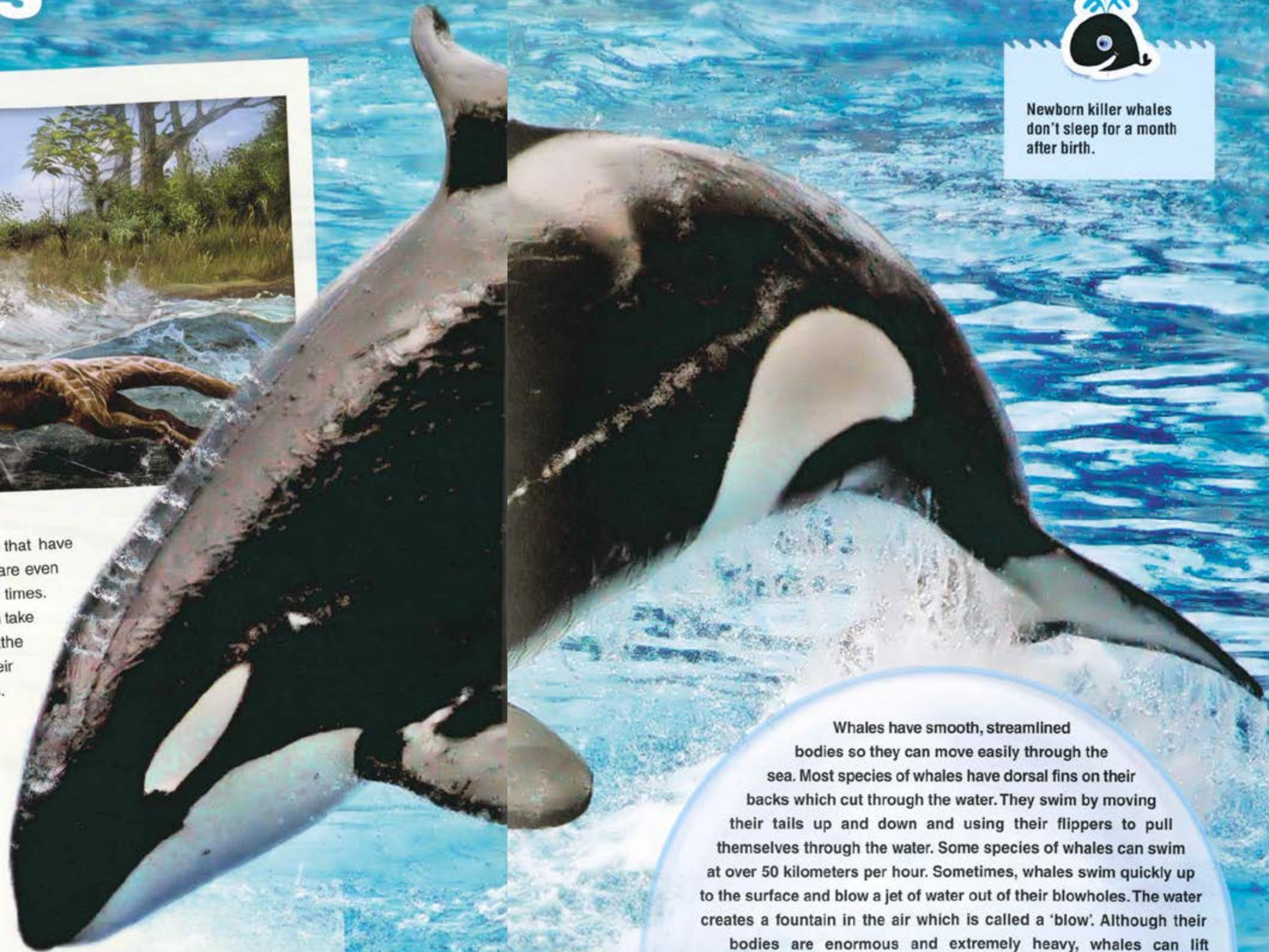
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Whales




Whales are the largest animals that have ever lived on the Earth. Some are even larger than the dinosaurs of prehistoric times. Whales are mammals. Unlike fish, which take in oxygen from the water, whales breathe air through blowholes at the tops of their heads and feed milk to their babies. Millions of years ago, whales probably had legs and walked on the land. Over the millennia, whales evolved to become ocean creatures. Their back legs became powerful tails and their front legs became strong flippers. Now, whales spend their entire lives in the water, and they are the only mammals that have adapted to life in the ocean.



Newborn killer whales don't sleep for a month after birth.

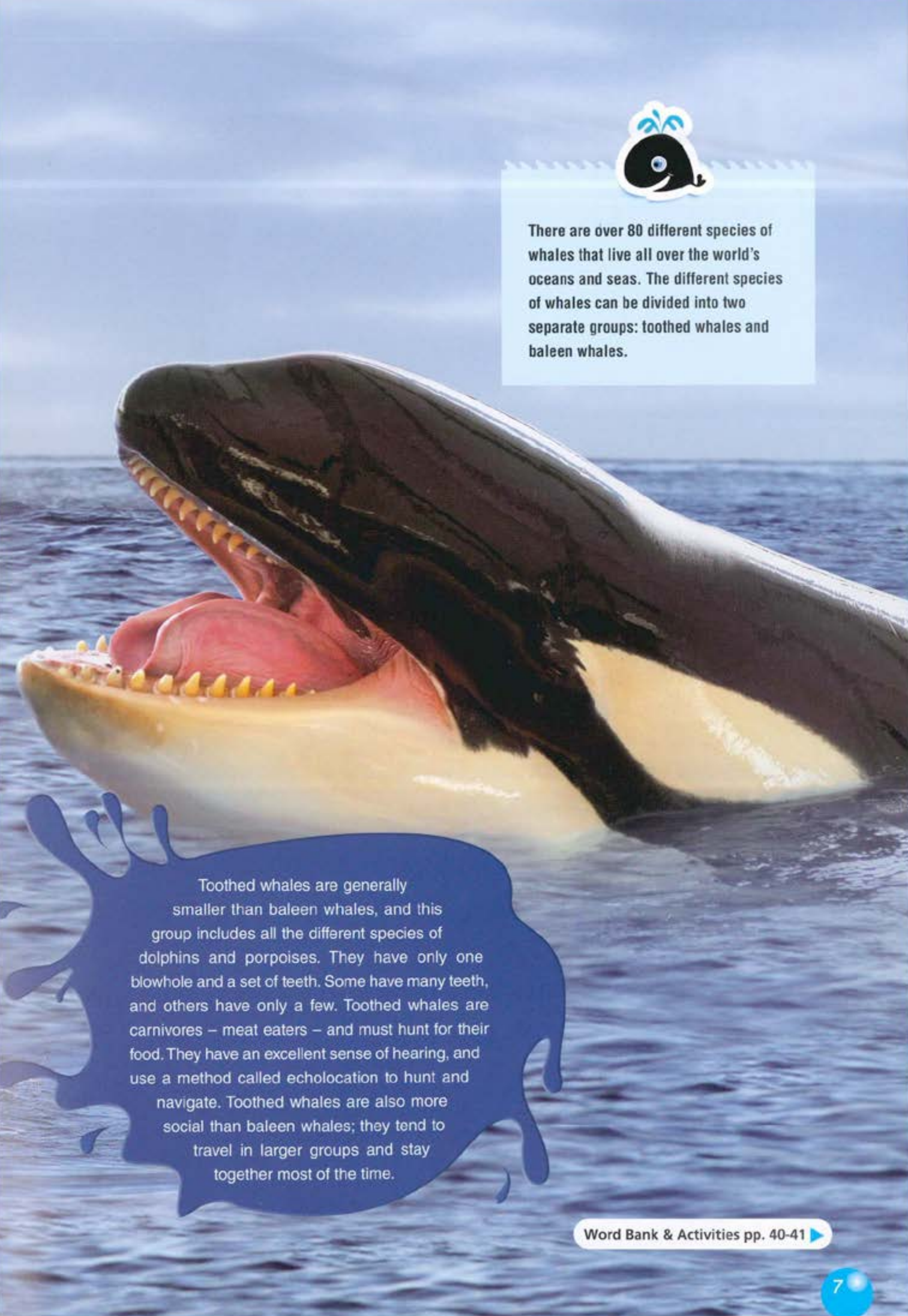
Whales have smooth, streamlined bodies so they can move easily through the sea. Most species of whales have dorsal fins on their backs which cut through the water. They swim by moving their tails up and down and using their flippers to pull themselves through the water. Some species of whales can swim at over 50 kilometers per hour. Sometimes, whales swim quickly up to the surface and blow a jet of water out of their blowholes. The water creates a fountain in the air which is called a 'blow'. Although their bodies are enormous and extremely heavy, whales can lift themselves out of the water and can perform amazing acrobatics in the air above the surface of the ocean.



Baleen whales have two blowholes, and they use baleen – a special comb-like structure in their mouths – to allow water to pass through, trapping large amounts of tiny crustaceans called krill inside. This method of consuming food is called filter feeding. However, baleen whales do not only eat krill. Unlike toothed whales, baleen whales are omnivores. This means they eat both plants and animals. They are opportunistic feeders; they eat any and all food that enters their mouths.



There are over 80 different species of whales that live all over the world's oceans and seas. The different species of whales can be divided into two separate groups: toothed whales and baleen whales.



Toothed whales are generally smaller than baleen whales, and this group includes all the different species of dolphins and porpoises. They have only one blowhole and a set of teeth. Some have many teeth, and others have only a few. Toothed whales are carnivores – meat eaters – and must hunt for their food. They have an excellent sense of hearing, and use a method called echolocation to hunt and navigate. Toothed whales are also more social than baleen whales; they tend to travel in larger groups and stay together most of the time.