



Jonathan Bird's Blue World

Episode 12 • Wilma the Whale • Study Guide

What happens when a Beluga whale, normally found far north in the arctic, suddenly shows up in a Bay in Nova Scotia? What happens when she starts swimming with people and approaching boats full of tourists? This segment shows how one incredible friendly whale transformed a town, and captured the hearts of children and adults alike.

Objectives

1. Introduces the basic biology of the beluga whale.
2. Discusses the implications of social interaction between humans and wild animals.
3. Explains the danger posed to marine mammals by close interaction with boats.

Questions for before watching the program

1. What color is a beluga? Why?
2. What problems might occur when a wild whale or dolphin becomes friendly towards people and approaches boats and swimmers?
3. How can you protect a friendly whale from injury by people?
4. Do beluga whales have teeth or baleen?

Discussion for after watching the program

1. Why are belugas one of the only whales that can turn their heads?
2. Beluga whales have no dorsal fin. Do some research to find out why biologists think they lack this fin.
3. Why did Wilma have deep parallel cuts on her skin?
4. Why might Wilma have left the bay where she lived for several years?
5. What do beluga whales eat?
6. Wilma “blew” water at Jonathan in the video. Why do belugas normally blow water?
7. Belugas normally live in the arctic, but Nova Scotia is not in the arctic. Do some research to find out why belugas sometimes leave the arctic on their migration.