



Our World

Week Beginning: Monday 24 February 2020



This Week in Our World...

This week the focus of **'Our World'** is the increase in the number of blue whales spotted off the shores of South Georgia.

Scientists say this is astonishing because they were worried the numbers of blue whales were getting too low.

Where is South Georgia in the world?

WORLD MAP



Where is South Georgia in the world?

WORLD MAP



0 1,000 2,000 Miles
0 1,000 2,000 3,000 Kilometers

Blue Whales



Background

Blue whales are the largest creatures ever to roam the Earth, and the Antarctic sub-species contained the very biggest of the big at over 30m.

These magnificent marine mammals rule the oceans and weigh upwards of 200 tons. Their tongues alone can weigh as much as an elephant and their hearts, as much as a car!

Blue whales reach these mind-boggling dimensions on a diet composed nearly exclusively of tiny shrimplike animals called krill.

They were hunted for their meat until 1966 when their numbers became low and hunting was banned.

Blue Whales



Survey

South Georgia is an island in the southern Atlantic Ocean that is part of the British Overseas territory of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

Scientists say they have seen a remarkable collection of blue whales in the coastal waters around South Georgia. Their 23-day survey counted 55 animals - a total that is unprecedented in the decades since commercial whale hunting ended.

To witness 55 of them now return to what was once a popular feeding ground for the population has been described as "truly, truly amazing".

Blue Whales



Findings

"To think that in a period of 40 or 50 years, I only had records for two sightings of blue whales around South Georgia. Since 2007, there have been maybe a couple more isolated sightings. So, to go from basically nothing to 55 in one year is astonishing," Dr Branch told BBC News.

Dr Branch was commenting on the survey which was led by the British Antarctic Survey.

Some might question whether the growth in numbers of blue whales around South Georgia is simply due to a short-term bounty of krill at the island.

sightings

Sightings (noun – plural)

An instance of seeing or catching sight of something, typically something unusual or rare





Watch...



Clip 1 (BBC News):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJABd1icTwM>