WILDLIFEDIRECT

Newsletter
Issue #27
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WILDLIFE WARRIORS KIDS

Hello Wildlife Warriors!
Stay connected to nature even when you are at home.

© Watamu Marine Association and the Kenya Marine Mammal Network

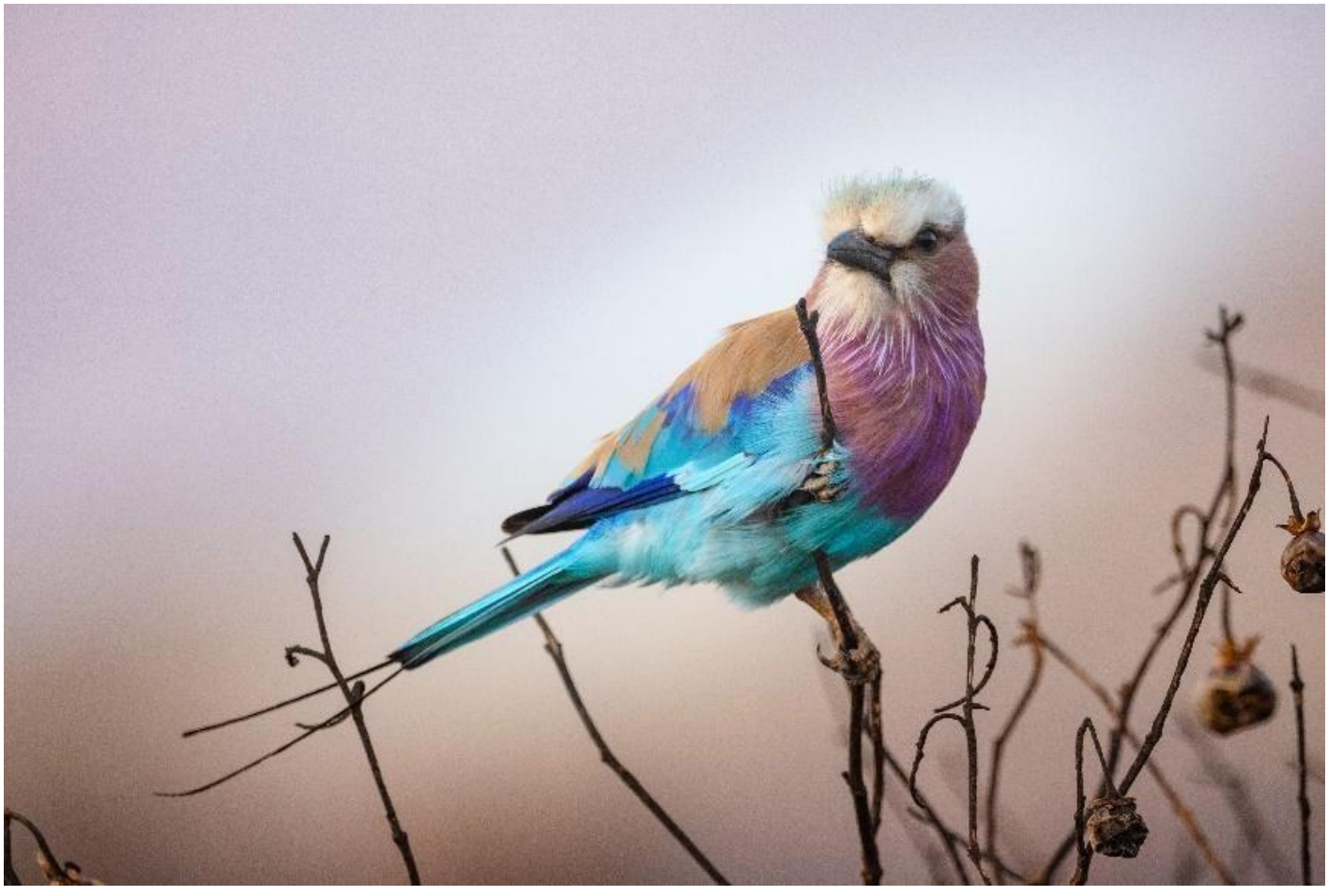
Welcome to Issue 27! Have you ever wondered which animals live along East Africa's coast? Let us learn about **Whales**! Did you know that Whales are the largest living animals on earth?

We also meet a Nature's Treasures Photo Competition junior entrant and explore actions we can take for nature. We have wild jokes, and much, much more… **Please read on!**

Stay with us on this fun filled adventure and always remember to share with your family and friends.

JUNIOR PHOTOGRAPHER HIGHLIGHT

Sourish Trivedy is a junior winner in Season One of the Nature's Treasures Photo Competition.



Q & A with Sourish Trivedy

We spoke to Sourish about his images

Q. How old are you?

A. I am 15 years old.

Q. What camera did you use?

A. I use a Nikon D610.

Q. What do you like about nature photography?

A. It brings happiness when you sit in nature looking at the animals. When you take a photo, you are capturing a moment that you can keep.

Q. What advice do you have for young and upcoming photographers.

A. You do not need a professional camera in the beginning. Use your camera as a learning experience to teach you how to work with the settings and how to capture the memories.

WHALES

VOCABULARY:

- **Pod** – Group of Whales
- **Baleen** - a comb-like structure attached to the upper jaws of a whale that filters the whale's food from the water.
- **Krill** - small crustaceans found in the oceans that whales feed on.

- Whales are social, intelligent, and aquatic mammals that live and spend their entire life in the ocean.
- They look totally different from human beings but we have so much in common..

UNDERSTANDING WHALES

- They breathe air into their lungs through the blowhole or 'nostril' located on top of their heads.
- They feed their babies with their own milk, take good care of them and also teach them life skills.

- Whales are classified as marine mammals that belong to the order **Cetacea!**
- Cetaceans is a collective name for whales, dolphins, and porpoises species found in all the world's oceans.
- There are two types of whales: Toothed and Baleen.

1. TOOTHED WHALES

- As their name suggests, they have teeth to assist them in hunting squid, fish and seals which they swallow whole.
- They have one blowhole (nostril) and use echolocation to hunt.
- There are 76 species of toothed whales including; sperm whales, dolphins, and porpoises.
- Sperm whales are the biggest toothed whales.

Spinner Dolphins

2. BALEEN WHALES

- They have baleen plates in their mouth to sieve tiny crustaceans, small fish, and other tiny organisms from the water.

- Baleen whales are larger than the toothed whales and have two blowholes (nostrils).
- There are 14 species of Baleen Whales. They include Blue Whales, Humpback Whales, Right Whales, Bowhead Whales, Gray Whales and more.
- Baleen whales such as the Blue whale, are sometimes called the 'Great whales' due to their larger size.

Example of a Baleen Whales species

The humpback whale

- This is a baleen whale that sings amazing and complex songs, sometimes for hours.
- They have no vocal cords and no air escapes during the singing; neither do their mouths move.
- Adults are between 12-16 meters long and weigh between 25-30 tons.

- They live in pods and always perform cooperative feeding techniques.
- They are acrobats of the ocean, breaching and sometimes twirling and slapping the water.
- They live for 45-50 years long.

WHALE SIZE

- Whales are the largest living animals on earth.
- The Blue Whale is the largest, growing as long as 100 feet (30 meters) and weighing up to 200 tons.
- The Blue Whale is thought to be larger than any of the dinosaurs that ever existed.

Lempuranai Primary students Joseph, his sister Mary, father and their teacher view a baby humpback whale Skeleton at Gede Museum. © Tobias Odhacha

- Blue Whales eat about 4 tons of tiny krill each day by filter feeding through the baleen.
- Blue Whales are also the loudest animals on earth.
- The Dwarf Sperm Whale is the smallest whale with the adult measuring only 2.6 meters long.

WHALE SWIMMING AND LIFE BELOW WATER

- Whales swim by moving their muscular tails up and down unlike fish that swim by moving their tails left and right.
- They have a streamlined shape and adults have no hair.
- Whales are acrobatic and can be seen jumping out of the water and twirling in the air.

WHALE MIGRATION

- Whales migrate over very long distances every year traveling in groups known as pods from cold-waters to warm-waters feeding grounds.
- The humpback whale annual migration between polar waters and tropical waters for mating and calving is the longest of any animal.

- Since 2011 when the Kenya Marine Mammal Network was started, over 1,500 sightings of 21 different species of marine mammals have been reported.
- The top three marine mammal sighting reports along the Kenyan coast are; The Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin, Humpback Whales, and the Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin.
- The sightings are reported by fishermen, tour operators, and sailing vessels by sharing reports, photos, and videos.

Whale Watching Along the Kenyan Coast

- Humpback whales were first seen in Kenya 30 years ago by fishermen during their migratory season.
- Over the years, their numbers have increased due to the international ban on whale hunting in the 1960's.

- Since 2011, Kenya has recognized the great ecological and economic value of whale migrations which occurs around the same time as the Wildebeest Migration.
- The two migrations have been named, "Twin Migration – Whales to Wildebeests" and have greatly boosted the Kenyan tourism industry.

FUN WHALE FACTS

- A blue whale calf can drink 200 liters of milk a day.
- Whales have a four-chambered heart.
- The heart of a blue whale is the size of a small car.
- Not all whales are gigantic! The Dwarf sperm whale is the smallest and can only reach 2.6 meters.
- Baleen is made out of keratin, just like our fingernails and hair?

Whale Tail Fin © Lamak Sheikh

- Whales can remain underwater for 90 minutes.
- Sperm whales have the largest brain on earth weighing up to 9kgs and 6 times heavier than ours!

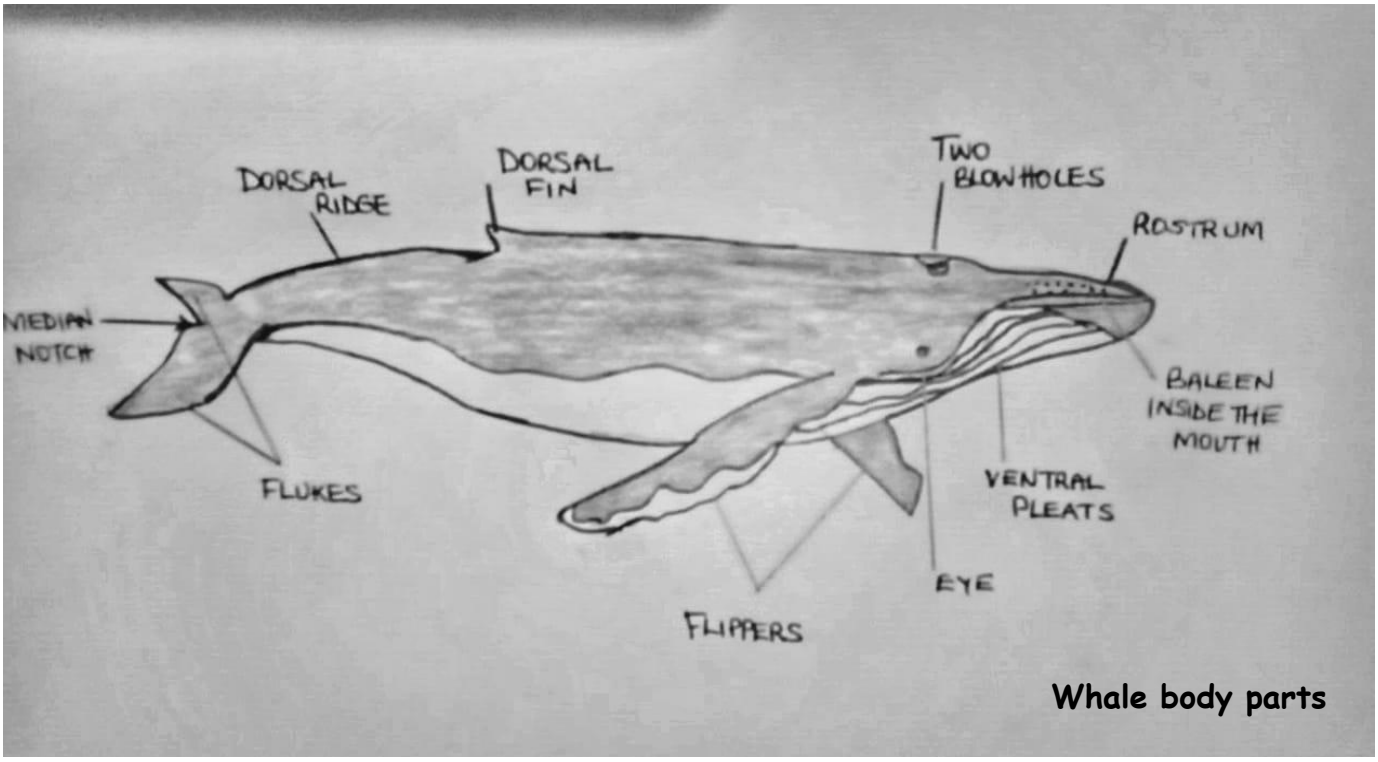
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHALE & FISH

WHALES	FISH
Breathe air in and out of their lungs through nostrils, called a blowhole, located right on top of their heads	Use gills to extract air from water
Whales are warm blooded	Fish are cold-blooded
Give birth to live young ones	Most fish lay eggs
Moves tail up and down to swim	Tail moves from left to right when swimming
Take care of their young ones	Only a few fish species care for their young ones
Have a skin with little hair	Have scales
Feed their babies with milk	Do not feed their young ones
Have eyelids and tear ducts	Do not have eyelids or tear ducts

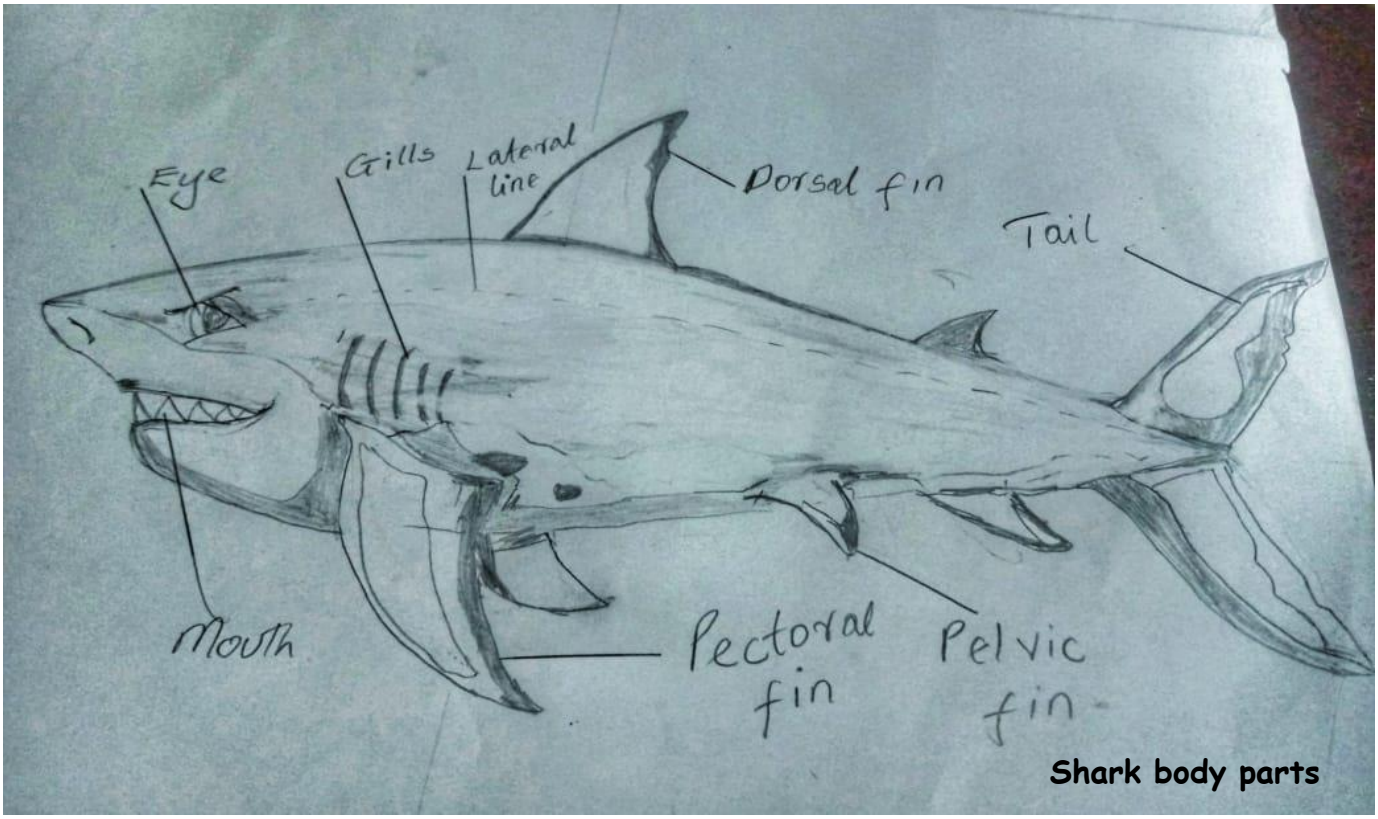
What are the similarities between whales and fish?
Please share your thoughts with us
WhatsApp number 0746 511 787

Body parts of a Whale and Shark

Can you see the differences?



Whale body parts



Shark body parts

THREATS FACING WHALES

- **Whaling** – In some countries whales are still hunted.
- **Entanglement in fishing gear or Bycatch** - Whales get caught in fishing nets as they migrate.

- **Pollution** –Plastic, noise, and water pollution on land and in the ocean can cause harm to whales far away.
- **Climate change** – Rise in ocean temperatures affects prey populations, feeding grounds, and whale migratory pathways.
- **Ship strikes**- Many whales and dolphins die from collision with boats, ships and cruises.
- **Habitat degradation**
- **Bycatch** – Large fishing nets trap and drown whales as they cannot get to the water surface to breath.

MEET MICHAEL MWANG'OMBE

Q: Tell us a little about yourself

A: I grew up in Taita Hills; as a kid, my first love was to be an explorer, and I would spend a lot of time out in the bush and around the hills, thinking of myself as a great explorer out discovering new places and beauty of nature. When I joined high school, my focus shifted to become an Agricultural Officer.

This was after an incident where I successfully helped a cow give birth. There were other instances where I would help the Agricultural Officer who came to our school once a week to collect samples from the cows. All this inspired me to want to work with animals. Each time he was around the school, I would find ways of skipping classes just to go and see what he was doing.

My passion for the ocean started when I visited Malindi for the first time, and went out to the ocean. This gave me a deep curiosity of what was beneath the water and at this point, I thought Diving was what would be suitable for me. Combining my computer skills, passion, and diving, I found my fate finally sealed in the world of marine mammals.

Q. How did you get interested in Whales and why?

A: This was when I visited Malindi for the first time and got more curious about the ocean. As a child, I had spent a lot of time watching National Geographic documentaries and I was very fascinated by these mammals.

I wanted to find out if we really had these mammals here in our country and also a deeper desire of sharing my knowledge about them. It was at the height of my curiosity that I joined Watamu Marine Association, the only organization in Kenyan coast doing marine mammal research and conservation

I got few opportunities to go out in the ocean and my first time to see a whale, it was just a feeling that can never be described and the fact that a lot of people didn't know much about the whales in our Kenyan waters that's what drove me to learn more about them and share what we so far know about them.

Q. How can you tell the difference between a male and female Whales?

A: With humpback whales, the species are dimorphic which means that the female is larger than the male.

The easiest way to determine a female humpback whale is its close association with a calf. Mothers and calves maintain a strong bond throughout the first year of the calf's life, so when we see an adult whale closely accompanied by a calf, we can safely assume that she is the mother of that calf.

Q. How many are there in Kenya? In the world?

A: In our Kenyan waters, we have 6 different species of whales that have been recorded.
However, the frequently sighted species currently known to attract whale watchers to the coastal waters of Watamu during whale migration happening each year from July to September, is the Humpback whale.

Q. What does your work involve?

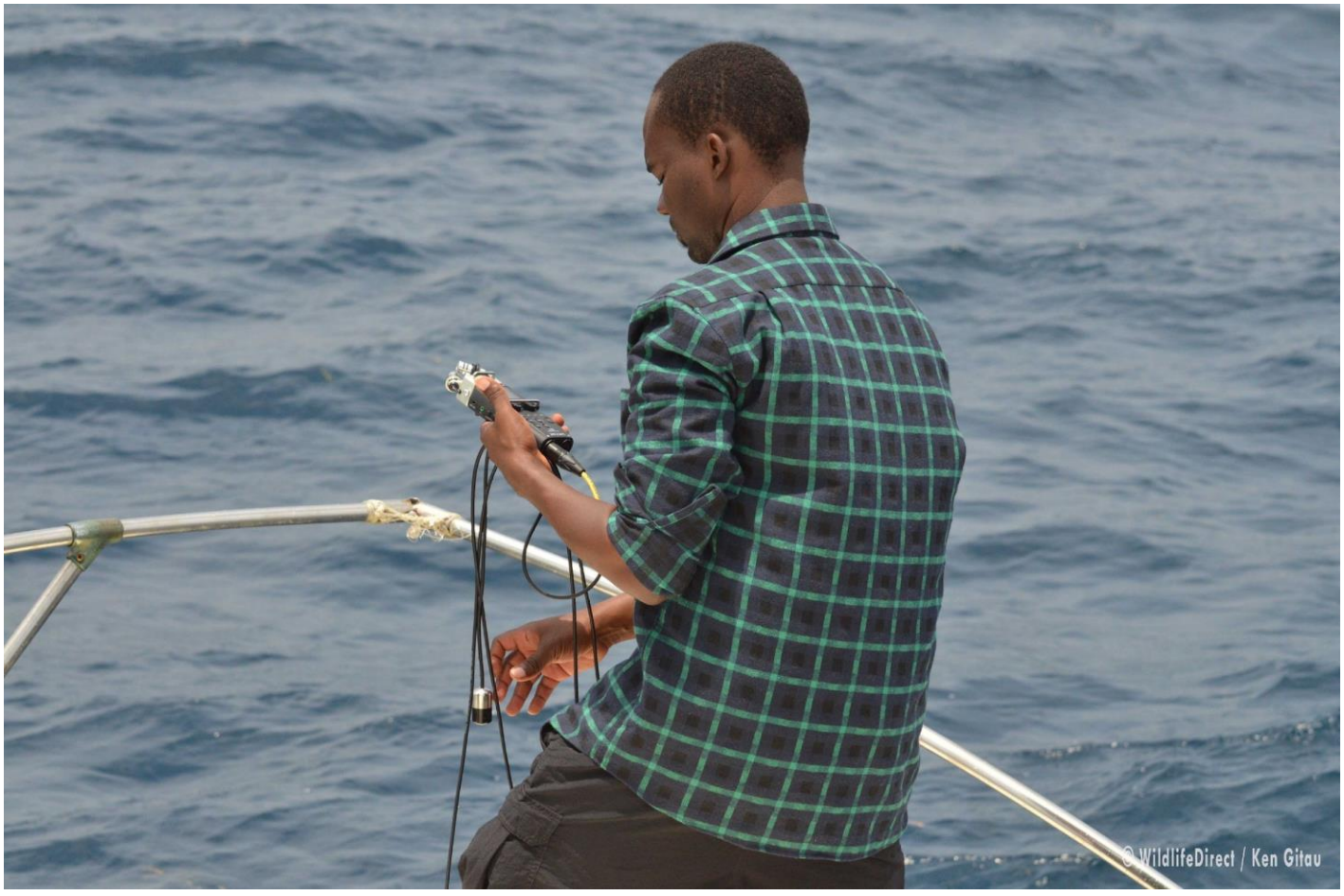
A: My work involves different activities, from being in the field collecting data of the mysterious whales, learning more about their feeding and breeding areas across the Kenyan coast; to conducting necropsies, try to find the cause of death of each whale and dolphin that gets reported to us or found dead along the coast.

Then the rest of the time, we are in the office conducting photo ID analysis of the images we collect during whale migrations.

We also visit schools and local communities to educate them about our work and how they can get involved.

Q. What does your normal day look like?

A: I don't have a normal day, I can be observing marine animals in the ocean, constructing a website in the office, analyzing data, writing a scientific paper, or teaching in a school.



My work involves the unexpected including dissecting dead marine animals to determine the cause of death.

Q. How would a young person get involved in Whales conservation? What do they need to study?

A: We are working on a program which will enable us take students for "A day of whale studies". Currently, we have our dolphin research program that is 10 years old. We encourage anyone visiting the Kenyan coast to join our team as we go out from November to April, studying our resident dolphins in Watamu and Malindi.

© Ken Gitau / WildlifeDirect

The beauty of studying marine mammals is that any course you take, be it Computer Science, Marine Biology, Veterinary Medicine, or even Law, you can still pursue a career in studying whales.

Q. What can we do to protect the Whales?

A: Become aware of these mysterious species and tell more people about them.

You can also adopt a dolphin or a whale. This supports our team to be out there in the ocean to discover more about our whale species and how we can create a safe haven for them in our Kenyan waters.

You can also join the team when they are out in the field so that you can get a chance to experience the magnificent creatures and share your experience with others.

We also don't want to forget: **Stop Plastic Pollution!**

WILD JOKES!

Q: What do humpback whales do during quarantine?

A: Netflix and Krill!

Q: What do whales like to chew?

A: Blubber gum!

Q: What did the mummy whale do when her daughter stayed out too late?

A: She flipped!

Q: Why did the whale call the detective?

A: Because he saw something fishy going on!

Q: How do whales make decisions?

A: They flipper coin!

Q: What do whales need to stay healthy?

A: Vitamin Sea!

Wild Jokes courtesy of Joy Omulupi

Do you have a wild joke to share.
Please share with us your joke via our
WhatsApp number 0746 511 787

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP NATURE

Kitchen Garden Watering

Derrick Memusi is a 16-year-old student at Oldoldol Secondary School. He has a kitchen garden at his home in Laikipia where he has grown different types of vegetables.

Recently, Derrick faced a water shortage challenge. He come up with an innovative way of reusing old food cans to water his vegetables. He drilled a tiny hole in each can to enhance drip irrigation.

N/B. Ensure that the water drops directly near the stem to be absorbed by the roots.

Share with us what your doing by taking a picture/video or text and share via **WhatsApp** to; **0746 511 787**

ART FOR WILDLIFE

Creating Learning materials using Waste paper

Wildlife Warriors Club members at Makobe Primary School in Shimba Hills, Kwale County are using paper mache, paint and wood glue to make learning aids for their club.

Meshak Kennedy and Baraka Kadi of Makobe Primary School holding a green snake model

Please send a **photo** of your **Drawing**, **Painting**, **Poem** or **Essay** on **WhatsApp** to **0746 511 787**.

THIS WEEK ON MY WILD AFRICA

We follow the extraordinary lives of a population of plains zebras in the arid saltpans of Botswana's Makgadikgadi Pans. These nearly 20000 zebras survive in the Makgadikgadi pans only by the grace of isolated summer rains and traveled thousands of kilometers throughout the year in search of water and food.

Tune in at 5:30 pm EAT Citizen TV

Watch the **film** with your family and tell us **what you learnt** by sending an **SMS** or **WhatsApp message** to **0746 511787**

COMING UP… DON'T MISS

jellyfish (predator) capturing a crab (prey) underneath its tentacles by Peter Leposo

- **My Wild Africa on CITIZEN TV** every Sunday at 5:30 pm EAT.
- **World Fisheries Day** - 21st November
- **International Cheetah Day** – 4th December

FOR PARENTS

This newsletter is issued each week to inform, inspire and encourage children who are at home during COVID 19 school closure.

It is distributed completely free of charge to children and their parents anywhere in Kenya, Africa and the world. If you would love to contribute to the Wildlife Warriors Kids, please make a donation to:

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Email us: info@wildlifedirect.org

Contact us on: +254 746 511 787

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