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Opening extract from

Deadly Factbook: Mammals

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Chapter 1

The **BLUE WHALE** is the biggest animal in the world today. It is also believed to be the biggest animal known to have lived on our planet.

A full-grown blue whale
weighs up to 180 tonnes.

Females can be up to 30 metres long – that's about the same as 2 huge articulated lorries parked end to end.

One reason that whales can grow so huge is that they live in the sea and the water supports their weight.

It is even heavier than the most enormous dinosaurs, such as *Diplodocus* and *Argentinosaurus*.

The blue whale's heart is the size of a small car and can you believe that its tongue weighs as much as an elephant?



8

As you might guess, the blue whale gives birth to the world's biggest baby. A baby blue whale is 7–8 metres long when it is born – that's twice the length of an average car.



The blue whale baby drinks more than a bathtub of its mother's milk a day. It puts on an amazing 90 kilograms or so in weight every day – that's the same as 90 big bags of sugar.

There are two types of

AFRICAN ELEPHANT

- the bush or savannah elephant and the forest elephant. The bush elephant is the largest living land mammal. The biggest male ever weighed about 10 tonnes and stood 4 metres tall at the shoulder, but most are a little smaller.

The African elephant has bigger ears than any other animal.
They help the elephant lose heat and keep cool in the African sun.

The most obvious difference between
African and Asian elephants – and an easy
way to tell one from another – is the
size of their ears. Those of the Asian
elephant are much smaller.

The ears of every elephant are slightly different in shape.

An elephant's tusks are actually huge teeth.
The largest-ever tusks were about 3.5 metres long. Elephants use their tusks for many tasks, such as digging up food, ripping bark from trees and fighting off attackers.

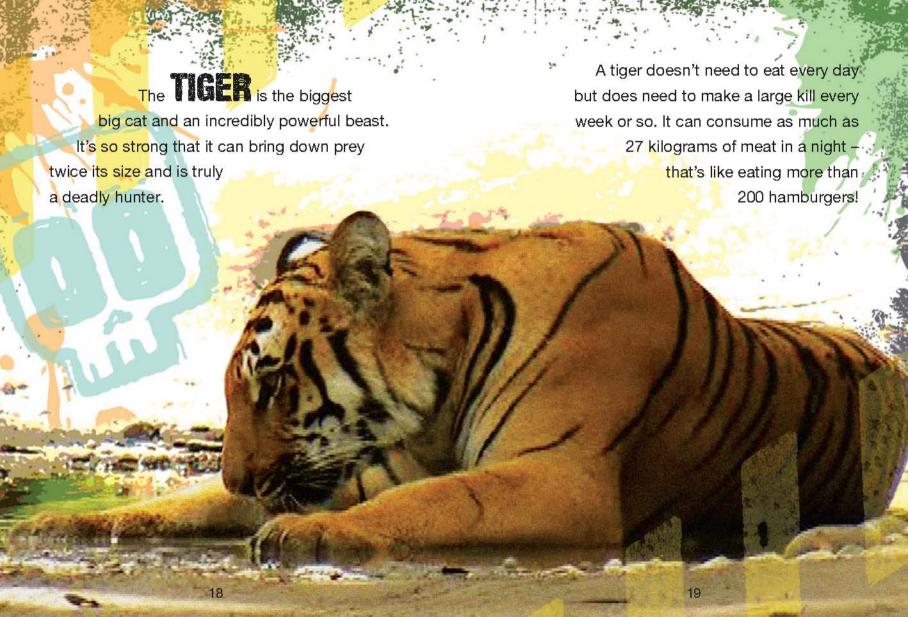
BLUE WHALES and elephants need to eat vast amounts of food to keep themselves going. You might think the blue whale would eat giant

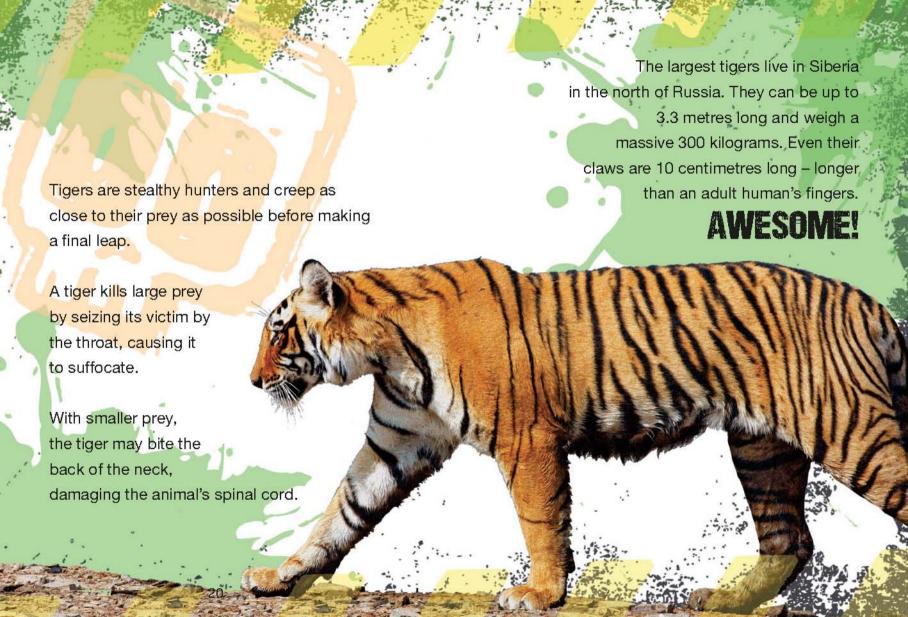
prey, but it feeds by straining tiny shrimp-like creatures called krill from the water.

Each krill is only 6 centimetres long, but the blue whale can eat as many as 5 million of them a day. Fortunately there are billions of these little creatures living in the world's oceans. There are probably more krill than any other animal on earth and together they weigh more than all the humans in the world.

A House







One of the smallest of all mammals is a bat called the

BUNBLEBEE BAT and as its name suggests, it's not much bigger than a bumblebee.

This tiny creature is about 3 centimetres long and weighs only 2 grams – less than a raspberry. It lives in caves in Thailand and is also known as Kitti's hog-nosed bat.

Despite its size, the bumblebee bat is a hunter. It eats insects, which it catches in mid-air or snatches from leaves. Like lots of bats, it finds its way in the dark and locates prey by using echolocation. The bat emits ultrasonic squeaks that bounce off objects in their path. The time it takes for the echo to return tells the bat how far away the object is and allows it to build a 'picture' of its surroundings and pinpoint prey. It can even tell whether an insect has a hard or soft body.