Cetacean Month Week 1
Classification of Cetaceans
When we observe and research animals, we take into account all their characteristics and features. We then sort them into appropriate classes and families. There are 6 classes of animals: mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, amphibians (frogs) and arthropods (insects/crustacea). Cetaceans fall under the class of mammals.

What does it mean to be a mammal?
A mammal is an animal that can breathe air, has a backbone, is warm blooded, and grows hair at some point during its life. All female mammals have glands that produce milk. Mammals are among the most intelligent of all living creatures. There are more than 5000 species of living mammals that live in all the major habitats. Mammals came into existence around the same time as the dinosaurs, as small rodents. After the extinction of giant reptiles, mammals began to thrive. Fun Fact: Around 50 million years ago the great ancestor of the whale had four legs and walked on land, called a Pakicetus. (See page 2 for the evolution of cetaceans)

Baleen vs toothed whale
Cetacea is the infraorder of marine mammals which includes all 80 varieties of whales, dolphins and porpoises. They are divided into two groups: toothed whales (odontoceti) and baleen whales (mysticeti). Dolphins, orcas and sperm whales are examples of toothed whales; they have 1 blowhole. Humpback whales, blue whales and grey whales are all examples of baleen whales; they have 2 blowholes. Toothed whales feed on fish or squid, but baleen whales feed on small animals called Krill. These baleen whales use their expanding throat to gulp large amounts of water and food, then push it out through their baleen teeth, which acts like a sieve trapping food in the whale’s mouth. Baleen is made from the same material as your fingernails, called keratin!

Baleen experiment
Sprinkle pepper or oregano into a bowl of water to represent Krill in the ocean. Then, using a comb, scoop out as much as you can! This demonstrates how baleen whales use their baleen to sive food from big gulps of water in their mouth.

Eco-Schools Connection - Marine and Coast
This Eco-Schools Pathway highlights our different coastal and marine habitats, how people are affecting these habitats, and what we can do to protect them. In this worksheet we have learned all about marine mammals that use the ocean surface to breath. Are you conscious when you are out on the surface of the water? Some easy things you can do to reduce your affect on these environments is to watch where you are driving, make sure no gas/oil is leaking, and keep your noise pollution to a minimum. Safe eco-friendly boating!
Evolution of the Cetaceans

Watch this video To learn more about “When Whales Walked” watch this educational video from PBS Eons: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OSRKtT_9yw