

Blue Whales

The blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) is one of the largest animals that has ever lived. Blue whales can grow up to 32 meters long and weigh up to 200 tons. Like minke whales, they use brush-like baleen plates made of keratin to filter several tons of krill into their mouths every day. The lower jawbone on exhibit at the Kushiro City Museum is 6.7 meters long. The whale it belonged to would have been around 25 meters long.

This jawbone came from a whaling expedition conducted more than 50 years ago (the blue whale has been protected from commercial whaling since 1966). In the past, whales were hunted by companies based in Kushiro and other locations along Hokkaido's east coast. Small-scale commercial whaling recommenced in the area in 2019, but the blue whale remains a protected species.