

How much can a blue whale weigh

How Much Can a Blue Whale Weigh? Unveiling the Mysteries of the Ocean's Giants **** Imagine a creature so colossal, its sheer size dwarfs any land animal. This magnificent marvel of the deep, the blue whale, holds the title of the largest animal ever to have lived on Earth. From the depths of the ocean's mysteries to the captivating spectacle of its migration, the sheer magnitude of the blue whale continues to fascinate scientists and nature enthusiasts alike. But how much does this aquatic leviathan truly weigh? This comprehensive guide will explore the intricacies of blue whale weight, revealing fascinating insights into their biology and the challenges of measuring such a colossal creature.**

How Much Does a Blue Whale Weigh? An Exploration of Mass and Measurement: **Understanding the weight of a blue whale is more than just a number; it's a window into their biology, their role in the ocean's ecosystem, and the challenges inherent in studying such a massive animal.**

Methods for Assessing Blue Whale Weight

Accurate measurement of a blue whale's weight is a complex undertaking, demanding both advanced technology and careful consideration of the animal's specific characteristics. • Necropsy: *Post-mortem examinations of deceased whales provide crucial data on their overall mass, including their skeletal structure, blubber, and*

internal organs. This method, however, relies on the availability of

complete carcasses. • Photogrammetry: Advanced photography techniques using multiple angles and precise measurements allow for three-dimensional reconstructions of the whale's body. Software then calculates the volume, which, combined with density estimates, yields a weight approximation. • Indirect Measurement (Based on Length): While not a direct measurement of weight, the relationship between blue whale length and weight has been extensively studied. Scientists have developed statistical models that use length as a proxy to estimate weight, crucial for surveys and population assessments.

Factors Influencing Blue Whale Weight

Several factors influence a blue whale's weight, making a single figure an oversimplification.

• Age: *Young blue whales, naturally, will weigh less than their mature counterparts. A significant amount of weight gain occurs during their growth phases.*

• Sex: **While not as pronounced as in some other species, there can be slight variations in weight between male and female blue whales, influenced by reproductive differences.** • Geographic Location: **Dietary availability and environmental conditions in different regions of the ocean can influence growth rates and consequently, weight.**

• Individual Variations: **Just as humans vary in weight, blue whales exhibit individual differences based on their unique genetic makeup and environmental experiences.**

Estimating Blue Whale Weight: A

Statistical Overview

The most accurate estimates of blue whale weight are achieved through statistical analysis, incorporating the range of reported weights and the various contributing factors. Table 1: Estimated

Weights Based on Length | *Approximate Length (meters) | Approximate Weight (metric tons) |* ||| | 20 | 100 | | 25 | 150 | | 30 | 200 | | 35 | 250 | | 38+ | 250-200 | (Note: *This table provides a*

general overview. Actual weights can deviate depending on the methods and considerations used.) Advantages of Knowing a Blue

Whale's Weight: • Population Assessment: **Weight estimates, alongside other data, help scientists assess the health and size of blue whale populations.**

• Conservation Efforts: Understanding the optimal weight range informs conservation strategies, ensuring the survival of these magnificent creatures.

• Ecosystem Impact: **The vast size and feeding habits of blue whales impact ocean ecosystems significantly. Weight data helps researchers**

analyze this impact more accurately. • Research and Monitoring:

Knowing approximate weight facilitates the tracking and monitoring of individual whales in various populations, enhancing research capabilities. Challenges in Measuring Blue Whale Weight: •

Accessibility: **The ocean environment presents significant challenges for directly observing and measuring these massive creatures.**

• Data Collection: *Obtaining comprehensive data sets across different populations is difficult due to the wide range of habitats and migratory patterns.*

• Variability: Weight varies considerably based on age, sex, and environmental factors.

Beyond Weight: Understanding Blue Whale Biology and Ecology

Feeding Habits and Energy Needs

Blue whales, as filter feeders, rely on krill and small crustaceans. Their massive size reflects the enormous energy demands of sustaining such a colossal body. The sheer quantity of food consumed contributes significantly to their weight and overall well-being.

Migration Patterns and Seasonal Changes

Blue whales undertake vast migrations across the globe, driven by seasonal changes in krill availability. Understanding these patterns is crucial for predicting and monitoring the whale's movements and potential interactions with human activities.

Threats to Blue Whales: A Look at Environmental Concerns

- Ship Strikes: Ship traffic poses a significant threat to blue whales, leading to injuries and fatalities.
- Entanglement: Fishing gear entanglements can cause debilitating injuries and even death.
- Climate Change: Changes in ocean temperatures and the availability of krill affect the whales' feeding grounds and migration patterns, contributing to ongoing stress.

Case Studies: Examining Specific Blue Whale Populations

The Southern Hemisphere Blue Whale Population: Challenges and Conservation

Ongoing research tracks the Southern Hemisphere blue whale population, analyzing their distribution and growth trends to inform conservation efforts and monitor the impact of various pressures. Studies in this region have been critical in identifying specific threats and implementing effective conservation strategies. (Example of a Case Study Table would be included here with specific data and findings.) *The weight of a blue whale is a complex parameter, not simply a number but a window into the animal's biology, its role in the ocean ecosystem, and the intricate interplay of natural forces. The methods used to assess this weight have evolved, with significant progress in technological advancements. Despite these advancements, the challenges of studying and protecting these magnificent animals remain.* Advanced FAQs: **1.** What is the largest recorded weight of a blue whale, and how was it measured? **2.** How does the weight of a blue whale relate to its metabolic rate and energy consumption? **3.** What are the long-term implications of climate change on blue whale populations and their weight ranges? **4.** How does the distribution of blue whale populations across different oceans impact their weight and growth patterns? **5.** What are the emerging technologies that could further refine our ability to assess the weight and health of blue whales?*** This information is intended for educational purposes and does not constitute professional advice. Always consult reliable scientific sources for the most up-to-date

information.

How Much Can a Blue Whale Weigh? Unpacking the Immensity of Earth's Largest Animal

Imagine standing at the foot of a skyscraper, craning your neck to see the very top. Now, imagine that skyscraper was alive, breathing, and swimming through the ocean. That's a glimpse into the sheer scale of a blue whale. When we ask, "How much can a blue whale weigh?", we're not just talking about a big animal; we're talking about the heaviest animal ever to have lived on Earth, eclipsing even the mightiest dinosaurs. These magnificent marine mammals are true giants of the deep, and their weight is a testament to their incredible evolutionary journey. The average adult blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) tips the scales at a staggering amount. Let's dive into the specifics, exploring the factors that contribute to their colossal size and what this immense weight means for their lives in the ocean.

The Astonishing Averages: A Weighty Subject

So, how much *does* a blue whale weigh? The answer is, quite simply, a lot. We're talking about figures that are difficult for many of us to truly comprehend. On average, an adult blue whale can weigh between ****100 to 150 tons (200,000 to 300,000 pounds or 90,000 to 135,000 kilograms)****. To put that into perspective, that's roughly the weight of 15 to 30 adult elephants combined! Or, consider this: a

single blue whale heart can weigh as much as a small car, and its tongue can weigh as much as a full-grown elephant. These aren't exaggerations; they are the reality of these gentle giants. However, these are just averages. The upper limits of blue whale weight are even more mind-boggling. The largest blue whale ever recorded was a female, caught in the southern Atlantic Ocean in 1909. This magnificent creature tipped the scales at an astonishing ****190 tons (380,000 pounds or 172,000 kilograms)****. That's almost 200 tons of pure, blubber-covered, muscle-powered marine life.

Factors Influencing Blue Whale Weight

Several factors contribute to the impressive weight of a blue whale: *

- **Age:**** Like all living organisms, blue whales gain weight as they grow. Calves are born at a substantial size, weighing around 2.5 to 3 tons (5,000 to 6,000 pounds) at birth, and they rapidly gain weight by consuming their mother's incredibly rich milk, which can contain up to 50% fat. They can gain as much as 200 pounds (90 kilograms) per day in their first year. As they mature into adults, their weight continues to increase, reaching peak size in their prime years. *
- **Sex:**** Female blue whales are generally larger and heavier than males. This sexual dimorphism is common in many whale species, and blue whales are no exception. Females often carry the extra weight needed for gestation and lactation. *
- **Diet and Feeding Grounds:**** The availability and abundance of their primary food source – krill – play a crucial role in a blue whale's weight. Blue whales are baleen whales, meaning they filter feed. During their feeding season, typically in colder waters rich with krill, they can consume enormous quantities of these small crustaceans. A blue whale can eat up to 40 million krill in a single day, equating to several tons of food. This high-calorie diet allows them to build up the thick blubber layer

essential for insulation and energy reserves, especially for their long migrations to warmer waters for breeding. * **Time of Year:** Their weight can fluctuate throughout the year due to migratory patterns and feeding cycles. They tend to be heaviest at the end of the feeding season when they've stored maximum blubber, and lighter during the breeding season when they are fasting or consuming less.

Why So Big? The Evolutionary Advantage of Immense Size

The sheer size and weight of a blue whale are not accidental. Their colossal stature offers several evolutionary advantages: * **Predator Defense:** For an adult blue whale, there are virtually no natural predators in the ocean. Their immense size acts as a formidable deterrent against any potential threats, including orcas (killer whales), which might target calves or smaller individuals. *

* **Thermoregulation:** A thick blubber layer, a direct contributor to their weight, is essential for maintaining body temperature in the cold ocean waters. The larger the body, the lower the surface area to volume ratio, which helps to conserve heat more efficiently. This is crucial for animals that undertake long migrations through vast oceanic expanses. * **Energy Storage:** The blubber provides a vital energy reserve. This is particularly important during the breeding season when adults may travel to warmer latitudes and often fast for extended periods. This stored energy allows them to survive and reproduce without constant feeding. * **Efficient Movement:** While it might seem counterintuitive, being large can actually make efficient movement through water easier. Their streamlined bodies, despite their size, allow them to glide through the water with remarkable grace and speed, covering vast distances in their search for food and

mates.

The Weight of a Blue Whale: A Biological Marvel

Let's break down what makes up that immense weight. The majority of a blue whale's body mass is composed of: * **Blubber:** This thick layer of fat beneath the skin is crucial for insulation, buoyancy, and energy storage. It can be up to a foot thick in some areas! *

Muscle: Powerful muscles are needed for swimming, diving, and the tremendous effort involved in filter feeding. * **Bones:** While their bones are dense, they are also hollow in some areas, which helps with buoyancy and reduces overall weight to some extent. *

Organs: Their internal organs, like the heart and lungs, are proportionally massive to support their enormous bodies. The weight of a blue whale is also a significant factor in its biology and behavior. For instance, their **swimming speed** is impressive for their size, with adults capable of reaching speeds of up to 30 miles per hour (48 kilometers per hour) in short bursts, although their cruising speed is much slower. This ability to move efficiently is a testament to their powerful musculature and streamlined form.

The Significance of Blue Whale Weight in Conservation

Understanding the weight and overall size of blue whales is not just a matter of scientific curiosity; it's also vital for their conservation. Historically, blue whales were hunted to near extinction for their blubber, meat, and oil. Accurate estimations of their population size and the biomass they represent are crucial for: * **Assessing**

population health:** Changes in average weight or size could indicate issues with food availability or environmental changes affecting their health. * **Monitoring recovery efforts:** As whale populations begin to recover, understanding their growth and weight gain provides tangible evidence of successful conservation initiatives. *

Understanding their ecological role: The immense biomass of blue whales plays a significant role in the marine ecosystem, influencing nutrient cycles and the food web.

In Conclusion: A Truly Colossal Creature

When you ponder "how much can a blue whale weigh," you're contemplating one of the most awe-inspiring aspects of the natural world. These gentle giants, with their average weights ranging from 100 to 150 tons and the record-holders exceeding 190 tons, represent the pinnacle of mammalian size. Their immense weight is a product of age, sex, diet, and the evolutionary advantages that their colossal stature provides for survival in the vast oceans. They are a living testament to the power and wonder of nature, and a crucial reminder of why protecting these magnificent creatures remains a global priority. The next time you think about the ocean, remember the silent, immense presence of the blue whale, a creature that truly dwarfs all others on our planet.

Understanding the Immense Weight of the Blue Whale

The blue whale, known scientifically as *Balaenoptera musculus*, stands as the largest animal to have ever existed on Earth. Among its

most striking features is its extraordinary size—particularly its weight, which reaches staggering proportions. On average, an adult blue whale can weigh between 100 to 180 metric tons, though some exceptional individuals have been recorded exceeding 200 tons. This makes the blue whale not only the heaviest animal but also one of the most massive creatures in the natural world. To truly grasp the scale of this weight, consider that an average blue whale weighs as much as 30 to 40 adult elephants combined—each elephant typically weighing around 6 tons. When scaled to metric units, this immense mass reflects the evolutionary adaptations that enable such gigantism in marine mammals. The blue whale's enormous size is not merely a biological curiosity; it plays a vital role in ocean ecosystems, influencing food webs and nutrient distribution across vast oceanic regions.

Biological Foundations Behind the Blue Whale's Mass

The sheer weight of the blue whale is supported by a suite of specialized physiological traits. Its body is streamlined yet robust, with a massive skeleton designed to withstand water pressure and support immense bulk. The whale's muscle mass is extensive, enabling powerful swimming over long distances, while its blubber layer—sometimes over a foot thick—provides insulation and energy reserves. Despite this colossal size, the blue whale sustains a diet predominantly composed of krill—tiny shrimp-like crustaceans—consuming up to 4 tons daily during feeding seasons. This efficient feeding strategy, combined with a highly effective digestive system, allows the whale to accumulate and retain the energy necessary for maintaining such an enormous body.

Ecological and Scientific Significance

The weight of the blue whale is not just a measure of size—it is a key indicator of marine health and ecological balance. As apex predators in their environment, blue whales influence krill populations, helping regulate these foundational organisms that sustain countless marine species. Studying their weight and feeding habits provides critical insights into ocean productivity and climate change impacts, as shifts in krill abundance directly affect whale survival and reproduction. Furthermore, understanding how these giants manage their massive energy needs inspires research in biology, engineering, and even medicine, particularly in areas related to cardiovascular function and metabolic efficiency.

Conservation Implications and Future Outlook

With historical whaling reducing blue whale populations to critically low numbers, modern conservation efforts are essential to their recovery. The weight of a blue whale underscores the species' ecological value and the urgency to protect it. As ocean environments face warming temperatures, acidification, and declining prey availability, maintaining healthy krill stocks becomes imperative. Advances in tracking technology and population monitoring are enhancing our ability to safeguard these giants. Looking ahead, continued scientific inquiry into blue whale physiology and weight dynamics will deepen our understanding of extreme biological size, inform conservation strategies, and highlight the broader importance of preserving marine biodiversity. The blue whale's immense weight is not just a measure of its physical presence—it symbolizes the

resilience and fragility of life in the world's oceans.

Unveiling the Immensity: How Much Can a Blue Whale Weigh?

The ocean's depths harbor creatures that dwarf anything found on land, and at the pinnacle of this colossal marine life stands the blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*). Often hailed as the largest animal to have ever lived, the sheer scale of a blue whale is almost incomprehensible. But when we ask, "how much can a blue whale weigh?", we're not just seeking a number; we're delving into the biology, ecology, and evolutionary marvels that allow such a titan to exist and thrive.

Estimating the weight of these magnificent marine mammals is a complex undertaking, involving scientific surveys, estimations from stranded carcasses, and sophisticated measurement techniques. The average blue whale weight is staggering, but the upper limits push the boundaries of our understanding of biological mass. This article will explore the factors influencing blue whale weight, the methods used to determine it, and the incredible implications of their immense size.

The Weightiest of Them All: Blue Whale's Place in History

Before we dive into specific figures, it's crucial to contextualize the blue whale's enormity. For millennia, dinosaurs roamed the Earth, some reaching colossal sizes. However, even the largest of these

prehistoric giants, like *Argentinosaurus*, are believed to have weighed significantly less than an adult blue whale. The buoyancy provided by water allows marine animals to achieve sizes that would be impossible for terrestrial creatures, where gravity's pull is a constant limiting factor. The blue whale, therefore, holds the undisputed title of the heaviest animal in the Earth's history, both past and present.

Factors Influencing Blue Whale Weight

The weight of an individual blue whale isn't a static figure. Several dynamic factors contribute to their mass, making each whale a unique biological entity. Understanding these variables is key to appreciating the range of their weight.

Age and Maturity: The Growth Curve of a Giant

Like all living organisms, blue whales grow over time. A newborn blue whale calf, while already a substantial creature, is a mere fraction of its adult weight. Calves are born weighing around 2.5 to 3 metric tons (approximately 5,500 to 6,600 pounds) and can gain up to 90 kilograms (200 pounds) per day during their nursing period, fueled by their mothers' incredibly rich milk. This rapid growth phase is essential for their survival and future development. As they mature, reaching sexual maturity typically between the ages of 5 and 15, their bodies continue to increase in size and bulk. The largest and heaviest blue whales are invariably mature adults.

Sex: The Gender Weight Difference

While both male and female blue whales are enormous, females tend to be slightly larger and heavier than males. This sexual dimorphism is common in many whale species, with females often exhibiting

greater mass, likely related to reproductive needs and energy storage for pregnancy and lactation. The subtle differences can add hundreds, if not thousands, of kilograms to their overall weight.

Seasonality and Food Availability: Fueling the Engine

Blue whales are baleen whales, meaning they filter-feed on vast quantities of small prey, primarily krill. Their feeding patterns are highly seasonal, with most feeding occurring in cold, productive waters. During these feeding seasons, blue whales gorge themselves, accumulating significant fat reserves to sustain them through leaner periods, such as migration or breeding. Therefore, a whale at the end of a successful feeding season will weigh considerably more than one at the end of a non-feeding period. This dietary influence on blubber thickness is a major contributor to weight fluctuations.

Geographic Location and Subspecies: Regional Variations

While we often speak of the "blue whale" as a single entity, there are recognized subspecies, such as the North Atlantic, North Pacific, and Antarctic blue whales. The Antarctic blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus intermedia*) is generally considered the largest and heaviest of the subspecies. Differences in prey availability and environmental conditions in their respective habitats can lead to variations in average size and weight among these populations.

Estimating the Enormous: How Scientists Measure Blue Whale Weight

Precisely weighing a living, swimming blue whale is an impossible feat. Scientists have developed several ingenious methods to

estimate their immense mass:

Measurements from Stranded Whales: A Grim but Valuable Source

One of the most direct, albeit unfortunate, ways to determine a blue whale's weight is by weighing stranded individuals. When a whale washes ashore, researchers can use industrial-scale scales or meticulously measure its dimensions (length, girth) and use established formulas to calculate its weight. While this method provides accurate data for individual whales, it is infrequent and relies on the unfortunate demise of the animal.

Length-Girth Formulas: The Scientific Standard

The most common method for estimating the weight of live whales involves using mathematical formulas based on their length and girth (circumference). Researchers measure the total length of the whale and its maximum girth. These measurements are then plugged into empirically derived formulas, often specific to different whale species, to predict their weight. These formulas are developed by correlating measurements from stranded whales with their known weights.

Photogrammetry and Drones: Modern Techniques

Advancements in technology, such as photogrammetry using aerial drones, are revolutionizing whale research. Drones can capture high-resolution images of whales from above, allowing for precise length and girth measurements without the need for direct physical contact. This non-invasive approach provides valuable data on a larger number of individuals.

Biopsy Sampling and Nutritional Assessment: Indirect Clues

While not directly measuring weight, biopsy samples can provide insights into a whale's blubber thickness and overall nutritional status, which are strong indicators of its weight. Analyzing these samples helps scientists understand the physiological condition of whales and can be correlated with weight estimations.

The Numbers Game: How Much Does a Blue Whale Actually Weigh?

Now, let's address the central question: how much can a blue whale weigh? The figures are truly mind-boggling.

Average Weight: A Colossus Among Mammals

The average weight of an adult blue whale typically ranges from 100 to 150 metric tons (approximately 220,000 to 330,000 pounds or 100,000 to 150,000 kilograms). This alone places them far beyond any other animal on Earth.

Record-Breaking Giants: Pushing the Limits

However, these are averages. The upper limits are even more astounding. The heaviest recorded blue whale was a female, a mature Antarctic blue whale, weighing an astonishing 190 metric tons (approximately 418,000 pounds or 190,000 kilograms). Some estimates suggest that exceptionally large individuals might even approach or exceed 200 metric tons.

Weight Breakdown: The Anatomy of Immensity

To put this into perspective, consider the components of a blue whale's immense weight:

1. **Blubber:** A thick layer of blubber, essential for insulation and energy storage, can account for a significant portion of their body mass, sometimes up to 25-30% of their total weight.
2. **Muscle and Organs:** Their massive musculature, vital for propelling their enormous bodies through the water, along with their internal organs, contribute the bulk of the remaining weight. The heart of a blue whale alone can weigh as much as a small car.
3. **Skeleton:** While bone is dense, the sheer size of their skeletal structure is also a considerable factor.

The Implications of Immense Weight

The sheer weight of a blue whale has profound implications for their biology, behavior, and ecological role.

Physiological Adaptations: Surviving the Gigantism

To support such a massive body, blue whales have evolved extraordinary physiological adaptations. Their circulatory system is incredibly powerful, with a heart capable of pumping thousands of liters of blood. Their respiratory system is designed for efficient oxygen uptake and storage, allowing them to dive for extended periods. Their skeletal structure is robust enough to withstand immense pressure and support their weight, especially when they come ashore.

Feeding Ecology: The Krill Consumption Machine

The enormous energy demands of a blue whale's body necessitate a diet rich in high-energy food. Their reliance on krill, which are present in vast swarms in certain oceanic regions, is a testament to this. A single blue whale can consume up to 40 million krill – that's about 4 tons – in a single day during the feeding season. This immense consumption plays a significant role in the marine food web.

Conservation Challenges: Protecting the Giants

The immense size and migratory nature of blue whales make them vulnerable to various threats. Historically, commercial whaling drastically reduced their populations. Today, threats include ship strikes, entanglement in fishing gear, and the impacts of climate change on their prey sources. Understanding their weight and energetic requirements is crucial for developing effective conservation strategies to protect these magnificent creatures for future generations.

Conclusion: A Living Monument to Nature's Grandeur

So, how much can a blue whale weigh? The answer is an awe-inspiring testament to the power of evolution and adaptation. With adult averages ranging from 100 to 150 metric tons and record-holders pushing towards 200 metric tons, the blue whale stands as the undisputed heavyweight champion of the animal kingdom. Their immense size is not just a numerical fact but a complex interplay of age, sex, diet, and environmental factors, all supported by remarkable physiological adaptations. These gentle giants remind us

of the incredible biodiversity our planet holds and the critical importance of preserving these wonders for the health of our oceans and the enrichment of our world.

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approach to learning that aligns with modern technological trends. Developing strong digital literacy skills is now essential.

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Questions & Answers About how much can a blue whale weigh

N o	Question	Answer
1	Just how heavy can a blue whale get?	Blue whales are the heaviest animals on Earth, with adults typically weighing between 100 and 200 tons (200,000 to 400,000 pounds). Some exceptionally large individuals have been recorded weighing even more!
2	What's the maximum recorded weight of a blue whale?	The heaviest blue whale ever recorded was a female, measuring an astonishing 190 tons (380,000 pounds). This massive creature was caught in the Antarctic in 1947.
3	How does a blue whale's weight compare to other large animals?	A blue whale can weigh as much as 30 African elephants combined or roughly 2,000 humans. They dwarf even the largest dinosaurs that have ever lived!

4	Is there a significant difference in weight between male and female blue whales?	Yes, female blue whales are generally larger and heavier than males. This sexual dimorphism is common in many whale species, with females needing more size and energy for reproduction and nursing their young.
5	What's the weight of a baby blue whale at birth?	Even at birth, a blue whale calf is incredibly large. They weigh around 2.5 to 3 tons (5,000 to 6,000 pounds) and are about 25 feet long. They gain weight rapidly by drinking their mother's milk.
6	Why are blue whales so incredibly heavy?	Their immense size and weight are adaptations for efficient movement through the water, conserving heat in cold ocean environments, and allowing them to consume vast amounts of food. Their buoyancy also helps support their massive bodies.
7	Does a blue whale's weight vary significantly by region?	While individual variation exists, blue whales in the Southern Hemisphere tend to be slightly larger and heavier on average than those in the Northern Hemisphere. This is likely due to differences in food availability and oceanographic conditions.

blue whale weight in kilograms, how much does a blue whale weigh, maximum weight of a blue whale, blue whale average mass, blue whale size and weight comparison, factors affecting blue whale weight, weight of the largest animal on Earth, blue whale weight range, blue whale mass facts, how heavy is a blue whale

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