



Baleen Comb

While some whales have teeth, many others have a mouthful of something special called baleen. These tightly packed bristles are made of keratin, the same material as our fingernails! As a whale takes big gulps of water and then pushes the water out with their tongue, the baleen catches small critters like krill or plankton, which the whale then eats. Follow the instructions below to see what it's like to eat like a whale.

Materials

Tub or tray
Play sand (or water)
Raisins
Combs (wide tooth or fine tooth)
Bowl

Directions

1. **Pour** your play sand (or water) into a shallow tub or tray.
2. **Sprinkle** raisins on top and lightly cover with sand.
3. **Brush** the comb through the sand and try to **scoop** up the raisins. This is just like how a whale filters through water with its baleen!
4. **Gather** all the raisins you scooped up with the comb and **place** them in a bowl.
5. *If you used clean water in your tub or tray:*
Rinse the raisins in clean water, and then **enjoy** your snack!
6. **Learn** more about baleen and take a closer look using the photos on pages 3-6.



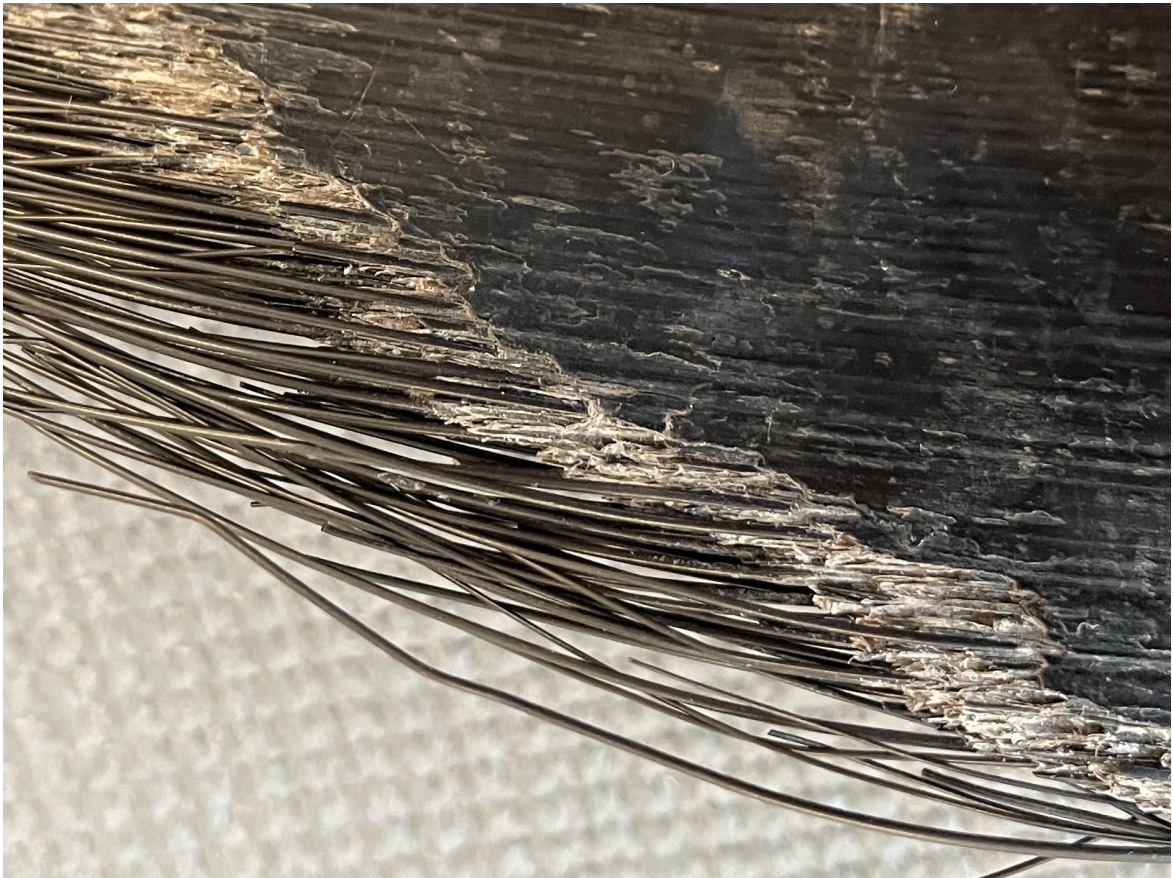
Guiding Questions

Take a look at the baleen pictured on the following pages. The first baleen featured comes from a blue whale. Blue whales can be up to 110 feet long and weigh up to 330,000 pounds! The second set of photos show baleen from a gray whale. Measuring up to 49 feet long and weighing around 90,000 pounds, these whales are smaller than the blue whale. While investigating the photos on pages 3-6, consider the following questions:

1. Both the blue whale and the gray whale primarily eat tiny shrimp-like animals, but the blue whale can sometimes eat small fish and crustaceans. How do you think the baleen is helpful in eating these different types of food?
2. As noted above, blue whales are much bigger than gray whales. Do you notice any differences between their baleen?
3. Knowing that baleen is made out of keratin, the same material as our fingernails, how do you think it would feel to the touch?

Blue Whale Baleen





Gray Whale Baleen



