



WHALES: VERY SOCIAL SEA CREATURES

Whales are very social creatures that travel in groups called pods. **They use a variety of noises to communicate and socialize with each other.** The three main types of sounds made by whales are clicks, whistles and pulsed calls¹.

Clicks are believed to be for navigation and identifying physical surroundings. When the sound waves bounce off² an object, they return to the whale, allowing the whale to identify the shape of the object. Clicks can even help to differentiate between friendly creatures and predators³. Clicks have also been observed during social interactions, suggesting they may also have a communicative function.

Whistles and **pulsed calls** are used during social activities. Pulsed calls are more frequent, and sound like squeaks⁴, screams, and squawks⁵ to the human ear. Differing vocal “dialects” have been found to exist between different pods within the same whale population. This seems to allow them to differentiate between whales within their pods and strangers.

Whales also use their tails and fins to make loud **slapping**⁶ noises on the surface of the water to communicate non-verbally. The sound can be heard for hundreds of meters below the surface and may be a warning sign of attack or a way to scare schools of fish together, making them an easier meal.

1 *pulsed calls*: strong, regular beating sounds.

2 *bounce off*: to move away after hitting a surface.

3 *predator*: an animal that hunts, kills and eats other animals.

4 *squeak*: a short, very high cry.

5 *squawk*: an unpleasantly loud, sharp cry.

6 *slapping*: hitting.

