

# Baby whale's first breath caught on camera off Australia

23 July 2009



This photo received from the Centre for Whale Research in Western Australia shows a new-born humpback whale calf being lifted clear of the water to take its very first breath off Ningaloo Reef in the waters off Western Australia. Australian scientists have photographed a humpback whale helping a newborn calf take what appears to be its first breath, a rare event/

Australian scientists have photographed a humpback whale helping a newborn calf take what appears to be its first breath, a rare event described as the "Holy Grail" for whale-watchers.

The marine scientists from Western Australia's Centre for Whale Research said they watched in astonishment as the mother swam beneath the distressed baby and lifted it above the [water](#), clearing its blowhole to take in air.

"We feel awed and privileged to have finally seen this spectacle after over 20 years of research," said scientist Curt Jenner.

The researchers said the water was full of blood, indicating the mother had just given birth on the [migration route](#) off Western [Australia](#). They added that the "small and skinny" baby was instantly revived by its first breath.

"It was apparent that the calf was struggling to stay at the surface to breathe and was swimming

around in tight, clockwise circles with only the tip of its snout protruding," said Jenner's wife and fellow scientist, Micheline.

"As soon as the cow lowered its newborn back into the water, its little tail flukes began to beat like a wind-up toy being lowered into the bath," she added.

Humpbacks are one of the largest whale species, growing up to 18 metres (60 foot) long. They are a mainstay of the whale-watching industry in Australia, which is worth an estimated 300 million dollars (246 million US) a year.

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