

VIGIA
VIGIA
May'16

NEWSLETTER


museudabaleia
CANIÇAL | MADEIRA

museology

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Educative challenge “Vou marAr-te a cabeça”.

museology

OBJECT OF THE MONTH



Substance formed in the large intestine of the sperm whales, *Psyseter macrocephalus*, (Linnaeus, 1758). It's product of the accumulation of bile secretions and hard to digest components. In the past, it was used in the perfume manufacturing, due to the aromatic fixation properties. During the whaling activity here in Madeira, the ambergris was sold at inflated prices and exported to France.

Denominação

Ambergris

Material

Ambergris

Property

Madeira Whale Museum

Inventory number

MBM0164

Location

Madeira Whale Museum

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history

The cutting process of Sperm Whales

The choice of the sperm whale as the preferred specie to hunt in Madeira was not made at random. The experience of others whalers who hunt in other parts of the world served as an example, making easier to take advantage of the species that Madeira archipelago had in abundance. For the sperm whale preference weighed several factors, between them the physical characteristics that made them an easier prey than other species of cetaceans, but others factors had be crucial for this selection as well.

This animal physical composition allowed that their exploitation rendered a lot of revenue, especially after entering Caniçal's fabric, where it had the necessary resources to dismantle, process and consequent use of almost all components from this species.



Sperm Whale Oil

It was taken the maximum advantage of these animals, from the skin to the head's oil, everything was used. Dismantling was not done randomly; it has a methodological process because treatment was done differently to the tissue and to the different body parts of the whale, resulting in different products.

The skin was used for bait in fishing. Oil was extracted from the animal fat. Meat and bones were transformed in animal rations and agricultural fertilizers. The head's oil, removed from the spermaceti organ, was wanted a lot for his special characteristics. Teeth and bones from the mandible was transformed by artisans (scrimshaw). Still in the intestines from some sperm whales was possible to find a rare product, valuable as well, the Ambergris, usually exported to France, where it was used in the perfume industry, due to acknowledged fixation property.

Whales and Dolphins in Madeira

There are Currently registered 29 species of whales and dolphins in Madeira, about 33% of the total number of cetacean species in the world. In the last 20 years the Madeira Whale Museum developed a broad investigation and historical work and proceeded to the systematic registration of the spotted or stranded cetaceans.

This effort allowed the update of the list of cetaceans found in Madeira, adding 14 new species (Freitas et al, 2012) (available [here](#)). For this effort contributed as well the Natural History Museum from Funchal, other entities, several Maritime-Tourist companies and private individuals that make available records and photographs that allowed the identification of species not yet flagged in the region.



Sperm Whale



Common dolphin

science

This species differ between 1 and 30 meters long and with a weight between the 60 kg and 180 tons. Cetaceans are a diversified group that include, for the Madeira archipelago, 7 species of Baleen whales (mysticeti), like the blue whale, the fin whale or Brides's Whale and 22 species of toothed cetaceans (otondoceti), like the sperm whale and several species of Ziphiidae and dolphins. According to the gathered information in the last 20 years it's possible to know better the pattern of occurrence of these species, namely 3 very common species (Spotted Dolphin, Bottle-nose Dolphin and the Common Dolphin); 4 common species (Short finned pilot whale, Striped dolphin, Bryde's whale, and fin whale); 6 occasional species (Sei whale, Blainville's whale, Cuvier's whale, pigmy sperm whale, Risso's dolphin and Orca). The remaining species have unusual or exceptional presence .



Brydes's Whale



Short finned Pilot Whales



Striped Dolphins

education

Vou MarAr-te a Cabeça educative challenge

In the beginning of every academic year the Madeira Whale Museum presents an educative challenge, encouraging the development of projects of pedagogical continuity with schools.

In September 2015 was present to the educative community the challenge “**Vou marAr-te a cabeça**”, based on the stranding of a whale in Praia Formosa beach in 4th of May 2014.



**marAr-te a
cabeça**
cabeça



This challenge pretends to explain to students the process that is triggered from the animal collection to the skeleton assembly and, especially, the determination of the animal species, that's made, as well, by the analyses of the head anatomy. For this were developed 8 models, in fiber glass, with the shape of a whale head to be used as a park bench.

Whale heads were distributed to the participant schools for an artistic intervention realization, enabling students evolved to understand science through art. With that purpose as defined a theme for the intervention, the way whales see the world when they come to the surface, with the motto “**As baleias veem o mundo de uma forma que eu nem sequer imaginava!**”

Classes involved in the challenge, a total of 156 students, realized a free visit to the Museum for better understanding of the project, gathering of information and inspiration for their artistic intervention. The Madeira Whale Museum realizes lectures about environmental awareness, monitoring the educative process inherent to the challenge.



Participant institutions were: Apel school, Machico's Basic and Secondary school, D. Manuel Ferreira Cabral secondary School, Gonçalves Zarco Secondary School, Horácio Bento de Gouveia School, Machico's Secondary School, Padre Manuel Álvares School, Santa Cruz Secondary School and the Madeira University.

The developed works were placed in Caniçal's public spaces, contributing to the embellishment of the village but, mostly, maintain the association of this location to their cultural roots, in this case, whales.



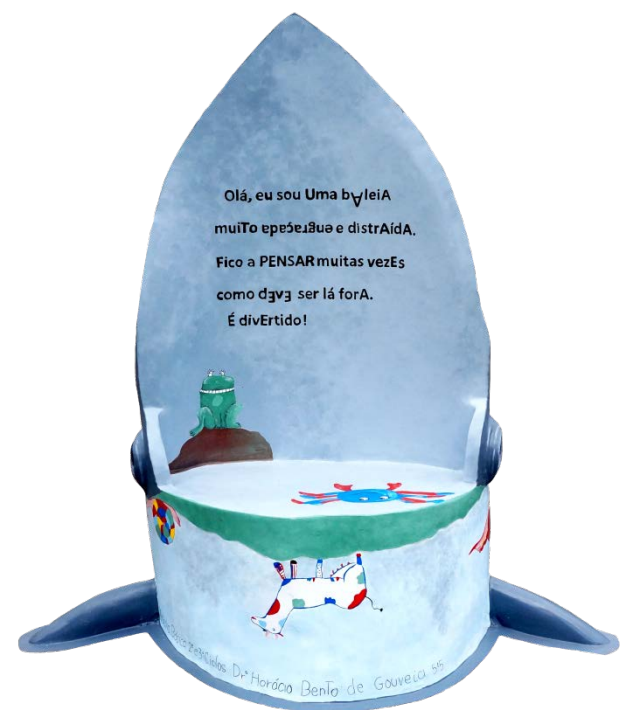
EBS Gonçalves Zarco



UMa



APEL



Winner Whale
EB23 HBG

The challenge's Jury was composed by the Marine Biologist Rita Ferreira and Plastic artist Mariana Ribeiro, assigned, with unanimous approval, the 1st prize to Horácio Bento de Gouveia Basic and Secondary School.