



RBC BLUE WATER GALLERY - BACKGROUNDER

The Canadian Museum of Nature's new, signature RBC Blue Water Gallery reveals the diversity of life on our blue planet and the critical role that water plays in sustaining all living things.

The gallery features:

- over 200 real specimens from the Canadian Museum of Nature's national collections
- a Pacific coast aquarium
- a 4,500 kg (10,000 lb) tank representing an eastern Ontario river ecosystem
- a wetlands aquarium featuring spotted turtles
- numerous models, such as a beluga, narwhal, leatherback turtle, and Mola Mola fish
- educational play areas: an arctic research ship and deep-sea sub
- captivating videos and hands-on activities
- a 19-metre (66-foot) long skeleton of a blue whale!

Visitors will learn about:

- water's unique properties and how it is an ideal medium for life
- the abundance of water on Earth and how our planet compares to others in the universe
- the diversity of life in the ocean
- deep-sea life and its adaptations
- Canada's fresh waters (rivers, streams, lakes, ponds and wetlands)
- weather and the water cycle
- global water issues and human impacts.

Throughout the exhibition, engaging electronic media and mechanical interactives help visitors explore a gamut of fascinating questions, such as:

- How do waves and tides work?
- Why is the ocean a noisy place?
- Why do some marine animals get so big?
- Why do some deep sea creatures glow in the dark?
- How do some ocean organisms make food without sunlight?
- What is the biggest migration on the planet?
- How does a sea turtle break speed and distance records?

A glimpse at some of the cool specimens to see...

Blue whale *Balaenoptera musculus*

Blue whales are the largest animals ever to have existed. Their total world population is between 5,000 and 14,000. Scientists believe that blue whales may live 80 years or more, but this has yet to be confirmed. The whale in our Water Gallery was between four and six years old when it died, likely from a collision with a ship. It is only one of two blue whales on display in Canada (and one of 17 on display in the world).





Bubble gum coral, *Paragorgia arborea*

Corals bring to mind tropical coral reefs, but bubble gum coral occurs in cooler ocean waters such as the North Atlantic. Its common name comes from its bright pink colour (when alive) and bulbous branch ends.

Off Canada's east coast, cold-water coral forests may provide critical nursery habitat for young cod and halibut. Bubble gum coral grows at depths ranging from 200 to 1300 metres. Fishing trawlers damage these slow-growing forests.

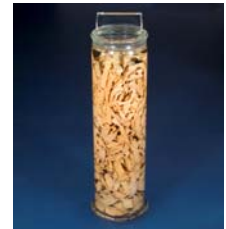
This specimen was collected in 1963 off the Atlantic coast, northeast of Newfoundland, in water about 550 metres deep.



Whale tapeworm, *Diplogonoporus balaenopterae*

Tapeworms are long, thin, parasitic flatworms that mature in the digestive systems of vertebrates. They absorb food directly through their skin from their host's intestine. The longest tapeworm species—those that live in whales—can be up to 40 metres in length, making them some of the longest animals on Earth.

Diplogonoporus inhabits baleen whales such as fin, minke and sei whales.



Portuguese man o' war, *Physalia physalis*

The Portuguese man o' war got its name from the resemblance of its bluish-purple float to the triangular sails of 15th and 16th century Portugese warships. It's not a jellyfish, but a colonial animal made up of four kinds of individuals (example: polyps, medusoids) that have become so specialized they can't live on their own. The tentacles average 10 metres in length (some are much longer)!



Giant squid arm *Architeuthis dux*

The giant squid is an elusive animal with eight arms, two very long tentacles and eyes the size of Frisbees.

Until the early 2000s, when living giant squids were captured on film, scientists had never observed this animal in its natural habitat.

This specimen was collected from White Bay, on the eastern side of the Great Northern Peninsula in Newfoundland and Labrador, in 1964.

