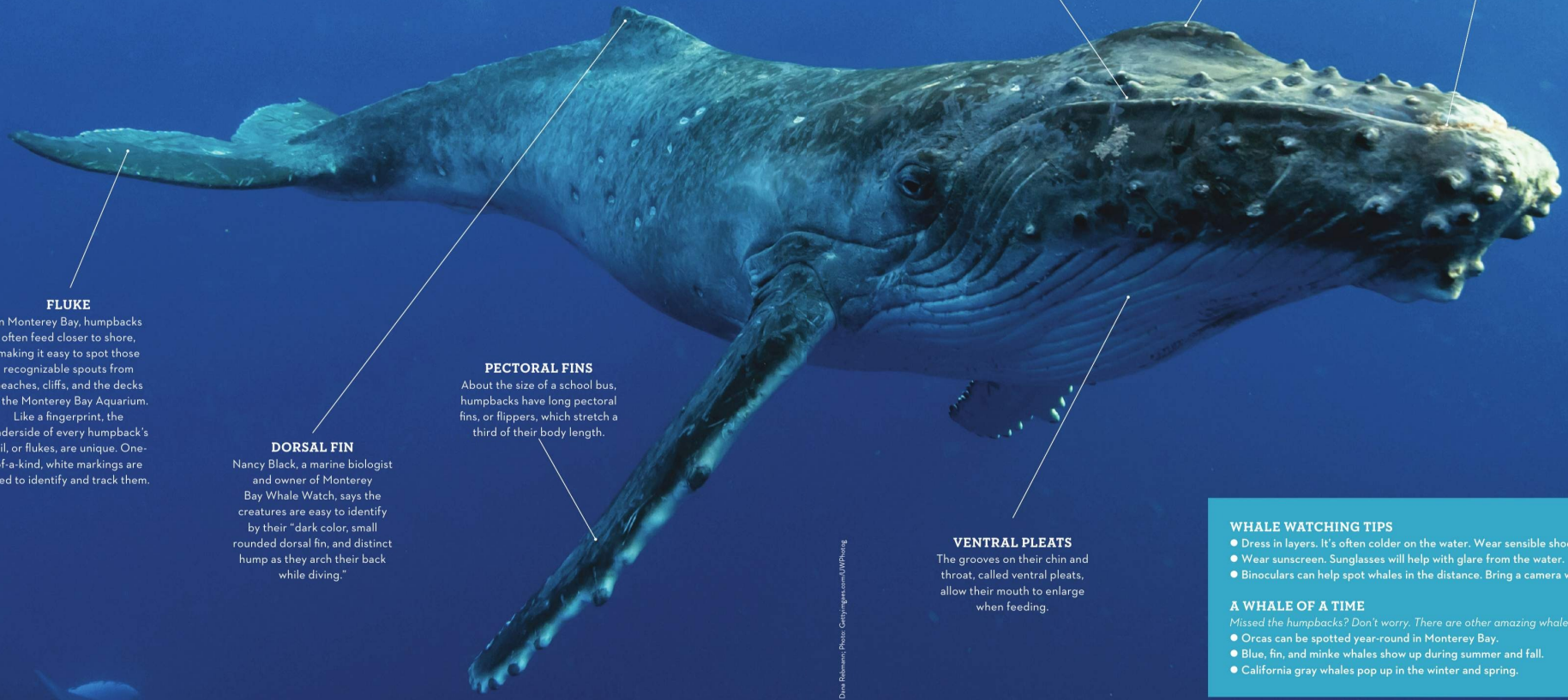


ANATOMY OF A HUMPBACK

The superstars stand out among the crowd of whales that call Monterey Bay home.



FLUKE

In Monterey Bay, humpbacks often feed closer to shore, making it easy to spot those recognizable spouts from beaches, cliffs, and the decks at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Like a fingerprint, the underside of every humpback's tail, or flukes, are unique. One-of-a-kind, white markings are used to identify and track them.

PECTORAL FINS

About the size of a school bus, humpbacks have long pectoral fins, or flippers, which stretch a third of their body length.

DORSAL FIN

Nancy Black, a marine biologist and owner of Monterey Bay Whale Watch, says the creatures are easy to identify by their "dark color, small rounded dorsal fin, and distinct hump as they arch their back while diving."

MOUTH

Monterey Bay is teeming with a variety of wildlife throughout the year, but humpback whales are especially fond of our nutrient-rich water, and generally make themselves at home from March to December.

BLOWHOLE

Blowholes allow whales to breathe at the surface of the water.

TEETH

Instead of teeth, they have baleen plates made of keratin (like fingernails) that help filter krill and small fish from large gulps of water.

VENTRAL PLEATS

The grooves on their chin and throat, called ventral pleats, allow their mouth to enlarge when feeding.

WHALE WATCHING TIPS

- Dress in layers. It's often colder on the water. Wear sensible shoes.
- Wear sunscreen. Sunglasses will help with glare from the water.
- Binoculars can help spot whales in the distance. Bring a camera with a strap.

A WHALE OF A TIME

Missed the humpbacks? Don't worry. There are other amazing whales to see.

- Orcas can be spotted year-round in Monterey Bay.
- Blue, fin, and minke whales show up during summer and fall.
- California gray whales pop up in the winter and spring.

Words: Dana Robinson; Photos: Gettyimages.com/UMPhoto