

WILDLIFE WONDERS OF THE SEA

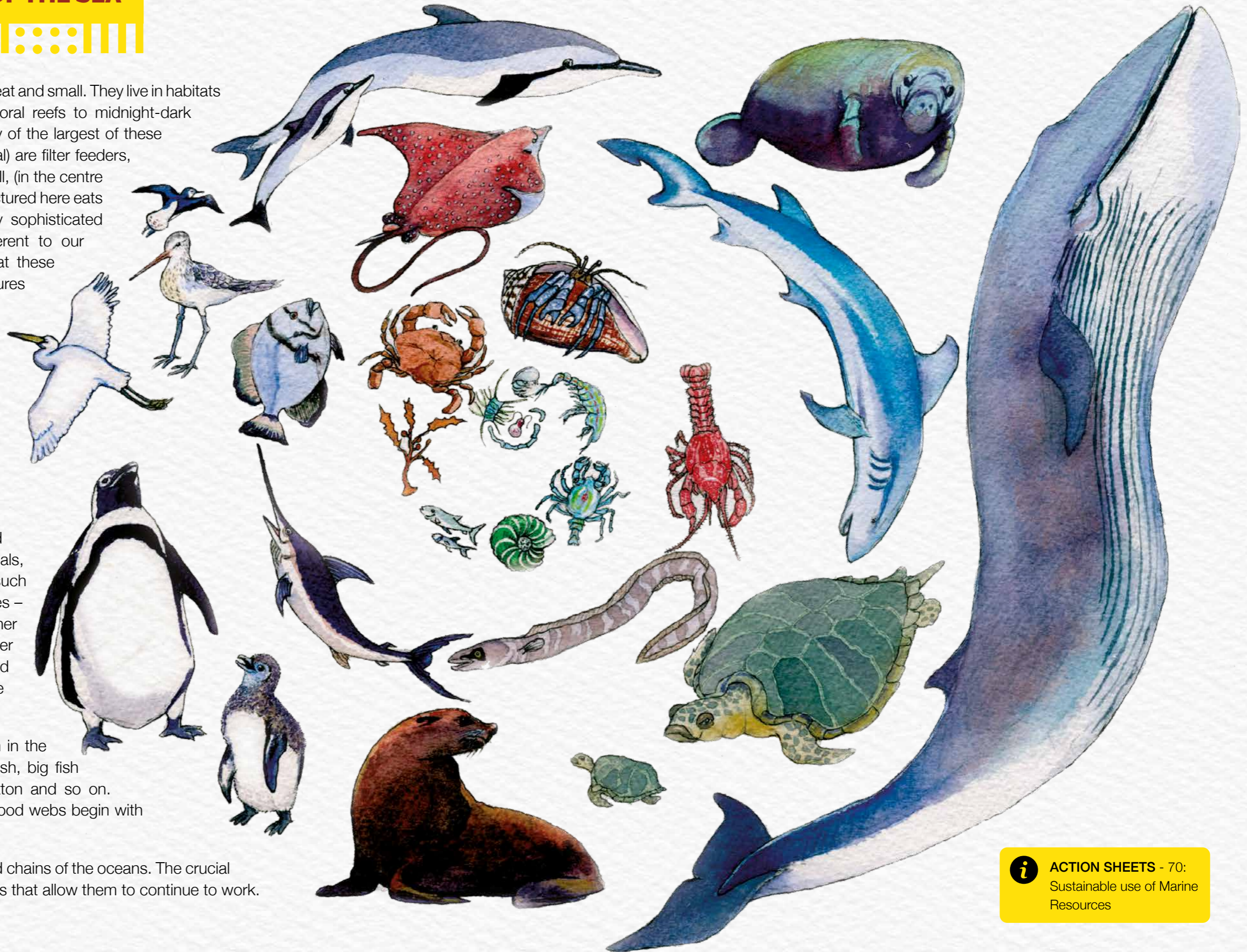
The sea is home to many creatures, great and small. They live in habitats equally varied, from sun-drenched coral reefs to midnight-dark deep ocean trenches. Ironically, many of the largest of these creatures, the whales (last in our spiral) are filter feeders, relying for their dinner on the tiniest krill, (in the centre of our spiral). The humpback whale pictured here eats them by sieving the water with very sophisticated mouthparts called baleen, very different to our teeth. Biologists now understand that these whales may have evolved from creatures like hippos and elephants which went back to the water.

Plankton are microscopic plants and animals. They float in the water, rising as the water warms and sinking as it cools, running with tides and ocean currents.

Phytoplankton are plants and so photosynthesise, deriving their energy from the sun (this process is described in **Chapter 4**). Zooplankton are animals, often the babies of bigger creatures such as crabs and fish. Some are herbivores – eating phytoplankton – some eat other zooplankton, and some eat whatever bits and pieces of waste and dead material they find whirling around in the soup of the sea.

Many very complex food chains form in the sea, as sharks eat seals, seals eat fish, big fish eat smaller fish, small fish eat plankton and so on. Plankton underpins them all. All sea food webs begin with this wondrous soup.

Humans exploit many parts of the food chains of the oceans. The crucial task is to ensure that we do so in ways that allow them to continue to work.



i ACTION SHEETS - 70:
Sustainable use of Marine
Resources