

Colossal whale may be heaviest animal

A newly discovered ancient species of whale is thought to be even heavier than the blue whale, the largest animal ever known to have lived on Earth



PERU

Perucetus colossus
Lived in middle **Eocene**
period (39 million
years ago)

Partial skeleton –
13 vertebrae, four
ribs and hip bone –
found in Ica desert

High bone
mass indicates *P. colossus*
lived in shallow waters

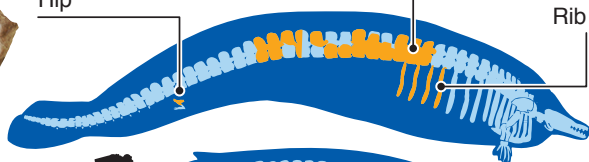


Hip



Vertebrae

Rib



Skeleton of ***P. colossus*** (20 metres long)
compared with **Wexford Blue Whale** (25 metres)
exhibited at London's Natural History Museum

■ *P. colossus* had skeletal mass 2-3 times
that of 25m-long blue whale and body
mass of 85-340 tonnes, equalling or
exceeding that of blue whale

■ New findings indicate
gigantism in marine mammals
began 30 million years earlier
than previously thought