

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## The Important Role Whales Play in the Ecosystem

### Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Whales contribute to the food chain by feeding on krill and plankton and supporting deep-sea life through whale falls. They also recycle nutrients, helping marine ecosystems thrive.
2. Phytoplankton produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. Whales support phytoplankton growth by spreading nutrients through their waste.
3. Whales store carbon in their bodies, and when they die, they carry it to the ocean floor, keeping carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.
4. Protecting whales is important because they help maintain a healthy ocean, which supports life on Earth and combats climate change.

