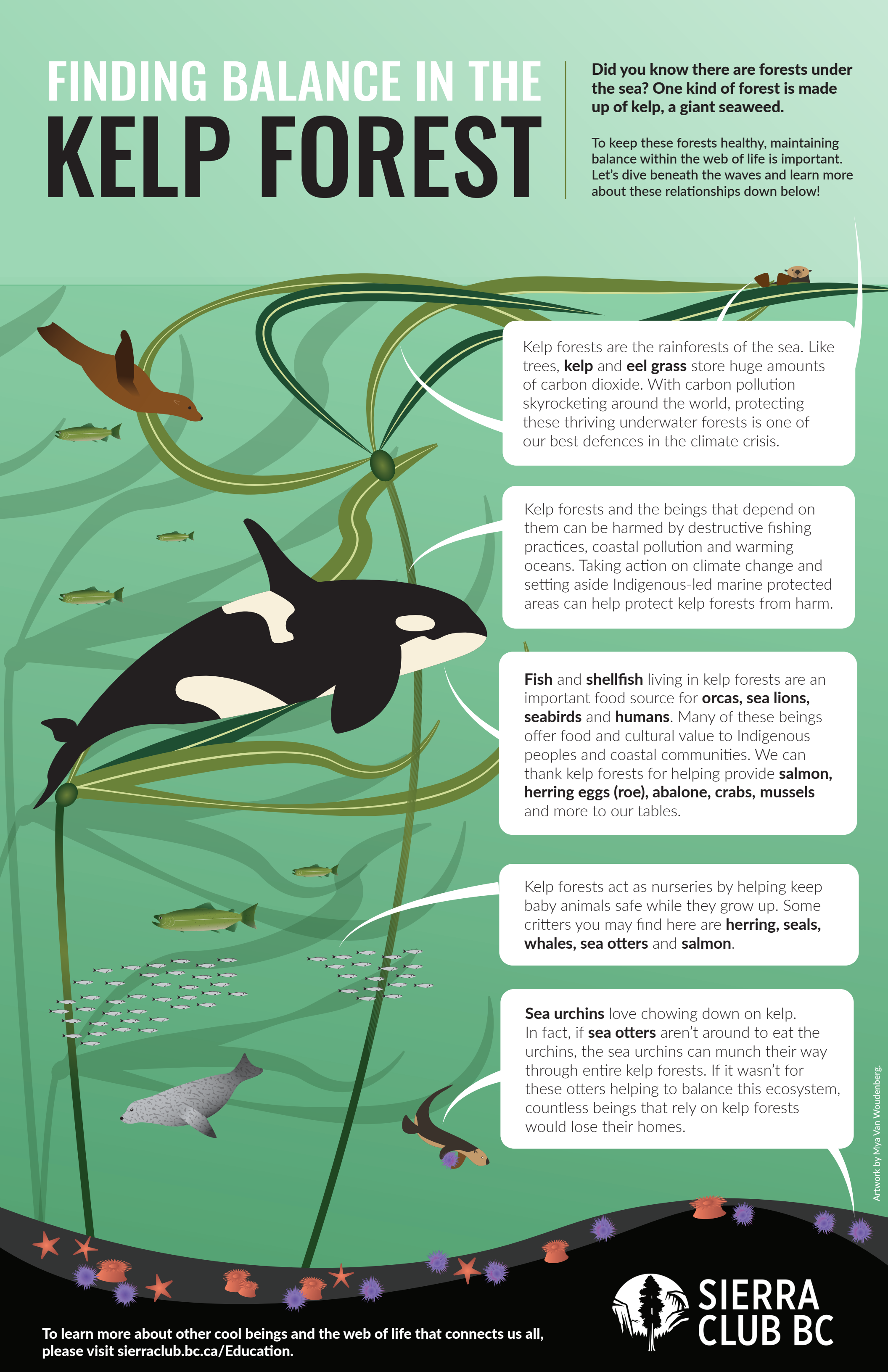


FINDING BALANCE IN THE KELP FOREST

Did you know there are forests under the sea? One kind of forest is made up of kelp, a giant seaweed.

To keep these forests healthy, maintaining balance within the web of life is important. Let's dive beneath the waves and learn more about these relationships down below!

An illustration of a kelp forest. Tall green kelp stalks with large blades and round air bladders rise from a dark seabed. Various marine life are depicted: a large orca with black and white markings swims in the center; a brown sea lion swims in the upper left; several green fish swim around; a sea otter floats on its back in the upper right; and a grey seal swims in the lower left. The seabed is decorated with orange sea urchins and purple starfish. Two white speech bubbles with curved tails point to different parts of the forest.

Kelp forests are the rainforests of the sea. Like trees, **kelp** and **eel grass** store huge amounts of carbon dioxide. With carbon pollution skyrocketing around the world, protecting these thriving underwater forests is one of our best defences in the climate crisis.

Kelp forests and the beings that depend on them can be harmed by destructive fishing practices, coastal pollution and warming oceans. Taking action on climate change and setting aside Indigenous-led marine protected areas can help protect kelp forests from harm.

Fish and **shellfish** living in kelp forests are an important food source for **orcas**, **sea lions**, **seabirds** and **humans**. Many of these beings offer food and cultural value to Indigenous peoples and coastal communities. We can thank kelp forests for helping provide **salmon**, **herring eggs (roe)**, **abalone**, **crabs**, **mussels** and more to our tables.

Kelp forests act as nurseries by helping keep baby animals safe while they grow up. Some critters you may find here are **herring**, **seals**, **whales**, **sea otters** and **salmon**.

Sea urchins love chowing down on kelp. In fact, if **sea otters** aren't around to eat the urchins, the sea urchins can munch their way through entire kelp forests. If it wasn't for these otters helping to balance this ecosystem, countless beings that rely on kelp forests would lose their homes.

To learn more about other cool beings and the web of life that connects us all, please visit sierraclub.bc.ca/Education.



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