

Stewards of the Coast and Redwoods



Whale Watching & Pacific Gray Whale Facts



Photo by Jackie Sones



Photo by Kevin O'Connor



*Bodega Head, Sonoma Coast, CA
January through May*

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Pacific Gray Whale Facts

Scientific Name: *Eschrichtius robustus*

Type of Whale: Baleen (filter feeding) whale

Range and Habitat: Shallow coastal waters of the North Pacific and Arctic Oceans

Identification: Gray w/ barnacles, white splotches

Birth Length & Weight: 15 ft (4.6 m), 1500-2000 lbs (680-907 Kg)

Adult Length & Weight: 50 ft (15 m), average 70,000 lbs (31,751 Kg or 35 tons), up to 90,000 lbs (40,823 Kg or 45 tons). Females are slightly larger.

Life Span: Estimated to live at least 60 years.

Sexual Maturity: 5-11 years old

Gestation: Average pregnancy is 13 months

Calving Interval: 1-3 years

Life Cycle: **Breeds** on southbound migration mostly in Southern California waters (November to January) & in Pacific coast lagoons of Baja (January to February),

Calves in Baja lagoons (late January to mid-February);

Nurses in lagoons 2 months; continues nursing on northbound migration (April to June) and in Alaska waters to August when calf is 8 months old; **Feeds** in Alaskan waters throughout summer to ice up.

Diet: Amphipods (small shrimp-like crustaceans) in the rich bottom sediment of the Arctic Ocean: Bering, Chukchi & Beaufort Seas. Incidental feeding on migration (e.g. krill bloom encounters). Mostly does not feed during migration, breeding & calving; lives off of blubber stored during summer feeding.

Migration Distance: 12,000 miles (19,312 kilometers) on average between Arctic Ocean: Bering, Chukchi & Beaufort Seas and Baja lagoons along the coast of the Pacific Ocean (some venture into the Sea of Cortez).

Average Migration Speed: 3-5 mph (2.6-4.3 Knots) continuous travel; shallow dives 5-15 minutes duration.

Spouts: Bushy heart-shaped blow.