

# Fascinating Facts about Grey Whales!

from the NOAA website



photo by Susan Murphy

## **Where do Grey Whales live?**

The eastern North Pacific stock of Grey Whales prefers shallow, coastal waters and feeds over oceanic continental shelves around the northern Bering and southern Chukchi seas between Alaska and Russia during the summer. In the winter, many of these Grey Whales migrate to the warm waters of Mexico's Baja California. They migrate each year along the entire West Coast of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

## **How can I identify a Grey Whale?**

Grey Whales are mottled gray, and adults can grow to 40-50 feet (12.2-15.2 meters) in length. Gray Whales also carry whale lice and parasitic barnacles that look like crabs, and create yellow and white patches on the whales. Instead of a dorsal fin, Grey Whales have 9-13 bumps along their dorsal ridge.

## **How well can a Grey Whale hear?**

It is thought that Grey Whales probably have excellent hearing, especially at low frequencies, which is valuable in the dark ocean environment where vision is less useful. Grey Whales also produce sounds including moans, rumbles and growls. The most prevalent call is a series of knocking sounds.

## **What do Grey Whales eat?**

Grey Whales filter their food through coarse baleen plates. Grey Whales are unique in that they prefer prey that live near or on the sea floor. They suck sediment and prey from the sea floor by rolling on their sides and swimming slowly along, sucking the sediment and prey from the sea floor.

## **How do Grey Whales have their young?**

Grey Whales are probably old enough to mate around 8 years old. Females are pregnant for about 13 months approximately every two to four years. Calves are born able to swim and are known to double their weight in about three months, and double their length in about two years. A mother and calf form a very close attachment, with the calf spending the majority of its time swimming close to its mother.

## **How long do Grey Whales live?**

Because of an absence of teeth (which can be used to estimate age in other mammals), it is difficult to tell the age of a Grey Whale.