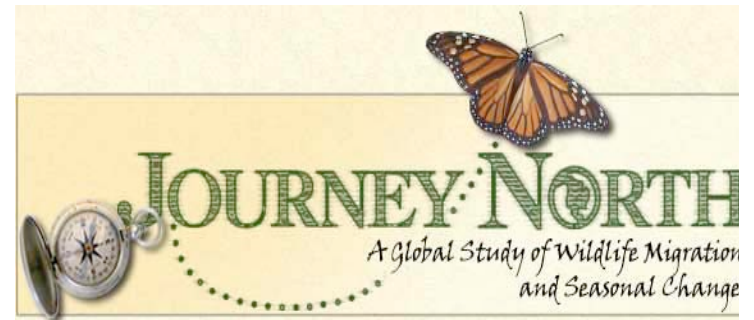




<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/>

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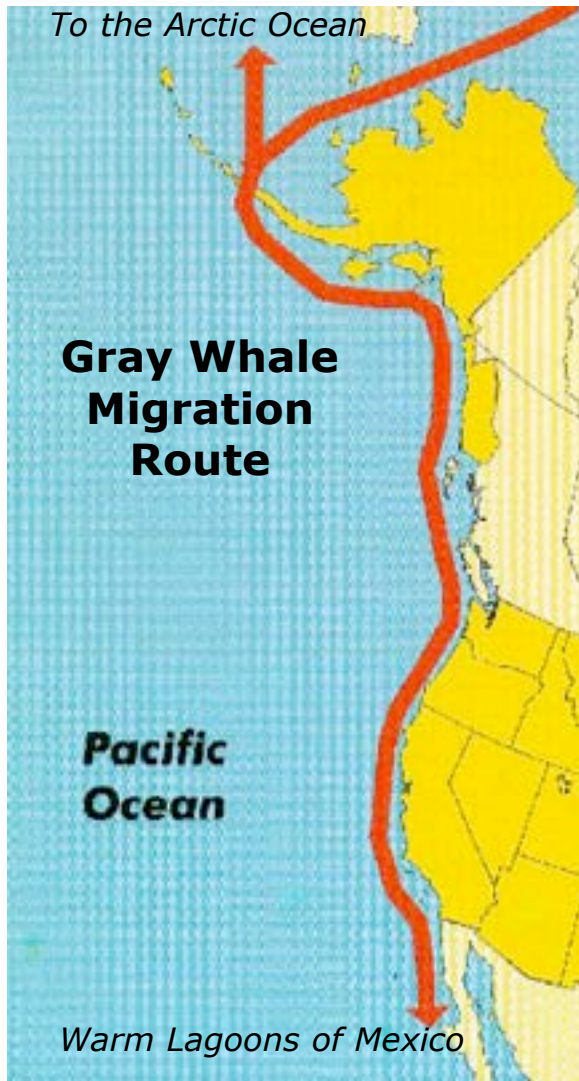


©Photo Linda Lewi

## **Gray Whales: The Monumental Migration**

by Jane Duden

Gray whales migrate farther than any mammal on earth. Each year they swim from the cold Arctic to warm Mexican lagoons and back again. That's over 10,000 miles!



1



©Photo Linda Lewis

## Why Do Gray Whales Migrate?

This baby gray whale is a few days old. Its mother left the cold Arctic waters of her summer feeding grounds in November. She swam for 55 days nonstop. In January she reached the warm, safe **lagoons** of Mexico's Baja Peninsula, just in time to give birth.

Gray whales migrate each fall to mate and give birth. They migrate north each spring to feast and grow fat. They do this every year of their long lives. Come see the news and sightings on the Journey North Web site!

People travel to the lagoons from afar to see these gentle giants and babies.

2



©Photo Mike Hawe

## Holy Cow, What a Calf

Imagine a two-ton baby, 15 feet long! That's the size of a baby gray whale, or **calf**.

Like you, baby whales do their growing on a diet of milk. Unlike you, they may gain more than 60 pounds a day! A calf is born without much **blubber** to keep it warm. The race to gain blubber helps it be fit and fat for its first journey north. The calf will swim more than 5,000 miles when only 2 or 3 months old.

Why do you think calves are sometimes called pickleheads?



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## Join the Whale Watchers

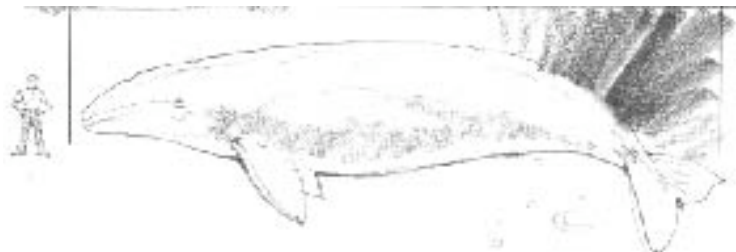
Gray whales follow a path just a few miles from shore. They swim just below the surface. That's why more people in more places see more gray whales than any other types of whales. Whale watchers all along the whale trail share their sightings on Journey North's Web site. We also keep track of whales migrating past two California observation posts. Using the data, what predictions will you make about this year's migration? When will be the **turnaround**, the date when whales heading north will outnumber whales heading south? When will the first whale reach Alaska?



©Photo Keith Jones

When will the largest group of cows and calves pass our California **observation posts**? Graph and predict with **data** from our bi-weekly reports.

How do observers spot gray whales on the migration trail? They look for the **spout** (above), the tail, or a **foot-print**. See how on the Web. And if you can't imagine kissing a baby whale, our video clip shows you what it's like for some lucky teens who did.



## Chow Time at Last

Except for babies, gray whales eat little or nothing during migration and in the lagoons. That changes when they get home and their arctic feeding grounds are again ice-free. They feast for 130-140 days before heading south again. It takes over 600 pounds of tiny **krill** to fill a gray's stomach.

Join Journey North as we discover and celebrate the whale trail!



**Krill** ©Photo Shauna Bingham