

CALIFORNIA GRAY WHALE COALITION

PROTECTING THE MOST ANCIENT BALEEN WHALE ALIVE TODAY

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AN INCREDIBLE GRAY WHALE MIGRATION !

This season we're witnessing a truly astonishing migration with a significant increase in numbers. The American Cetacean Society count is showing 455 Gray whales to date in comparison with an average number over the last ten years for the same period of 245.



Photo courtesy of National Marine Fisheries Service.

So we expect an amazing season in Baja and we know from our whale watching company members that there's a feast of whale watching happening along the west coast. It's wonderful news to see such a healthy migration. According to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), the whales are in good knick, many are pregnant and a number of calves have been seen already.

The Coalition will be sending two lucky staff to San Ignacio in March to check out the state of the season in this important Laguna. Definitely one of the big pleasures of running this Coalition is the joy and delight of being with the whales at such close proximity in San Ignacio.

But before we break out the champagne and celebrate, it is something of a mystery as to why there's such a major increase in numbers. Last year we saw an increase in cows and calf numbers which was a relief after five years of very low counts.

This year, the Coalition expects to see a much bigger increase in cows and calves.

Scientists do not know why the numbers are so high and there may be many reasons for the increased supply of nutrients which have given the whales enough energy to reproduce and undertake successful migrations. What we do know is that there's been a fifty fold increase in

phytoplankton under the deep sea ice – in areas previously inaccessible to research vessels. The source of nutrients for the increased phytoplankton is unknown.

With this dramatic increase in Gray whale numbers the Coalition will be watching Humpbacks, Bowheads and other species of whales who habituate the Bering Sea to see if there's similar increases.

What we do know is that there will be increased transient orca predation as packs of orcas lay in wait along the migration route for calves and occasionally mothers as well. This is one of the most horrific predator/prey relationships in Nature as the orcas will pursue a mother and calf for hours and days.

The Coalition recommends everyone check out our website and whale watching company members. Make a reservation for a Gray Whale watching trip and enjoy an amazing experience!

GRAY WHALE SCIENTIFIC WORKSHOP

At the end of March, the Coalition will finally be holding a scientific workshop in San Francisco. Our original intention to hold the workshop in Marina Del Rey in late October last year was scuttled due to family illnesses experienced by the workshop leader and the Coalition's CEO.

A wonderful roll-up of specialists in transient orca predation, climate change, prey, genetic interchange between eastern and western gray whales, ocean acidification and the impacts of shipping traffic will all be covered.

The Coalition is delighted to have a scientist from the Chukotka Peninsula, Russian Federation coming to the workshop. This will be the first time a Russian scientist has come to the US for a Gray Whale workshop.

The workshop will be the first comprehensive status review of the Gray Whale since 1999.

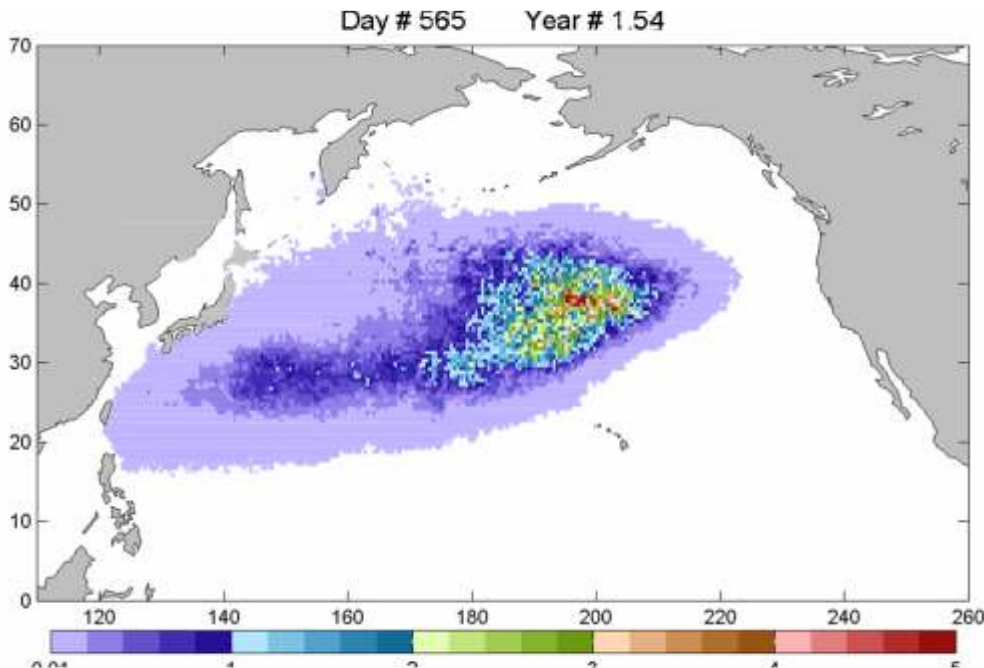
Unfortunately, the workshop will not be open to the public. The Coalition has limited funding for this historic workshop and we believe scientists appreciate the opportunity for a full and open dialogue with other experts without having to deal with public involvement. What we will do is ensure that the proceedings are published and hopefully, provide exclusive interviews with all the experts.

Representatives of the California Coastal Commission and the California Ocean Trust will be coming as observers.

The Coalition is still seeking funding for the two day workshop.

JAPANESE TSUNAMI DEBRIS ON ITS WAY

Japanese tsunami debris has washed up on U.S. West Coast nine months after disaster and there's 100 MILLION more tons on its way.



Graphical Projection by University of Hawaii at Manoa's Nikolai Maximenko and Jan Hafner

Japanese tsunami debris has washed up on U.S. West Coast nine months after disaster and there's 100 MILLION more tons on its way.

Large black floats are the first remnants of Japan's devastating earthquake and tsunami to begin washing up on the American coastline.

The debris traveled 4,500 miles on Pacific Ocean currents, pushed by wind and water, to reach the beaches of Neah Bay in far northwestern Washington state 280 days after the Japanese disaster.

Some 100 million tons of debris -- from wrecked fishing vessels to household furniture and even body parts -- is bearing down on the West Coast, raising environmental fears about the impact of massive amounts of wreckage clogging beaches.

Floating rubbish islands stretching dozens of miles in length have been spotted slowly edging away from Japan and towards the West Coast.

From entire segments of wooden homes, furniture and appliances to cars and boats, the rubbish islands are creating growing

concern due to environmental pollution as well as shipping hazards.

The main body of floating tsunami debris is expected to stretch the length of the coastline from California to Alaska, according to experts. How much of the debris is irradiated is another question.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES ARE MASSIVE

We all need to be vigilant as these massive changes overwhelm the planet. Although we're currently looking at a magnificent migration there's no guarantees this will be a permanent situation much less predictable.

Debris from Japan will create problems and continue to pollute the ocean with material and its toxic load. How the Tsunami debris will impact the marine environment of the sub Arctic and Arctic remains to be seen.

The California Gray Whale Coalition is on the job ! Please support our work.

With regards, Sue Arnold CEO California Gray Whale Coalition

THE REAL HAZARDS OF COASTAL POLLUTION

Some of you may have read about a Gray Whale found by Cascadia Research in Seattle a year or so ago. An autopsy on the stomach contents revealed an amazing array of STUFF.



The 37 foot near-adult male was found to be in better nutritional condition than some of the other gray whales that had died in recent weeks and starvation was not considered a major contributor to the cause of death. The animal had a surprising amount of human debris including more than 20 plastic bags, small towels, surgical gloves, sweat pants, plastic pieces, duct tape, and a golf ball ([see full list of items found and photo of all items](#)). The debris while numerous, made up only 1-2% of the stomach contents and there was no clear indication it had caused the death of the animal. It did clearly indicate that the whale had been attempting to feed in industrial waters and therefore exposed to debris and contaminants present on the bottom in these areas.

Everyone one of us needs to be so conscious of what we're dumping and where it's all going. The amount of debris in this whale's stomach is nothing short of outrageous but this is a familiar story. Seals, whales, dolphins, orcas are all vulnerable to human carelessness.

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