



EMERALD KEEPERS

EMERALDKEEPERS.ORG

For an Emerald Green, Ocean Blue Coronado



IT'S WHALE WATCHING SEASON

Winter in San Diego is prime time for whale watching. These majestic creatures can be seen from the shore or with a boat tour from December to April. It's exciting to see a spout or a tail from these giant marine mammals, but it's also important to remember our contribution to climate change is negatively impacting their future.

GRAY WHALES

During the winter months, the most common whale within a few miles of San Diego's shoreline is the Eastern North Pacific gray whale. One of the largest mammals on Earth, gray whales can grow 50 feet long and weigh up to 41 tons. They are identified by their dark gray color, lumpy back, and heart-shaped spout.

MIGRATION

Each year, gray whales migrate more than 10,000 miles between Alaska, where they spend the summer, and Baja California, where females give birth to their calves.

After wintering in the warm Baja waters while their young gain strength, gray whales return north in the spring. Relatively slow swimmers, gray whales cruise at an average speed of 5 knots (around 6 mph) and generally travel alone or in pods of two or three but may travel in larger groups during peak migration season.

POPULATION DECLINE

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) monitors gray whale populations and estimates the current population is around 14,500, a significant decrease from the 2016 peak

of 27,000. Their population decline is primarily attributed to a loss of food supplies due to the warming waters of the Arctic Ocean. In recent years, many of

the dead gray whales washed ashore have been emaciated and malnourished, suggesting they lacked the food and strength to complete their migration.

THREATS

Gray whales are hunted by orcas, but the biggest threat to gray whales are humans. Accidental ship strikes and fishing gear entanglement contribute to whale casualties. Offshore oil and gas development can affect both their habitat and foraging. And the impacts of human-caused climate change are threatening the location and availability of their food supply.

SIGHTING

Some of the best San Diego locations to see gray whales include Cabrillo National

Monument, La Jolla Cove, and Torrey Pines State Reserve. Organized whale-watching trips in boats or kayaks should follow the viewing practices established by the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

YOU CAN HELP

Everyone can help protect the gray whale population. Avoiding single-use plastics to keep trash out of the ocean as it is eventually ingested by marine life. Limit production of greenhouse gas emissions to protect the Arctic ice, essential for the gray whale's food supply.

Caring for our planet protects the gray whales and keeps Coronado Emerald Green, Ocean Blue.



SUPPORT EMERALD KEEPERS

Emerald Keepers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

