

Celebration of Conservation

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FROM: Dave Weller
TO: Virtual Team Leaders and Science Team
SUBJECT: Gray Whale Babies

Dear Virtual Team Members!

Greetings from the gray whale calf count. We had a wonderful day today and counted many mother-calf pairs.

At birth, calves are about 15 feet long. That's about the same length as a car! A gray whale calf weighs about 2,000 pounds.

The calves we see in April are about 3 months old. That means they were born in mid-January. The calves spend the first six weeks of their lives in the warm water lagoons of Baja California, Mexico.

Mothers like to raise their calves in the lagoons to keep them safe and warm. The lagoons are very much like a nursery school. It is filled with little calves that are just learning how to be gray whales.

Gray whale moms can be 36 to 50 feet (11-15 m) long. How long is that? Most school buses are about 40 feet long. That means gray whale can be as long as a bus or several feet longer!

Could a gray whale calf fit your classroom? How about its mom? Would they fit in the cafeteria? If all of the students in your class lay on the floor in a row, how many of you would it take to make up the length of a gray whale mom? How about a calf? (I wonder how many scientists it takes to be as long as a gray whale.)

Mothers feed their calves milk. The calves nurse until they are about 7 months old. By that time, the calves have migrated with their mothers from Mexico all the way to Alaska. (See the map and find the gray whale arctic feeding area and Baja wintering lagoons). The calves have learned how to feed on their own.

That is all for today virtual researchers.

Have Fun,

Dr. Dave

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