



Whale Watching Spoken Here is a unique program on the coast. It uses hundreds of trained volunteers to help visitors discover the fun and excitement of spotting whales in Oregon's coastal waters. The program was founded in 1978 and has served over 1 million whale watchers during the last 40 years. Oregon State Parks partners with the program every year for the Whale Watch Weeks. Learn more about their mission and how to join their ranks at whalespoken.org.



Oregon Coast Whale Watching



Whale watching is one of the most popular activities on the coast, enjoyed by tens of thousands of visitors per year. Oregon has more than two dozen excellent whale watching spots on the coast; many are in or near state parks.

Not sure where to start? The Oregon State Parks Whale Watching Center in Depoe Bay is the hub for all things whales. The center features interactive whale exhibits and expansive views of the Depoe Bay coastline. Its central coast location makes it a great jumping-off point for your adventure.



Whale Watching Center

Gray whales are the most commonly sighted whales on the coast. Their seasonal migration patterns bring more than 20,000 of them past the coast each year.

Oregon State Parks celebrates the migrations twice per year with "Whale Watch Week" during late December and late March. Volunteers are stationed at more than 20 of the best whale watching sites along the coast, ready to help visitors spot whales and offer fun facts about the marine mammals.

If you can't make it during one of the Whale Watch weeks, that's OK; the whales are still here! A small group of about 200 Gray whales remain in coastal waters every year, June - October. Summer months can be the best times for up close views of the whales. The Whale Watching Center is open to visitors year-round, as are all of the watching spots in state parks.



Whale Watch Week, Dec. 2018.

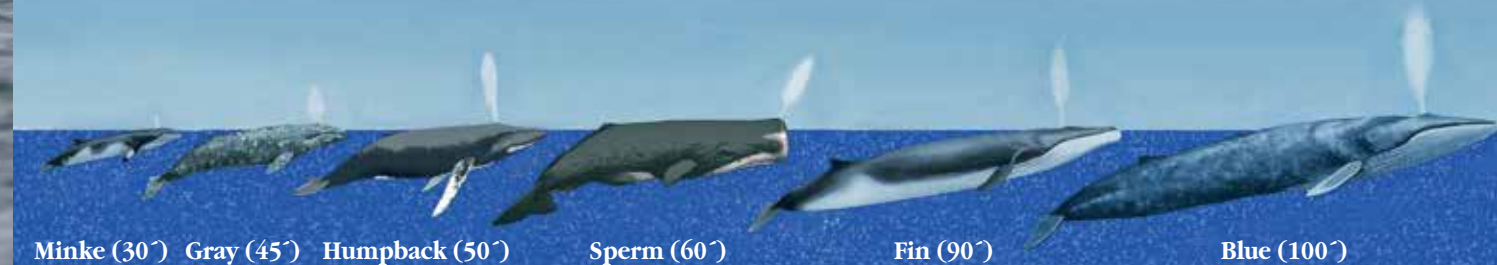
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
725 Summer St. NE, Suite C
Salem, OR 97301
oregonstateparks.org



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Write to OPRD, 725 Summer St. NE, Suite C, Salem, OR 97301;
or call 1-800-551-6949 (for the hearing impaired 1-800-735-2900).

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The Blow

Gray whales usually surface every 20 seconds as they swim, but will often stay under for 3 to 5 minutes when they are eating. If they have been down for 5 minutes they usually blow 5 times when they surface to replenish their oxygen supply. The blow, or spout, shoots nearly 12 feet high and expels 400 liters of air in a single blast. The whales take a few breaths at the surface then dive again. If they are frightened they can stay down for 30 minutes, hiding on the bottom or traveling great distances.



The Dive

A deep dive, also known as sounding or fluking, happens when a whale lifts its tail flukes out of the water. This helps propel the whale downward at a steep angle to the bottom, where they feed on zooplankton and amphipods. After the flukes disappear under the water, the turbulence of the dive will cause a circle of smooth water, known as a fluke-print.



The Breach

The ultimate in whale sightings is a breach: a whale launches itself out of the water in a spectacular show of power and grace. Scientists aren't sure why whales breach. Possibly they do it to remove parasites, communicate with each other or maybe it's just for fun. Gray whales aren't known for breaching nearly as often as Humpback whales, but young Gray whales seem to be the most common breachers along the Oregon Coast.



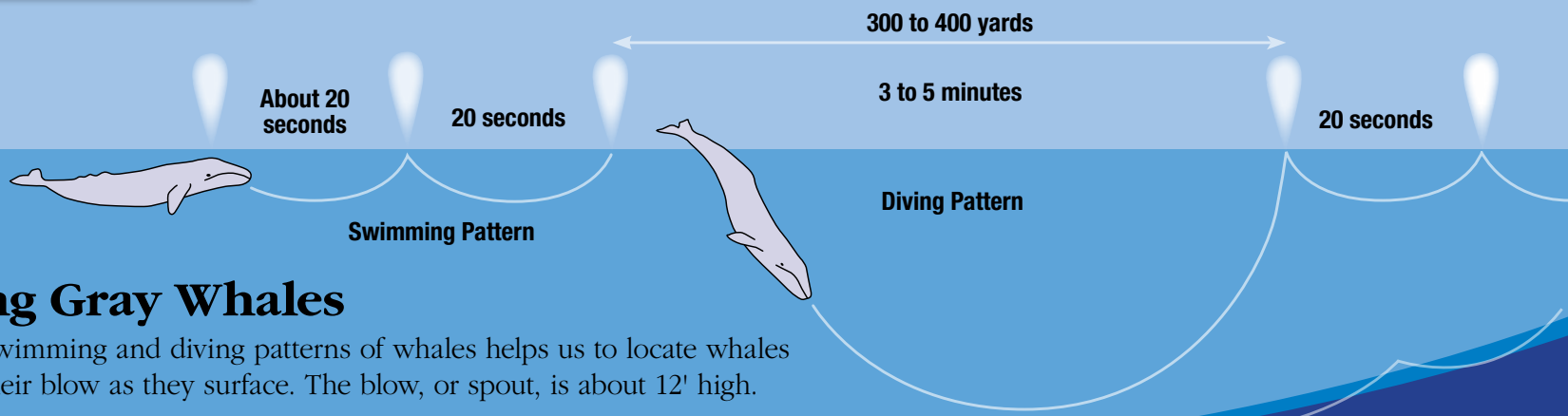
The Spyhop

Whales are intelligent and curious, and are often seen "spyhopping," or lifting their heads above the surface of the water. They like to rise out of the water to get a better sense of their surroundings. During the summer, Gray whales have been known to spyhop regularly, especially when local tour boats are near. Perhaps this means the whales enjoy watching us as much as we enjoy watching them?

Other Species

Humpback whales are the second most common whale on the coast; the best time to spot them is August and September. Orcas, also known as killer whales, can also be sighted. Look for them April - June.

The Best Whale Watching Sites



Watching Gray Whales

Studying the swimming and diving patterns of whales helps us to locate whales by watching their blow as they surface. The blow, or spout, is about 12' high.