

PRESENTS

GRAY WHALE

Eschrichtius robustus

Famous for its curious nature and friendly disposition, this species attracts thousands of tourists to Baja California Sur every year. After a drastic decrease in its population towards the end of the XIX and beginning of the XX centuries due to whaling, the North Pacific population has recovered thanks to multinational conservation programs.

TAXONOMY

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia
Subclass: Eutheria
Order: Artiodactyla
Infraorder: Cetacea
Parvorder: Mysticeti
Family: Eschrichtiidae
Ellerman & Morrison-Scott, 1951
Genus: *Eschrichtius*
Species: *E. robustus*



Conservation status:
• Nom 059 – Pr (special protection)
• IUCN – LC (least concern)



Distribution: From the arctic waters in the Bering Sea, to the Mexican Pacific.

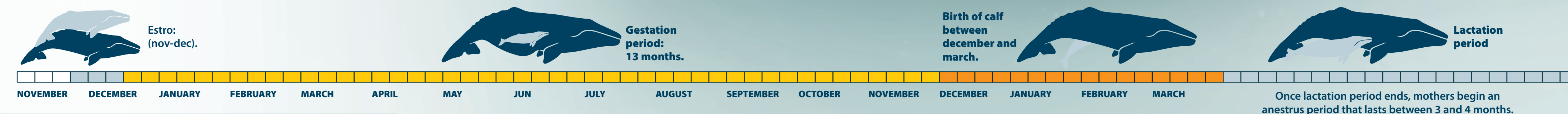


Diet: Amphipods, shrimp, mysids and polychaetes.



Sexual maturity: Between 6 and 12 years of age; can live to 75-80 years.

REPRODUCTIVE CYCLE



CONSERVATION TIMELINE



1949: Mexico signs the international agreements regulating whaling activities through the International Whaling Commission.



1972: The Ojo de Liebre Lagoon Whale Refuge is decreed.



1979: The San Ignacio Lagoon is decreed as a Whale Refuge.



1984: Mexico joins the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) which includes the gray whale under special protection status.



1988: The Biosphere Reserve El Vizcaino is established and includes the Ojo de Liebre and San Ignacio Lagoons, as well as the migration corridor between them.



1994: Species is included in the NOM-059-ECOL-1994, which lists the species and subspecies of wild flora and fauna under special protection status.



1996: Whale watching, conservation and protection guidelines are published in the NOM-EM-074-ECOL-1996.



2000: The General Wildlife Law is published, which aims to conserve wildlife through its protection and sustainable use.



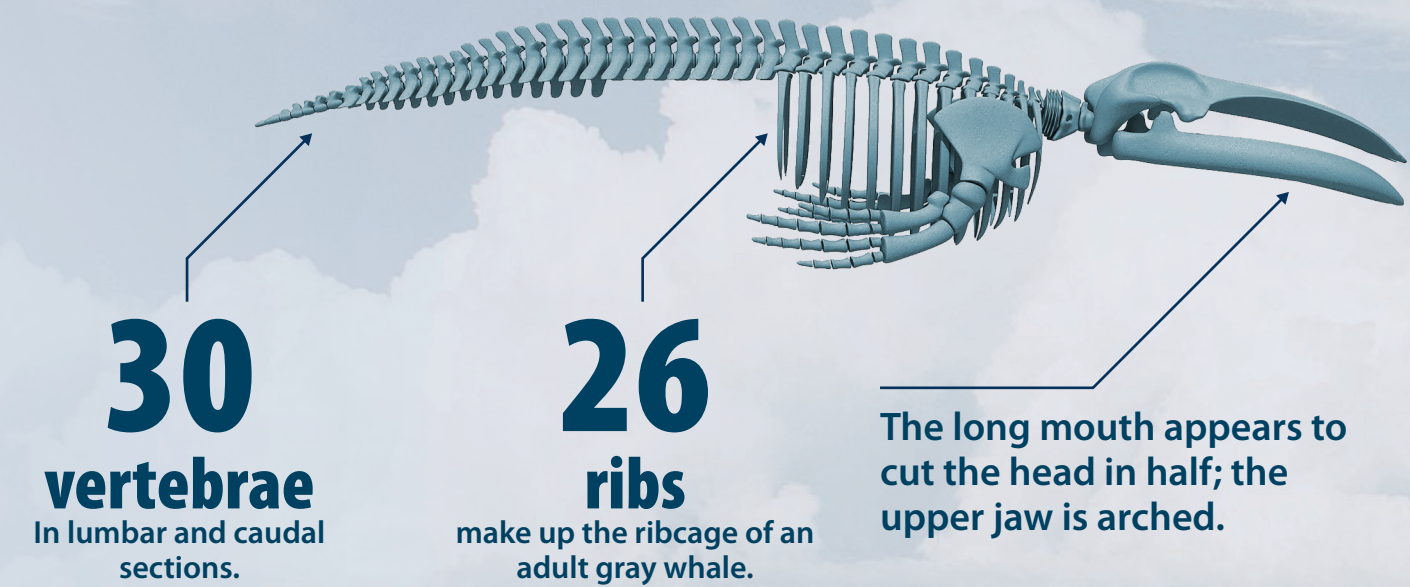
2010: Whale watching activities, habitat conservation and protection measures are established in the NOM-131-SEMARNAT-2010.



2014: A list of priority species and populations for conservation, including the gray whale, is published.

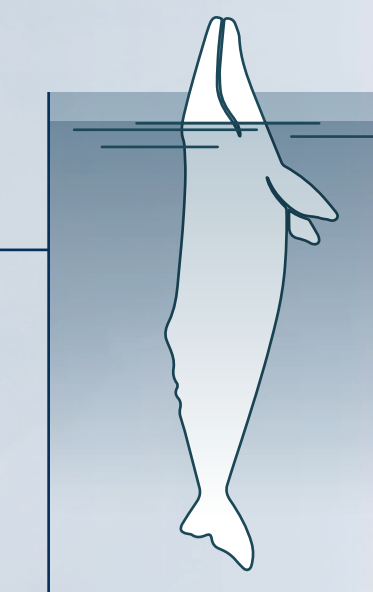
ANATOMY

Adults can reach 13-15 meters in length and can weigh between 15 and 33 tons. The skin is light gray with irregular white spots that create a unique pattern on each individual whale.



It is common to see them "spying" (spy hopping); they position their body vertically with the head above the water surface.

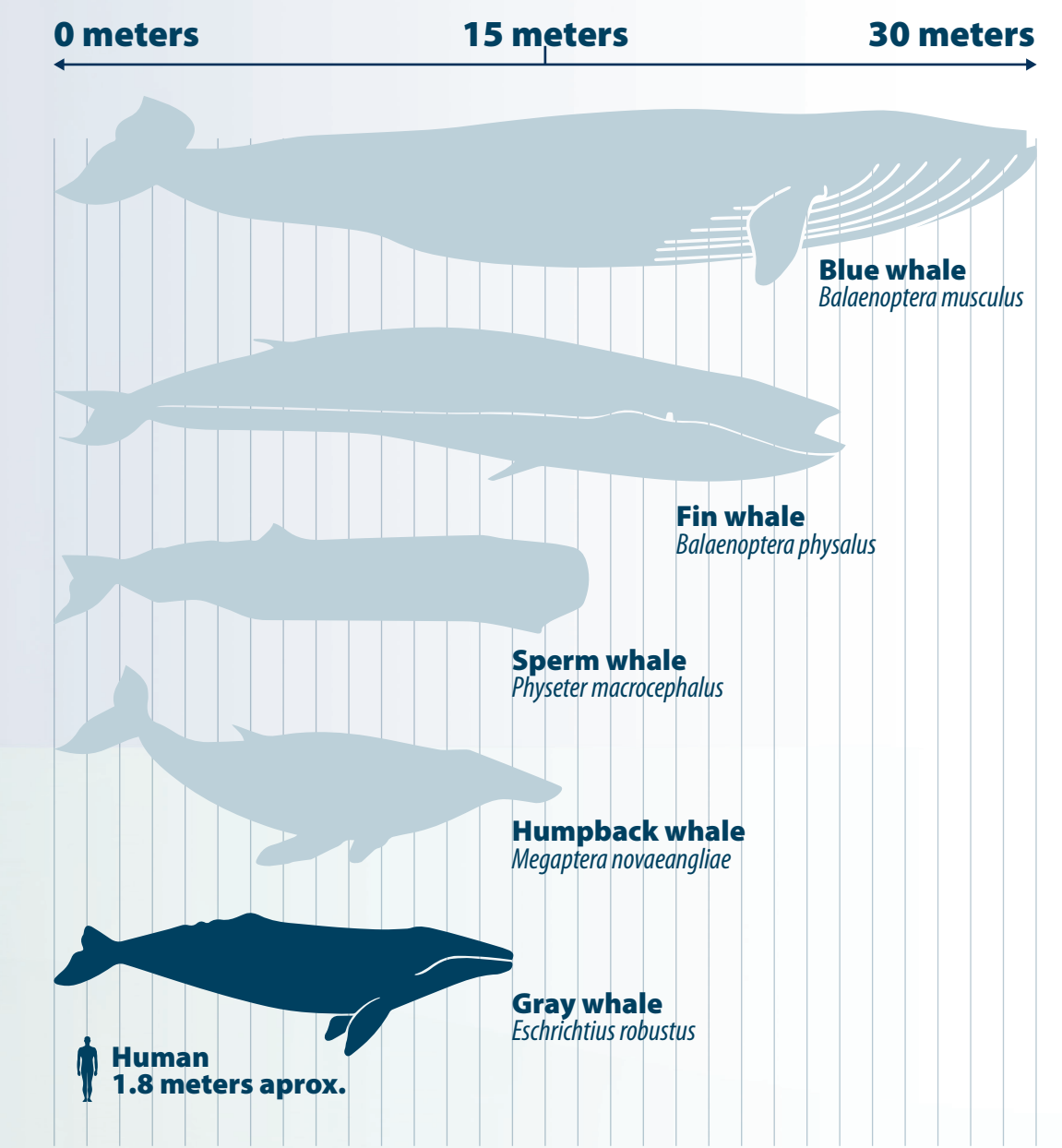
The spiracle has two slits, or blowholes; its blow is V-shaped.



160 pairs of baleen bristles
On average, less than 50 cm long and white-yellowish in color.

GIANTS OF THE SEA

The gray whale can reach up to 15 meters in length. However, she barely covers half the length of the largest cetacean in the world, the blue whale.



GRAY WHALES IN MEXICO

Every winter they migrate from the Bering Sea to the warmer waters in Mexico, where they give birth between December and February.



SOURCES:
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• DOF. 1994. NORMA Oficial Mexicana NOM-059-ECOL-1994
• DOF. 2014. ACUERDO por el que se da a conocer la lista de especies y poblaciones prioritarias para la conservación.
• Ballena Gris, *Eschrichtius robustus*. Naturalista. <https://www.naturalista.mx/taxa/41470-Eschrichtius-robustus>
• Números Naturales. 2016. Ecoturismo Marino. <https://vimeo.com/181058266>
• Steven L. Swartz. 2018. Encyclopedia of Marine Mammals (Third Edition)