

The California Gray Whale

*Papers presented at the
California Gray Whale Workshop,
University of California,
San Diego, Scripps Institution
of Oceanography,
21-22 August 1972.*

Sponsored by

*Southwest Fisheries Center,
La Jolla Laboratory, National
Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA*

and

*U.S. Department of the Navy's
Naval Undersea Center,
San Diego.*

CARL L. HUBBS, Chairman.

W. E. EVANS, Editor.

PREFACE

In early March 1971 an expedition sponsored by Sea World, Inc. of San Diego, under the direction of David W. Kenney with scientific support from the University of California, San Diego, captured a newborn female California gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) in Scammon's Lagoon, Baja California Sur, Mexico. This whale, 5.84 meters long and weighing 1,952 kilograms, arrived at Sea World in San Diego on 17 March 1971.

Although not the first successful capture of an immature California gray whale, this was however the beginning of a successful year of maintenance in captivity and the subsequent release into the wild, the first time for any species of baleen whale. The results of the scientific studies conducted during this year of captivity and the later field observations which were stimulated by the release of this unique whale, are the subject of this publication.

Many important contributors to our overall understanding of the complexities of the biology of the California gray whale are not formally represented in this report as contributors. The impact of the work of Carl L. Hubbs, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla; Raymond Gilmore, Museum of Natural History, San Diego; and Dale Rice, National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest

Fisheries Center, Seattle, Wash., as pioneers in establishing the basis for our present knowledge of the status of the gray whale population cannot be overstated.

Special acknowledgement is also due David W. Kenney, of Poway, Calif. for his efforts in successfully capturing and maintaining in good health the immature gray whale named Gigi II, the subject of most of the research reported here. Dr. Kenney should be applauded for his persistence in overcoming seemingly insurmountable opposition. Many of Dr. Kenney's colleagues were doubtful that a newly born gray whale could be successfully maintained alive in captivity for more than a few months, let alone one year. Yet, this

goal was achieved with overwhelming success. From predictions of normal growth, Gigi should have reached a total weight of 5,946 kilograms and a length of 8.30 meters by 20 March 1972. During her last week in captivity (6-13 March 1972), Gigi II was weighed three or four times. Due to the use of three different scales and two different conditions of weighing (i.e., animal fasting and animal fed prior to weighing), her final weights ranged from 5,364 kg to 6,350 kg. This weight range remarkably brackets the predicted weight previously mentioned. Her final overall length on 13 March 1972 was 8.15 meters, also significantly close to the predicted length of 8.30 meters based on normal growth. W.E.E.

indiscriminate interpretations which often accompany events of high publicity value, inadequate data collection, and difficulties in interpreting the sparse marine mammal data. Further complications arise from conflicting and contradictory views of special interest groups that influence resource decisions. A case in point is, of course, the blue whale.

Because this is also a time when significant policy and conservation decisions are being made on marine mammals, it is particularly important to concentrate on the generation of factual information. The conservation of our resources is essentially a decision-making process; this process can only be effective if decision-makers are supplied with appropriate facts. Workshops such as this California Gray Whale Workshop will do much to contribute to our understanding and knowledge of marine mammals and assist in making better resource decisions which hopefully will preserve these Leviathans for the education and enjoyment of future generations.

I think Herman Melville had a premonition that all of this would come to pass; that status of marine mammal stocks would be of world concern and as a small part of this concern we would be holding our workshop. In fact he could be before you now saying, as he did in *Moby Dick*:

"Already we are boldly launched upon the deep; but soon we shall be lost in its unshored, harborless immensities. Ere that come to pass; ere the Pequod's weedy hull rolls side by side with the barnacled hulls of the Leviathan; at the outset it is but well to attend to a matter almost indispensable to a thorough appreciative understanding of the more special leviathanic revelations and allusions of all sorts which are to follow.

It is some systematized exhibition of the whale in his broad genera, that I would now fain put before you. Yet is it no easy task. The classification of the constituents of a chaos, nothing less is here essayed. Listen to what the best and latest authorities have laid down . . ."

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

BRIAN J. ROTHSCHILD

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the California Gray Whale Workshop. The Workshop is being held in a significant location and at a particularly appropriate time.

The location, La Jolla, is of course, quite near the area surveyed as part of the well-known California gray whale census and is also a focal region for other studies on the dynamics and life history of the California gray whale. Some of this research will be presented at this Workshop where you will hear about such diverse topics as husbandry, respiration and metabolism, cardiovascular physiology and blood studies and behavior and physiology — all related to the California gray whale.

In addition to being a region where many contemporary studies on the gray whale have been undertaken, it was also in this general area of the North American coast that Charles M. Scammon, whaler and sometime

captain in the U.S. Revenue Marine, undertook his early studies of the natural history of the gray whale. His studies "The Marine Mammals of the North-Western Coast of North America," were published in 1874. Many of Captain Scammon's observations on the gray whale were made in the mid-1850's when he discovered a major nursery ground of the California gray whale in a Baja California embayment, Laguna Ojo de Liebre, now frequently called Scammon's Lagoon. Scammon was also involved in the early, intensive harvest of this species, an activity that was terminated in 1946 when the International Whaling Commission declared the gray whale a protected species.

The timing of this symposium is also appropriate. There is now an unprecedented interest in marine mammals. TV, radio, motion pictures, newspapers and magazines have all contributed to a growing public awareness and concern with these fascinating animals. Unfortunately, this deluge of publicity has resulted in a mixture of fact and fiction. The fiction has been further fed by various

Brian J. Rothschild is Director, Southwest Fisheries Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, La Jolla, CA 92037.