



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

Office Dept
1/23/53

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Immediate Release JANUARY 23, 1953

WHALES MOVING TO WINTERING GROUNDS

A little-known but spectacular wildlife migration is in progress right now, Director Albert M. Day of the Fish and Wildlife Service revealed today. The gray whales of the Pacific are moving in majestic procession southward along the coast of California to their winter breeding grounds.

These strange animals make an annual migration to certain bays in Lower California to bear their calves, returning later to feed in the ocean waters as far north as the Gulf of Alaska. Once very abundant, they were almost exterminated by whalers who operated in these confined bays to which the animals are migrating. Now protected, their numbers have increased so that they are counted in the thousands.

Whales are mammals, with a fish-like form, and like other mammals breath air and must hold their breath when below the surface of the water. They must spend much time at the surface where they may be counted. The gray whale, during this migration, follows the beach closely and may be counted as he surfaces within sight of land. The slate-colored gray whale is one of the smaller of the whales, with an average length of 40 feet. The blue or sulphur bottom whale reaches a maximum length of 106 feet and a weight of over 100 tons. But these 40-foot animals, traveling leisurely close inshore through the clear waters of southern California at six or seven miles an hour.

Dr. Raymond M. Gilmore, one of the country's few experts on whales and whaling, has taken up his Fish and Wildlife Service post at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at La Jolla in partial fulfillment of the United States' responsibilities as a member of the International Whaling Convention for the conservation of whales. Dr. Gilmore is making systematic observations to determine the size of the herd of gray whales, and will follow them later to the southern wintering grounds to complete his census. Dr. Gilmore, who has accompanied Antarctic expeditions and has written numerous articles on whaling, also advises the FWS on the issuance of whaling permits now required for United States nationals to take these animals, and on the establishments of whaling stations so as to insure their meeting treaty requirements. These requirements are designed to eliminate all wasteful practices.

The once great American whaling industry—100 years ago over 700 whaling ships involving an investment of \$40 million were engaged in the business—is temporarily dormant because of a lack of demand for the products. The business may be revived because the flesh of whales is similar to beef in flavor and texture, and is extensively used for food in Japan, as well as in several European countries, and has recently been introduced in the United States. Roy Chapman Andrews once estimated that one whale could produce as much meat as a herd of 100 cattle.

Several years ago Dr. Carl L. Hubbs, noted ichthyologist of the Scripps Institution, became interested in the gray whale migration along the coast and began estimating the size of the herd. Now Dr. Hubbs is on sabbatical leave, and Dr. Gilmore has taken over.

The International Whaling Commission, made up of representatives of the 17 treaty Governments, meets annually. This year the meeting will be in June at London. Dr. John L. Kask, Assistant Director of the FWS and Deputy United States Commissioner, and Dr. Remington Kellogg, Director of the National Museum, United States Commissioner, and Chairman of the Commission, will attend.

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