

## On the Road Again

### OBJECTIVES

Students trace the *migration* route of a gray whale and discover a gray whale's natural history.

### MATERIALS

- copies of the *On the Road Again* cut-outs on page 15
- map of western North America, big enough for a classroom bulletin board (or enlarge map at right onto butcher paper)
- markers, crayons, tempera paint, and/or various other art materials
- illustrations, photos, videos, and other resource materials on gray whales as available (see page 24)
- tacks or tape

### BACKGROUND

Gray whales inhabit the eastern North Pacific Ocean. They spend summers in the icy waters of the Bering and Chukchi seas, off Alaska — their feeding grounds. As the ice pack advances in the fall, gray whales embark on one of the longest known migrations of any mammal.

Hugging the North America coastline, gray whales swim south more than 9,000 km (5,600 miles) to the warm-water lagoons of Baja California, Mexico. The trip takes two or three months each way. The migrating whales can be seen from shore or whale-watching boats.



As it begins a deep dive, a gray whale lifts its tail flukes.



## ACTION

1. Enlarge the map of western North America so that it's big enough for a bulletin board display. Have students help color and label the map, then mount it on the wall in your classroom.
2. Photocopy the animal illustrations on page 15 (enlarge if you like) and cut them out.
3. Secure the adult gray whale cut-out to your map so that it can be moved and re-attached once each week with tape or tacks. Begin with your adult gray whale in the arctic feeding grounds. (Choose the Bering Sea or the Chukchi Sea.)
4. Explain to your students that the gray whale is going to be making a long trip (migration) all the way to the lagoons of Baja California, Mexico. Have the class choose which lagoon will be their destination. A gray whale takes two to three months to reach its destination – try this activity for ten weeks. *(If you measure the migration route and divide this measurement by 10, you'll know how far to move your whale each week.)*
5. Each week on the same day, move your whale a little farther down the migration route. Along the way, focus on the geography, animal life, and culture of the area.  
  
Attach the photocopied cut-outs (from page 15) to your map when you're near the appropriate area.
6. Mother whales give birth to calves on their southward migration. Surprise students by placing the gray whale calf next to the adult as the adult nears the lagoons. Celebrate with a baby whale birthday party!



Wildlife enthusiasts observe a gray whale in the warm-water lagoons of Baja California, Mexico.

# On the Road Again cut-outs



**amphipod (food for gray whales)**  
*Alaskan feeding grounds*



**Alaska sea otter**  
*Alaska*



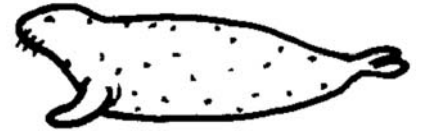
**walrus**  
*Alaska*



**salmon**  
*northwestern United States*



**Steller's sea lion**  
*northwestern United States*



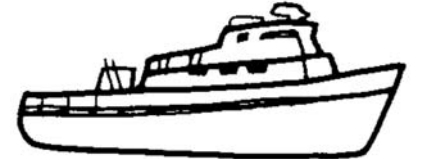
**harbor seal**  
*Alaska to Baja California*



**Douglas fir tree**  
*northwestern United States*



**bottlenose dolphin**  
*Southern California*



**fishing boat**  
*(anywhere along the coast)*



**killer whale**  
*throughout Pacific Ocean*



**California sea otter**  
*central California coast*



**California sea lion**  
*California coast to Baja California*



**surfer**  
*Southern California*



**cactus**  
*Baja California*



**coyote**  
*Baja California*



**gray whale calf**



**adult gray whale**