



The Pacific Whale Watch Association

The [Pacific Whale Watch Association](http://www.pacificwhalewatchassociation.com) (PWWA) is a group of 32 ecotourism companies departing from 19 ports in Washington state and British Columbia that are committed to research, education, and responsible wildlife viewing. As a conservation-first Association, PWWA focuses on protecting marine mammal populations by modeling safe and non-disruptive viewing behavior while also contributing real-time data to regional research partners to actively monitor sealife health and behaviors.

Each of our member operators provides an ethical, education-based approach to experiencing the sealife and wildlife in their natural habitat within the Salish Sea. All PWWA members uphold great respect and admiration for the Pacific Northwest and its magnificent sealife, and many of our captains and naturalists are longtime marine scientists and educators.

For more information, please visit www.pacificwhalewatchassociation.com.

PWWA Best Practice Guidelines

- PWWA is **100% focused on the health of Salish Sea whales and science-based solutions** that best support their current and future well-being.
- Whale watching serves as a critical **educational and conservational tool**. Leading marine and environmental scientists who study Salish Sea whales, such as Dr. David Bain and Ken Balcomb among others, agree that responsible whale watching tours are a net benefit to the health of the whales and sealife in the Salish Sea.
- Whale watching boats serve as **stewards on the water**, modeling best practices, alerting other recreational vessels on the water when whales are in the area, and urging those vessels to slow down and use high caution, via vessel presence, signal flags and radio communications.
- Research has shown that the **top driver of sound received by whales in the water is the speed a vessel is moving**.
- When viewing wildlife, PWWA **whale watch boats operate at a go-slow speed that is equivalent to the ambient noise level of rainfall**. One of the key findings from the most comprehensive recent study on underwater noise received by whales (NOAA DTAG – 2010-2012) is that there is a significant reduction in sound levels when boats conduct whale watching activities at **slow speeds of 7 knots or less**. PWWA members abide by this go-slow speed limit within one (1) km of any whale.
- You can learn more about PWWA's self-regulation operating guidelines here: <https://www.pacificwhalewatchassociation.com/guidelines>



Whale Health, Monitoring and Protection in the Salish Sea

- There are two different types of orca whales that frequent the Salish Sea. **Salmon-eating orca whales** (Southern Resident Killer Whales – SRKW) and **Mammal-eating orca whales** (also known as “transients” or “Bigg’s” whales).
- As of April 2019, there are **75** Salmon-eating orca whales (SRKW) in existence. As of 2011, there are an estimated **500** Mammal-eating orca whales in the Salish Sea.
- **Whale species that do not rely exclusively on salmon as their food source are thriving** in the exact same ecosystem and soundscape of the SRKWs. Since 2012, there have been 80 recorded new births of Mammal-eating orca whales existing in the exact same waterways and environment as Salmon-eating orca whales (SRKW).
- **PWWA provides over 90% of the salmon-eating Salish Sea orca sighting data to researchers and government agencies.** Large numbers of Minke Whales, Grey Whales, Humpbacks and even Harbour Porpoises are also frequently seen and reported by PWWA operators in Salish Sea waters.
- With the Salmon-eating orcas (SRKW) spending less time in Haro Strait and the Salish Sea, the Center for Whale Research and other scientists/researchers greatly depend on PWWA’s sightings data for their ongoing health and behavioral monitoring, as well as their annual sightings databases. **Without our data, this research work will be negatively impacted** to protecting and preserving the future of SRKW.
- PWWA has created a **science-based vessel management plan** with input from leading experts to guide best practices and self-regulation around responsible whale watching. The goal is to accomplish a “near zero” acoustic footprint of whale watching vessels in the vicinity of Salmon-eating orcas (SRKW) and other whales; science has shown that this will offer more benefits to the SRKWs than suggested approaches of moving vessels to further distances away.
- Enforcing go-slow zones that apply to **all small vessels** would be a science-based action that reduces noise exposure for SRKWs, expanding the volume of water they can search for salmon. Vessels that comply with go-slow zones’ rules would expose whales to less noise than distant non-whale watching vessels that are moving at faster speeds.

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