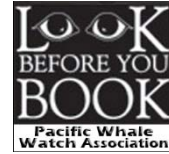




**Pacific Whale  
Watch Association**

PWWA Past, Present and Future



## **Pacific Whale Watch Association (PWWA): Past, Present and Future**

### ***Who We Are:***

We are a professional group made up of both Canadian and U.S. Whale Watch tour operators located in the trans-boundary region of the Pacific Northwest in the waters of the Salish Sea.

### ***Our Mission:***

We operate cooperatively in order to provide the public with opportunities to view whales and other regional wildlife. Through our on-board naturalists, teach the public about the natural history of the area's marine mammals, their habitats and concerns for their preservation.

### ***Our Goal:***

To operate in a respectful manner utilizing **Best Practices Guidelines**, that does not interfere with orca life processes.

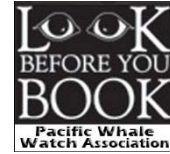
### ***Our History:***

Over the last twenty years our efforts have included, but are not limited to:

- Development of **Best Practices Guidelines** to view orcas and other regional wildlife. These practices have been recognized and adopted world-wide.
- Implementation of a voluntary **no go zone** on the west side of San Juan Island when orca whales are present. This specific area requires that our professional whale watch operators must maintain a minimum distance of 1/4 mile off shore between Eagle Point and Open Bay and to maintain a 1/2 mile off shore from *Lime Kiln State Park*.
- Education of millions of passengers which, throughout the years, has created strong support for orca conservation issues.
- Working cooperatively with non-governmental organizations, local, state, provincial and federal agencies who regularly contribute to scientific studies and monitoring.
- Development of a **go slow 7 knot viewing method**. Research has shown that a slower speed and reduced engine noise around the orca does not affect their ability to echo locate their prey
- Implementation of a **spread the viewing policy**. Our professional operators strive to divide viewing and go to different locations to avoid a concentration of vessels. A NOAA funded aerial survey in the summer of 2010 showed that out of 23 observations 39% had no boats present. Additionally, there are 12 - 14 hours per day in season when no commercial whale watching boats are operating and the whales are by themselves. During the remaining six months whale watching operations are suspended and the location of the orcas is mostly unknown.
- Provide a platform for hundreds of professional naturalists to increase their knowledge and observe wildlife behavior. These naturalists are highly educated and provide an excellent source of information for the general public regarding orca behavior and recovery.



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- Monitor private boaters when law enforcement is not present. Documentation shows that 90% of violations of voluntary guidelines are by private boaters. Our operators are in constant contact with *Soundwatch* (U.S) and *Strait Watch* (Canada). The commercial operators inform them via radio and cell phones, of potential concerns that private boaters present. Our boats are frequently the only source available to know the whereabouts of the orcas so that *Soundwatch* and *Strait Watch* can perform their valuable service.
- Direct political and funding support for:
  - Up-listing (raising to 'endangered') of the Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW)
  - Neah Bay rescue tug
  - Increased oil spill preparation
  - US and Canadian on-the-water education via The Whale Museum's *Soundwatch* (San Juan island) and *Straight Watch* (Canada),
  - *Orca Network*, *The Center for Whale Research* and *The Whale Museum*
  - Anti-hunting of gray whales at Neah Bay
  - San Juan County and Washington State law enforcement legislation for orca protection
  - Wild salmon restoration

### **Endangered:**

It is important to point out that the Southern Resident Killer (SRKW) Whale up-listing to endangered status was allowed because SRKW are a genetically and culturally unique group of whales. The reality is that the orca whale's population has often fluctuated during the last 35 year population study. Scientists continue their research to understand, however, these fluctuations do not seem to be impacted by vessel numbers. To the contrary, the whales that spend the most time with the PWWA fleet within Puget Sound are in J-pod. J-pod appears to have the most stable population amongst the SRKW community, while L-pod, who is the least observed of the SRKW community, has the most fluctuation.

### **Orca's Prey:**

SRKW eat approximately 80% Chinook salmon and 15% Chum salmon. The latest information coming from the scientific community (NOAA researcher) suggests that they pursue Chinook because it is a deep water fish and cannot see the orca coming the way other types of salmon can in shallower waters. Orca can use their sonar very effectively in these deep (up to 150 meters), dark waters. However, most researchers believe resident orca eat Chinook because of its high nutritional value for energy expended.

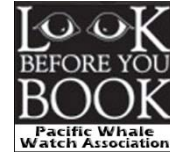
### **Historical Note:**

According to Washington State Fish and Game records, during the heyday of commercial fishing over four thousand fishing boats were on the water of the Salish Sea day and night. Still, our orcas returned to hunt, even though they were shot at and seal bombed. On any 4<sup>th</sup> of July, which is the most popular boating time for our region, the number of vessels on the water near orca whales pales in comparison to the past. It was only about 40 years ago that approximately 12 Southern Residents were killed and 45 were captured and put into captivity. It is remarkable that they were able to bounce back at all from such a travesty.



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### *Economic Impact:*

The thirty plus companies that make their living respectfully watching whales in the Salish Sea are a major cornerstone to our northwest tourism sector. In San Juan County alone the main reason to visit is natural beauty and whale watching.

Watchable wildlife directly employs hundreds of people such as captains, naturalists, office staff and more. The indirect effect is in the thousands of jobs. Consider, boat building, boat repair, port fees, moorage, fuel and more. Then add the major partnerships with hotels, motels, vacation rentals, B & B's, airlines, restaurants and more. The indirect effect is significant plus whale watching is non-consumptive and sustainable.

### *Editorial Comment:*

Whether driven by altruism, enlightened self-interest or both, the members of the PWWA are symbiotically connected to the Salish Sea and the wildlife that live there. We actively support conservation issues that directly impact our livelihood. We embrace all objective thought, new science and input to cooperatively preserve and protect the waters of the Salish Sea.

PWWA is an example of responsible capitalism. We are non-consumptive. We give back and provide our communities with economic stability through sustainable tourism. We have educated millions of passengers on the need to preserve habitat and protect resident orcas. Our organization feels that much of the boat related concerns have been polarizing and misguided. The popularity of whale watching helps to ensure that public opinion will never again allow the killing and capturing of orca whales.

Every concern raised about commercial and private boats could have been solved years ago if one law enforcement vessel would have been funded for five months each year during the whale watching season. Tens of thousands of dollars were spent on research that did not improve the orcas prey or habitat. This money could have been put towards real issues such as Chinook salmon restoration and removing toxins from our waters.

Due to the lack of their preferred prey **Chinook salmon**, we could likely be at the orcas population carrying capacity. Until more Chinook salmon thrive in our streams, we may not see our orca population dramatically rise. Join our efforts to restore our wild salmon stocks.

Together we can make a difference.

Thank you for your interest,

Members of the Pacific Whale Watch Operators