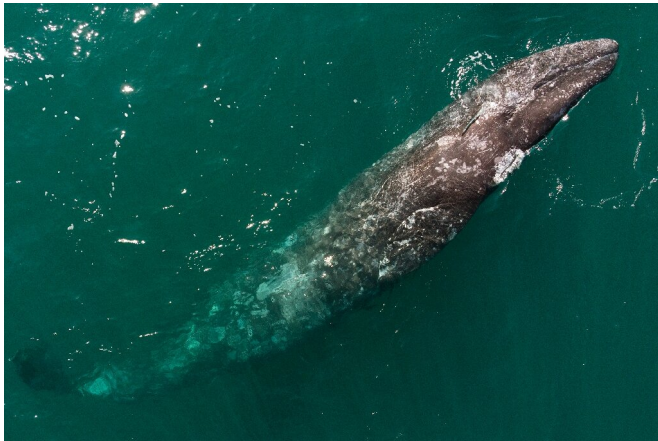


Lost in the Med: Pacific grey whale ventures far from home

3 May 2021



Grey whales usually live between Mexico and Alaska

A young grey whale has been sighted off the southern French coast in recent days, lost in the Mediterranean and trying unsuccessfully to make it back to its natural habitat—the northern Pacific—the national network for the rescue of sea mammals said.

The whale, some eight metres long (26 feet) and around 15 months old, had already been seen off Morocco in March, and then again in Italian waters, first near Naples, then Rome and then Genoa.

Pacific grey whales are native to the Pacific, with many of them spending winters off the Mexican state of Baja California and summers in Alaska.

"It's possible that the whale, born in California, got lost in the Beaufort Sea (in the Arctic) during its first feeding season," Adrien Gannier, a veterinary surgeon and a member of the rescue network, told AFP on Sunday.

"Instead of returning down to the Pacific, it probably went the Atlantic way and then got trapped in the Mediterranean," he said.

Grey whales usually stay near the [coast](#) and feed in [shallow waters](#).

Gannier said he had observed the young cetacean near Bormes-Les-Mimosas, on the French Riviera, where the port authorities managed to entice it to take course back into the open sea.

The hope is now that the young whale makes its way past the Gulf of Lion and the Spanish coast, exits the Mediterranean near Gibraltar and travels north across the Atlantic.

"It seems in quite [good health](#), but thin because its feeding pattern is not adapted to the Mediterranean," Gannier said.

Although grey [whales](#) can travel up to 12,000 miles (19,000 kilometres) during their annual migration, they rarely get this lost.

The last time a grey whale was sighted in the Mediterranean was in 2010, off the Israeli and Spanish coasts, Gannier said.

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APA citation: Lost in the Med: Pacific grey whale ventures far from home (2021, May 3) retrieved 15 May 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-05-lost-med-pacific-grey-whale.html>

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