

Whales migrate more than 5,100 miles

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U.S. scientists have found humpback whales migrate more than 5,100 miles from Central America to Antarctica -- a record mammalian migration.

The study's lead author -- Kristin Rasmussen, a biologist with the Cascadia Research Collective in Olympia, Wash. -- said the research validates a long-held assumption that humpback whales travel to warm water areas during the winter.

"It was very exciting because for years everyone said humpback whales could be found in warmer waters during the winter months but this was the first time we were actually able to quantify this on a global scale and relate it to these long distance migrations" said Rasmussen.

Researchers conducted the survey by identifying individual humpback whales on their wintering area off Central America and comparing them with whales identified on their feeding areas off Antarctica. Identification of individual whales was accomplished by comparing a unique set of markings on their flukes.

The study was reported in the journal *Biology Letters*.

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