

RESEARCH ASSISTANT (RA) POSITIONS AVAILABLE - seeking two, volunteer

Research Assistants for research on

Gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*) migrating northbound through the nearshore of the Santa Barbara Channel.

Gray Whales Count (GWC) is seeking Research Assistants (RA) to assist in our annual survey, conducted from shore at Counter Point, in the Coal Oil Point Reserve, Goleta, California, USA, adjacent to the campus of the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB).

This position is open to citizens of the United States of America and those authorized to work in the United States.

The 2015 survey begins February 17 and continues every day through May 25, from 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Sunday. We are looking for passionate, caring individuals who would be available to begin Saturday, **February 14** to train and assist with preparations and willing to commit for fifteen weeks, including the fourteen-week survey and wrap-up.

GWC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization for research and education. The primary goal of research is to estimate the number of Gray whales and Gray whale calves migrating northbound through our corridor and to share our data to complement similar sampling-studies along the California coast. A secondary goal is to document the variety and quantity of other marine mammals in the ocean area around our site, which is now a Marine Protected Area. We are able to monitor human activity, including interactions with marine mammals, including Gray whales.

Goals of education are to teach the process of scientific research to Counters and to give them the opportunity to conduct a meaningful study, to experience marine mammals in their natural environment, and to share this process and their enthusiasm with publics through direct interchange, outreach, and various media.

RAs will be trained by the Project Coordinator and, in-turn, share the responsibility for research and education.

Applicable skills learned and achieved include:

- > Process, concepts, and protocols of the survey
- > Ability to identify a multitude of marine mammal species from a distance, including but not limited to: Gray whales, Humpback whales, Bottlenose dolphins, Common dolphins, Pacific white-sided dolphins, Harbor seals, California Sea lions, Sea otters, etc.
- > Identify behaviors of these marine mammals
- > Distinguish calves from juveniles and adults
- > Identify vessels and vessel operations
- > Detailed, consistent data entry
- > Learn about marine mammals in their natural environment and the forces that affect them, both natural and anthropogenic
- > Developing responsibility and a working relationship within a team

Because of the training required, applicants must be willing to commit full-time to the project for the time period involved (minimum of 15 weeks, which can be extended if the applicant desires to be involved with data entry and analysis). This will entail up to 9 hours

of work a day for at least 5 days a week. (With training, RA's are required to work everyday the first two weeks.) The Count is 7 days per week and the RA may commit additional to the Count as desired. The more time you can put in, the more you will get out of your experience.

Priority will be given to those candidates with associative career goals who are able to participate fully.

This is a unique opportunity to gain extensive experience in scientific fieldwork in an environment rich with diverse populations of marine mammals. You will work with equally diverse individuals who are caring, attentive, and curious. Gray whales are a sentinel species traveling from temperate lagoons in Mexico, along the dynamic California Current at the eastern edge of the North Pacific Ocean to the Arctic waters of northern Alaska in one of the longest marine mammal migrations. There are boundless avenues of exploration, and Gray Whales Count can begin your journey.

Requirements:

- > Even though we are situated in Southern California, you must be able to withstand harsh weather conditions. Fieldwork can be physically and mentally demanding at times.
- > Willingness to work long hours.
- > Experience with a camera and digital asset management a plus.
- > Commit for a minimum of fifteen weeks, full time (minimum five days per week).
- > Enrolled in or completed a degree in biology, marine science, zoology, environmental science, animal behavior or a related field.
- > Previous field experience with marine wildlife and observation is highly recommended but not required.
- > Ability to work in a team environment. Cannot stress this enough. You will be trained to be a leader of an operation with people of differing experience and dedication.
- > Be enthusiastic and possess a caring, positive attitude, with a strong desire to learn.
- > Be adaptable and patient. The migration is characterized by pulses rather than a steady stream; and weather is the unknown factor: wind, rain, and fog can shut us down.
- > *We strive for a perfection that cannot be attained. We are forgiving and learn from experience.*

This is a volunteer position. The selected RAs will be responsible for their own transportation to and from Santa Barbara/Goleta, California and daily to the survey site. Recognizing that living costs are high in this area, Gray Whales Count will award a \$500 stipend to assist each RA with expenses upon successful completion of the RA position. RAs will be responsible for all for living expenses while volunteering for Gray Whales Count.

To apply: Please send cover letter/resume to Project Coordinator, Michael Smith michael@graywhalescount.org.

We strongly recommend you look over our website: graywhalescount.org to familiarize yourself with our operation. In the cover letter, please address why you wish to participate in Gray Whales Count and what you hope to achieve in your experience.

There is no deadline to apply. The position will remain open until it is filled. Please consider applying early in order to arrange travel plans and to secure room and board.

**Michael H Smith,
Project Coordinator**

[Gray Whales Count](#)

**nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation
for research and education**

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