

Quantifying gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) vocalizations from passive acoustic detectors to gain insights into the southward migration route

By: Kai Meyer

VIU Faculty Advisor: Dr. Susan Sanders

Each year, about 20,000 grey whales migrate between their summer feeding grounds in the Bering and Chukchi Seas and their winter calving grounds in Baja California. While new insights into the northbound migration corridor of grey whales in British Columbia, Canada were recently published, the southbound migration corridor remains poorly defined. I analyzed data from six passive acoustic detectors deployed off the coast of British Columbia, Canada. Gray whale vocalizations were predominantly detected along the edge of the continental shelf, suggesting that at least a fraction of the population follows this route rather than migrating close to shore, perhaps to save energy. The results of this study do not only contribute to fill a knowledge gap of this otherwise well-studied species, but can also have important conservation implications (e.g., addressing vessel strikes and ambient noise level reduction) in the future.