

Comparison of Blue and Fin Whale Behavior, Headings and Group Characteristics in the Southern California Bight during Summer and Fall 2008-2010

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Baseline undisturbed behavior/social patterns of blue/fin whales are not well described and are needed to identify and understand potential effects of anthropogenic activities. Behavioral data were collected during aerial effort. Initially observed behavior state, heading, minimum/maximum inter-individual dispersal distance were recorded during line-transect sampling. During the summer seasons, blues were seen more than fins; in fall, fins were seen more. Initially observed blue behavior was usually travel or mill. Observed fin behavior was mostly travel, mill, or surface-active travel. Both species were seen socializing in fall but not summer; foraging was observed in summer through fall. In summer, blues were seen headed S; in fall, headed inshore. In summer, fins were headed SSW or WNW; in fall, they were headed NE or WSW. Data represent the most extensive record of systematic undisturbed behavior on these species in SOCAL and include social interactions not previously documented in this region.