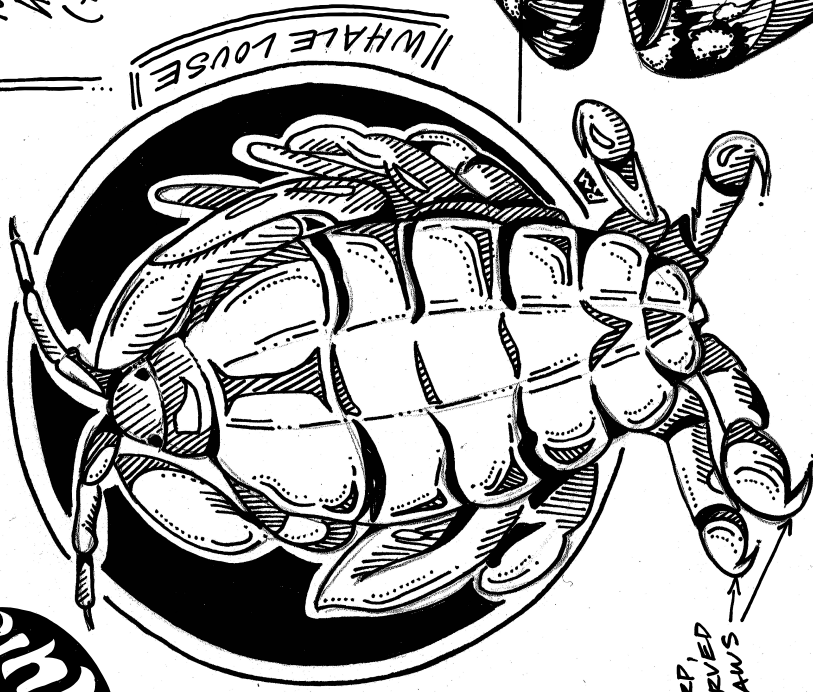




The GRAY WHALE (*Eschrichtius robustus*), a relatively slow-moving baleen whale that undergoes one of the longest annual migrations in the world, is one of the most heavily infested whale species. A great variety and number (think thousands!) of parasites and other hitchhikers can be found on a single whale — adding several hundred pounds of extra weight to the behemoths. WHALE LICE (Cymatids) are pale crab-like creatures that live their entire lives in the creases of whales. Almost every whale species has its own specific lice species!



WHALE LOUSE

SHARP, RECURVED CLAWS

WHALE LICE (in the family Cymatidae) are commensal external parasites, meaning they benefit from eating dead skin and algae that grow on whales. While the whale doesn't really gain anything from lice, it isn't harmed by them either — unless you consider incessant irritation harmful! Whale lice have extremely sharp, recurved claws for clinging to their hosts. Gray whales remove their lice by scratching themselves on the ocean floor.

GRAY WHALE

BARNACLES



Whale lice spread from whale mothers to calves by dining on the protein-rich parasites.

In calving lagoons, where whale mothers melt to clean the whales, calves, fish-like tops melt.



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