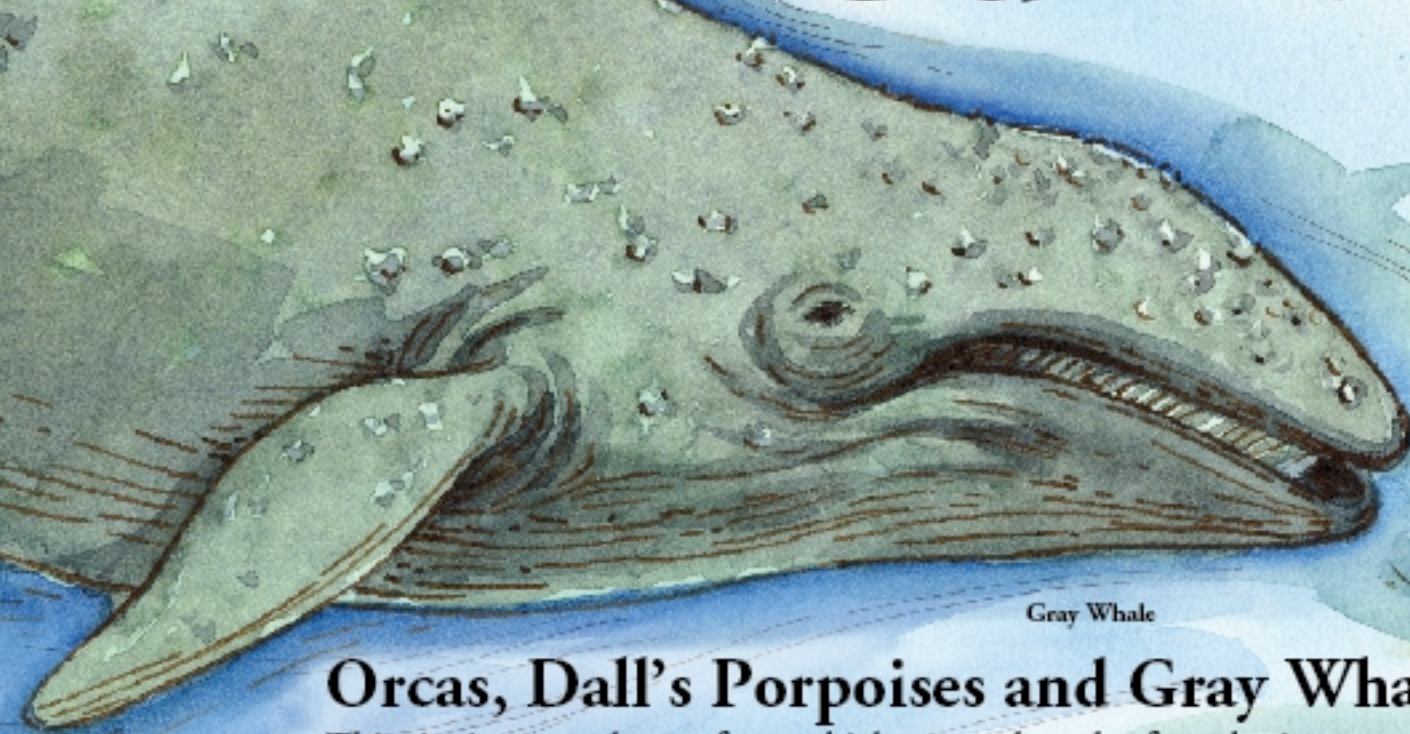


Our Rich Marine Waters

'Big fish eat little fish.' – Ancient Proverb



Gray Whale



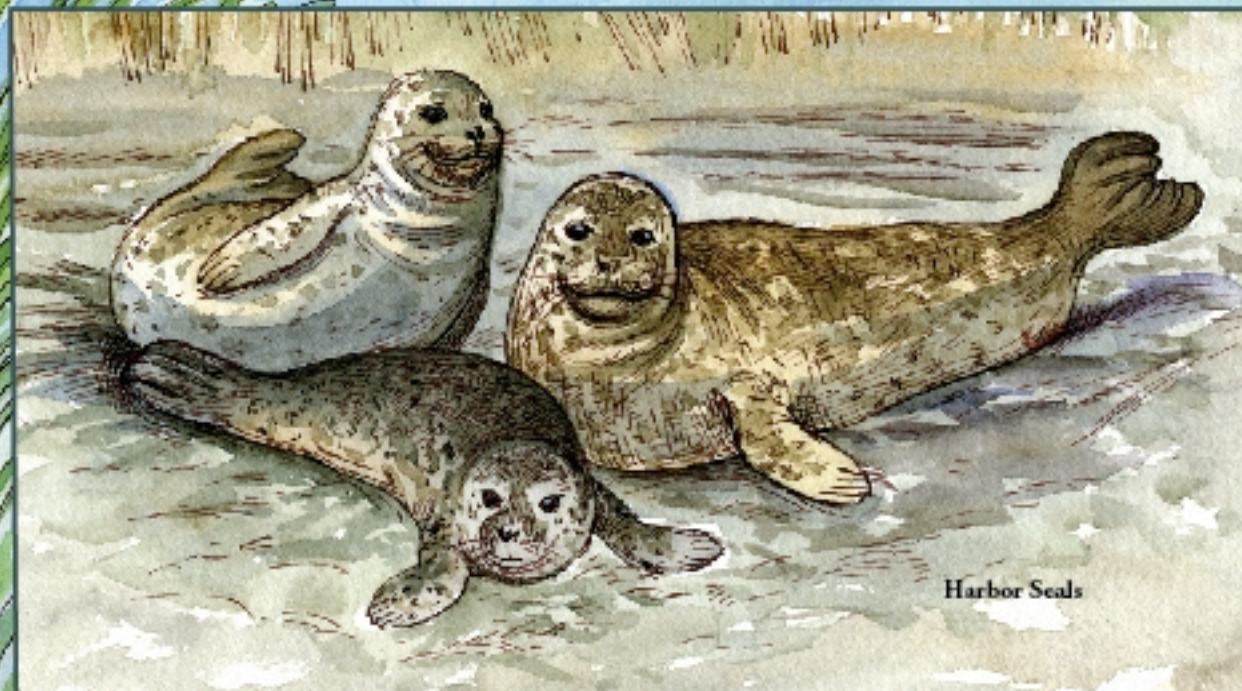
Dall's Porpoise



Orcas

Orcas, Dall's Porpoises and Gray Whales

This site is a superb spot from which to watch pods of acrobatic orcas, lumbering gray whales or fast-swimming Dall's Porpoises that visit from time to time. Orcas are seen typically from late fall through midwinter. They travel in groups of several individuals led by the elder female. The resident orcas of Puget Sound eat mainly salmon, with a strong preference for Chinook. Nearly every spring, from March through early June, gray whales feed near shore on both sides of this passage. One or two gray whales at a time may be observed on the sandy shallows just in front of the downtown area or from the marina to Sandy Point. They scoop up bathtub-size mouthfuls of the muddy bottom and use their tongue and baleen to sift out four-inch long shrimp. Please report any orca or gray whale sightings to The Orca Network (toll free) at 866-ORCANET (672-2638). www.orcanetwork.org.



Harbor Seals

Plankton – Base of the Marine Food Chain

These rich waters are a mixing bowl for phytoplankton – single-celled plants that are the most common vegetation in the sea. Fresh water from three nearby rivers and many smaller streams meets saltwater in Puget Sound, the second largest estuary in the United States after Chesapeake Bay. Plankton convert sunlight to protein and carbohydrates, feeding everything that grows here from tiny shrimp to the gray whales that eat them.



River Otters

River Otters, Sea Lions and Harbor Seals

Keep an eye out for river otters, California sea lions, harbor seals and their pups. Harbor seals often sneak a curious look at you from a distance and then sink below the surface. Never assist or interfere with marine mammals on the beach that might appear lost or abandoned. In most cases the mother is hunting and will return, unless humans interfere. Instead, keep your distance and report these to the Marine Mammal Stranding Network by calling Orca Network at 866-ORCANET (672-2638).

www.islandcountymrc.org



This signage by Island County Marine Resources Committee is funded through a cooperative agreement with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, CZM310 grant agreement G0800002. Text by Dan Pedersen. Design and Illustration by Kris Wiltse, www.kriswiltse.com