Whale Watcher: Game Background

In this game, the player takes on the role of an *Ocean Adventures* volunteer team member attempting to capture various gray whale behaviors on film. Along the way, various threats to whales pass by, and the player can pause to read more information about the threat, thereby garnering additional points. Each level has a goal number of behaviors to capture as well as a time limit in which to do so. Each level ends when the goal has been met; the player gets a bonus for time left on the clock. At the end of each level, graphics show the behaviors captured, with inset video to show each one. Additional graphics show whale threats encountered. Clicking any item brings up information about why it is a problem. In addition, clicking each item adds 50 points to the player's score, but only once per item per game, regardless of game level. (In other words, clicking an item twice does not result in 100 additional points.) Assisting the players are hint balloons from Jean-Michel Cousteau that offer additional notice as to when the whale behaviors and threats will be encountered. Players can pause game play to click on these hints (which they must do to gather data for their data sheets) and score additional points. This information is also available at level changes if the player does not want to interrupt game play.

LEVEL 1
Baja California, Mexico: In the protected lagoons of Baja California, Mexico, mature gray whales meet to mate. Groups of whales gather to attract potential partners. The gray whale gestation period is 12 months, so females that became pregnant the previous year give birth in the warm waters here. These new mothers and their calves are last to leave the lagoons to head north, which gives the newborns as much time as possible to develop insulating blubber.

- Behaviors to collect: Mating, social/friendly, rubbing
- Threats encountered: whale-watching boats

LEVEL 2
San Diego, California: The coast of southern California is one of the busiest shipping routes the gray whales encounter. Whales are forced to alter their routes to avoid the dangerous shipping traffic.

- Behaviors to collect: blowing, nursing
- Threats encountered: ship traffic, nets, chemicals/pollution

LEVEL 3
Monterey Bay, California: This stretch of coastline is one of the most dangerous parts of the migration due to the threat of orcas. Orcas are among the gray whale's few natural predators, teaming up to attack young calves and their mothers.

- Behaviors to collect: fighting orcas, swimming through kelp
- Threats encountered: orcas

LEVEL 4
Depoe Bay, Oregon: not every migrating gray whale swims the entire journey.
Between 200 and 300 whales coming from the Baja lagoons make their seasonal homes
along the coast between California and southeast Alaska. Researchers also believe that
a small population of grays live permanently at points along the coast and do not make
the migration at all.

- Behaviors to collect: spy hopping, feeding
- Threats encountered: nets, sonar

LEVEL 5
Bering Sea, Alaska: At last the gray whales have reached their final destination. Most
whales have lost about a third of their body weight along the journey. Here, they will
feed until the changing daylight hours, cooling temperatures and dwindling food
supply tells them it's time to head south again.

- Behaviors to collect: breaching, feeding
- Threats encountered: global warming, ice