

ORCA NETWORK
Annual report 2025

Orca Network

Connecting people with whales of the Pacific Northwest

Making waves in 2025

2025 was a year full of hope, connection, and meaningful progress. The Langley Whale Center welcomed tens of thousands of visitors through its doors, while our Ways of Whales presentations inspired audiences near and far with the wonders of whale biology and behavior. We embarked on an unforgettable journey to Baja to witness the magic of gray whale migration firsthand, celebrated community and conservation at the beloved Welcome the Whales parade in Langley, and showed up where decisions are made, logging 40 advocacy meetings and 33 actions on behalf of the whales and waters we help protect.





Our amazing volunteers showed up in so many ways to bring their dedication and enthusiasm to every corner of our work and we simply could not do this without their help. Together, we celebrated record-breaking moments, including over 19,000 whale sightings received through our community sighting network, while keeping nearly 16,000 subscribers close to the whales they love via our weekly whale report.

In all, Orca Network reached over half a million people this year, a reflection of the growing community of hearts and minds united around these extraordinary whales and the conservation work that drives us. Hard work and impressive numbers go hand in hand!

At the heart of it all is our staff, who show up everyday with dedication, passion, and a deep commitment to the conservation, education, and advocacy work that drives everything we do. 2025 offered a remarkable testament to what becomes possible when an inspired community shows up together for the well being of whales. This report celebrates some of the remarkable moments that made it such a meaningful and successful year!

Staff

Susan Berta
Executive Director

Stephanie Raymond
Programs Director

Joy Brungardt
Operations Director

Cheryl Payne
Finance Director

Abby Thies
Transition Facilitator

Cindy Hansen
Education & Advocacy Coordinator

Jaelyn Long
Development Coordinator

Kaarina Makowski
Media and IT

Kristin Mackenzie
Volunteer Coordinator

Garry Heinrich
CPSMMSN Coordinator

Serena Tierra
WSN Co-Coordinator

Rachel Haight
WSN Co-Coordinator

Marla Smith
WSN Assistant

Nikol Damato
WSN Assistant

Lucy Miller
LWC Co-Coordinator

Trevor Snow
LWC Co-Coordinator

Sarah Rose
LWC Assistant


Serena Tierra

Board

Howard Garrett
Board President

Rachel Clark
Vice President

Bob Gentz
Treasurer

Sarah Frazin Sadid
Secretary

Dr. Richard Gammon
Board member

Jill Hein
Board member

Kristin Pederson
Board member

Fred Lundahl
Board member

Sandra Dupernel
Board member in memoriam


Serena Tierra

Our pod is growing!

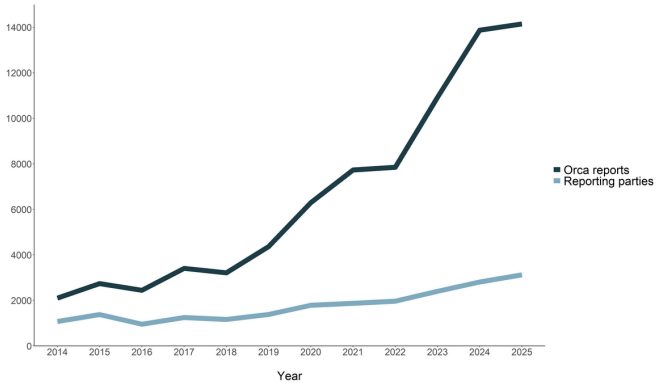


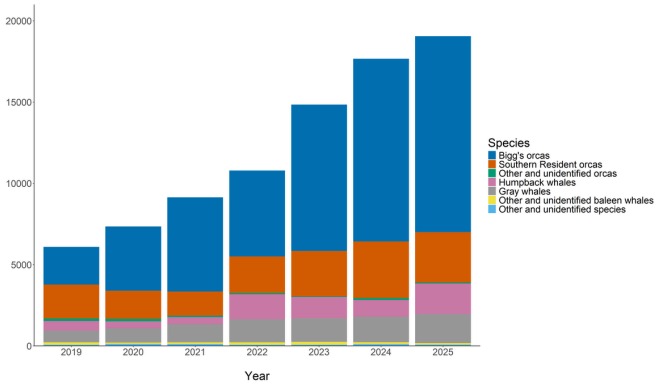
Orca Network welcomed one new board member and 2 new staff members this year

Whale Sighting Network



Every whale sighting tells a story. Orca Network's Whale Sighting Team collects and tracks whale activity across the Salish Sea, powered by thousands of citizen scientists, including shoreside neighbors, ferry commuters, whale enthusiasts, and researchers who report what they see. We turn these observations into data that supports scientists working on Southern Resident orca recovery, informs policymakers shaping habitat protections, and strengthens partnerships across agencies dedicated to safeguarding our shared waters. Most importantly, it deepens the public's connection to the whales who call this region home. In 2025, this network of observers and partners grew exponentially, demonstrating the power of community to turn individual moments of connection into knowledge, advocacy, and meaningful action for the whales.

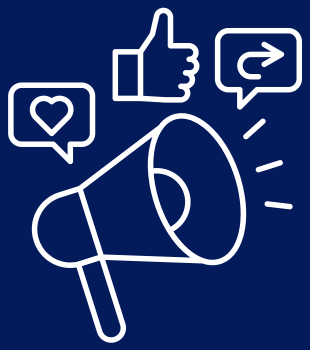




- 18,096 whale sightings were submitted by community scientists
- Number of days with orca reports: 346 days
- Number of people who reported orca sightings: 3125 unique reporting parties
- Our WSN team confirmed or likely pod ID'd for 13,655 reports
- Our WSN team also determined, confirmed, or likely ecotype for 14,086 reports



One Network. Immeasurable impact. Countless miles



- 248,590 followers across all social media platforms
- 15,800 whale report email subscribers
- 2,700 real-time text alert subscribers
- 181,000 unique website visitors
- 43 whale reports were published
- 493,533 Total reach for all programs, social media, website, etc.

In 2025, Orca Networks reach extended farther than ever before, connecting with communities across social media, email, real time alerts, and our website to bring people closer to the whales of the Salish Sea. From record breaking whale sighting reports, to hosting a robust whale loving community online, our Network continued to be a trusted source for thousands looking to stay connected to these iconic animals. As public interest in whale conservation grows, we're building to an even wider reach in 2026, deepening engagement, providing more volunteer opportunities, and reaching new audiences who care about protecting these waters for many generations to come.

Education, Outreach, and Advocacy



Orca Network's Education, Outreach & Advocacy program turns knowledge into action. Through public talks, community and school presentations, and our Ferry Naturalist program, we help people understand the challenges facing Southern Resident orcas and the broader marine ecosystem they depend on. In 2025, this work extended deep into the policy arena, where our advocacy efforts took many forms: attending regulatory meetings, submitting public comments, co-signing letters with partner organizations, weighing in on legislation, and issuing action alerts that mobilize our community when it matters most. None of this would be possible without our dedicated volunteers, who are trained across programs and show up with so much heart. Through this outreach work, this program ensures that community voices remain a powerful, educated force in whale recovery and habitat restoration.

2025 in Action

- 57 events and presentations reaching 6,836 people
- 1,070 people reached through our Ferry Naturalist program
- 6 cross-program volunteer trainings
- 461 active volunteers
- 40 Advocacy meetings attended
- 33 Advocacy actions taken:
  - 4 comment letters
  - 10 Posted Action Alerts
  - 7 letters co-signed with partners
  - 2 Advocacy blog posts
  - 10 pro/con legislative sign-ins



Central Puget Sound Marine Mammal Stranding Network

This year, our Central Puget Sound Marine Mammal Stranding Network (CPSMMSN) continued to be a lifeline for marine mammals across Whidbey and Camano Islands, Skagit County, and North Snohomish County. Whenever a call came in, our trained stranding responders were there, assessing sick, injured, entangled, and deceased animals, and turning every observation into detailed reports that help NOAA track marine mammal health nationwide. In addition, our devoted Seal Sitter volunteers spent thousands of hours on local beaches, quietly watching over seal pups and elephant seals to make sure they had the space and calm they needed to rest and grow. It was a busy year of work, including a joyful moment when our team helped free an entangled harbor seal pup and lent support to a large whale entanglement response. This work was immensely supported by our extraordinary volunteers, whose time and compassion form the backbone of this incredible program. Together, they remain a vital line of protection for marine mammals in our waters, gathering the data and providing the care that helps shape the future of marine mammal conservation. Here are their impressive stats for 2025, as this work continues to be a pillar in our conservation work here at Orca Network.

493 stranding calls received

67 In-person responses

78 Level A NOAA reports filed

Successfully free 1 entangled harbor seal pup

Assisted with 1 large whale entaglement reponse

3,289 volunteer hours contributed:

-3,023 Ellsie Mae sitters hours

-100 Camp Casey Gray Whale hours

-166 Stranding response hours

LANGLEY WHALE CENTER



In 2025, the Langley Whale Center once again served as the heart of Orca Network, a place to gather and learn, where curiosity about the Salish Sea came alive for families, students, and travelers from near and far. This year, The Langley Whale Center hosted school field trips that brought young learners face to face with marine science, while special youth events sparked a new generation's wonder for the ocean, and how to take care of it. Visitors filled the Center throughout the year, turning simple stops into lasting connections with the Marine Mammals of the Salish Sea. We have huge gratitude to our incredible volunteers, who generously gave their time to keep the Center's doors open and its mission thriving. The Langley Whale Center's story in 2025 wasn't just about exhibits, it was about families made lasting memories, curiosity sparking care, and learning that to protect our waters, we have to understand them first.

- 38,787 Visitors (as of Nov 30)
- 358 Volunteer Hours
- 75 Youth Event Attendees
- 306 Field Trip Participants





Marla Smith

Working on behalf of the whales we love

What's at Stake

The Southern Residents: A Population at the Brink

As of the July 1st 2025 census done by the Center For Whale Research, only 74 Southern Resident orcas remain in the wild. This federally endangered population has hovered at historic lows for over a decade. As low birth rates and high calf mortality continue to plague these beloved pods, the threats to their population are well understood but far from solved. The most crucial threat is the critical shortage of their primary food source, Chinook salmon, followed by the presence of persistent organic pollutants, and chronic disturbance from vessel noise that interferes with their ability to hunt and communicate. With so few whales left, each birth and death can tip the balance between recovery and decline. Their protection is urgent, and advocacy non-negotiable. Here at Orca Network, our commitment to the Southern Residents is rooted in love and hope. Every day we work hard to educate, advocate, and build community around the belief that recovery is possible, and that it can be achieved. They are nothing less than deserving of this work, and it is up to all of us to answer with bold action and caring compassionate hearts who work on their behalf. Their future is not yet decided, and with sustained support, continued public engagement and policy action, recovery remains within reach and a goal we will always strive for.

The Sounders: Gray Whales of North Puget Sound

Each spring, a small group of gray whales known as the "Sounders" breaks off from the larger Pacific migration to feed on ghost shrimp in North Puget Sound before continuing north. Their presence isn't guaranteed though, since 2018, eastern North Pacific gray whales have been caught in an unprecedented die-off. In 2019, this was officially declared an Unusual Mortality Event (UME) with strandings continuing at high numbers and calf counts at record lows. The UME was officially closed in November of 2023, however, population abundance and birth rate remain low. Some Sounders have even begun skipping their migration to Baja all together, and returning to Puget Sound in the winter instead, a likely sign of prey decline in the Arctic, their main feeding grounds. Orca Network's Whale Sighting Network tracks these whales season to season, gathering and relaying public sightings that help Cascadia Research Collective document their arrivals and movements. Every report from the public adds to a record researchers depend on to protect this small, resilient group, and learn more about what this population needs to survive.

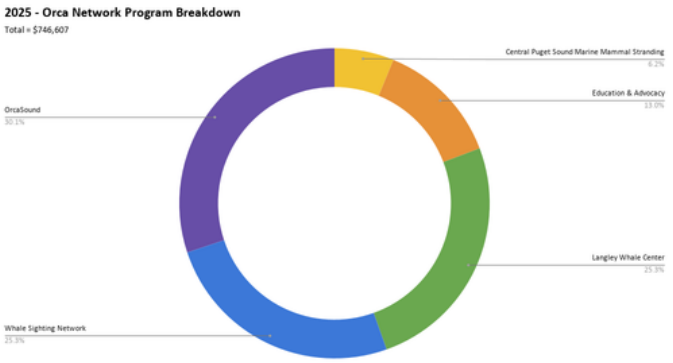


Rachel Haight

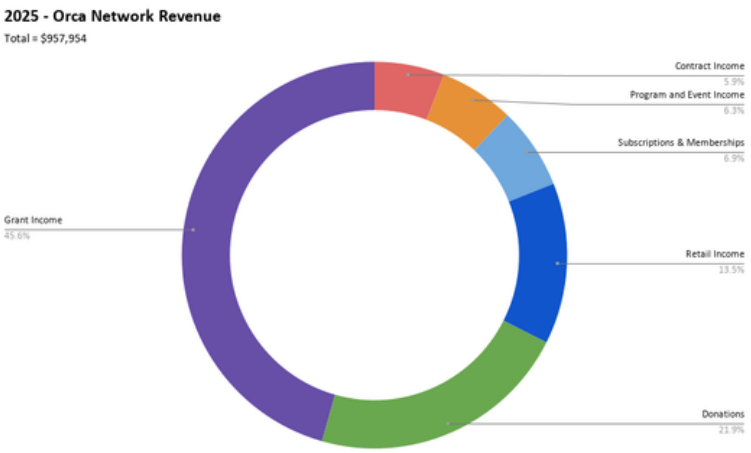
Waves of support

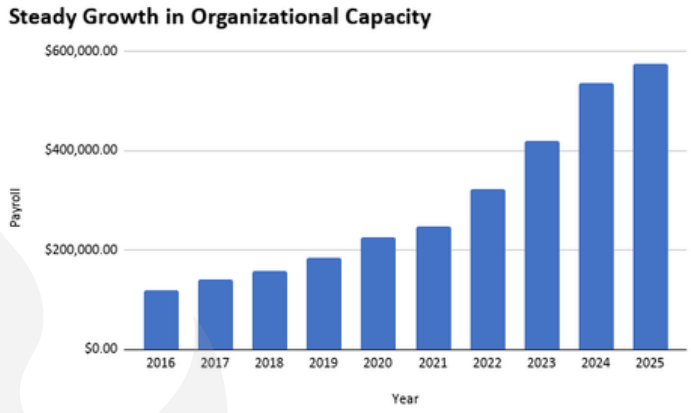
a year of gratitude and hard work

2025 was a year of meaningful growth for Orca Network, made possible by the continued generousity of our donors, the support of grants, and the growing success of our programs. Together, these sources of income are building a stonger, more sustainable foundation for our work. We are deeply grateful to everyone who has invested in Orca Network and believed in the importance of our mission.



What shaped this year





Top revenue drivers

- Grant income $436,923.50
- Donations $210,124.95
- Retail Income $129,102.13

We are excited to carry this momentum forward, reaching more people, strengthening our advocacy, and inspiring a growing community of people who care deeply about the whales of the Pacific Northwest. We are committed to growing thoughtfully and sustainably so we can expand our impact and continue creating these meaning connections. Our hearts are grateful to all that have brought us to this moment, and we look forward to building on that impact together in the years ahead!

THANK YOU!

Our work is not possible without the generous support of others

This work has never belonged to us alone. This year's work was made possible by a community of donors, volunteers and supporters whose generosity and care runs deep. Their dedication carried Orca Network through another year, and we extend our deep heartfelt gratitude to this amazing whale community. Your care and contributions helped protect the orcas and waters of the Salish Sea, and for that, we are truly thankful

Become part of the Pod!

Volunteer with us!

Join our amazing pod of volunteers across our programs. There is something for everyone!

Sign up for our weekly newsletter

Stay informed! sign up to receive our weekly whale sightings report

Follow us on Facebook!

For whale news, events, and to get real-time whale sightings information, please give us a follow!

Donate

Your generosity makes waves! Your support fuels our continued mission and helps fund our programs. Every bit helps!


Marla Smith


Serena Tierra


Marla Smith

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