NOVEMBER, 2025
ISSUE 2 OF 3,000

WHALE MAIL

THE OFFICIAL FOREST WHALES NEWSLETTER

Whaley awesome animals!

SPECIAL SPECIES: BEAKED WHALES

Beaked whales are some of the most mysterious creatures in the ocean. Unlike humpbacks or the orcas that people often see, these whales spend most of their lives deep below the waves, far away from busy coastlines. Because they dive so deep and stay underwater for long periods, scientists know surprisingly little about them. In fact, many people have never even heard of beaked whales!

There are more than 20 known species of beaked whales, each with its own unique features. They are named for their long, narrow beaks, which look a little like those of dolphins. Most beaked whales are medium-sized, growing between 15 and 30 feet long, though a few can be even larger. Their colors range from gray to brown, and some have distinctive scars or markings that help researchers tell them apart.

Beaked whales are champions of deep diving. Some species have been recorded diving over a mile down into the ocean, staying underwater for more than an hour before coming up for air. In these dark depths, they hunt for squid and deep-sea fish. To find food, they use echolocation, sending out clicking sounds that bounce back to help them “see” in the pitch-black water.

Despite living far from humans, beaked whales still face dangers. Loud underwater sounds, such as naval sonar or drilling, can disturb them and sometimes lead to strandings on beaches. Pollution and climate change may also affect their food supply.

Because they are so hard to study, every new discovery about beaked whales feels exciting—like solving a piece of a giant puzzle. By protecting the oceans and reducing noise pollution, we can help keep these shy, deep-diving giants safe for the future. They remind us that the ocean still holds many secrets waiting to be uncovered.

Length: 15-40 feet
Weight: 900-20,000 lbs
Food: Squid
Lifespan: 80-85 years
Status: Protected
Number left: ?

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This Month IN SPACE!

November 5 - Supermoon
November 16 - Leonid meteor shower
November 30 - Mars reaches farthest point from Earth

Viewable with a telescope: Saturn's rings
With binoculars: Jupiter's moons (late at night)

Nature

WISCONSIN... DESERT?

Tucked between the towns of Spring Green and Lone Rock, Wisconsin, lies an unexpected natural wonder: **a desert**. Known as the Wisconsin Desert or Spring Green Preserve, this sandy landscape looks more like something you'd expect in the Southwest than the Midwest. It was formed over thousands of years from sand deposits left by the Wisconsin River. Over time, winds shaped the sand into dunes, creating a dry, open environment unlike anything else in the state.

This desert is often called "Wisconsin's Sahara," and it's home to plants and animals that don't usually live in the region. Visitors can find *prickly pear cactus, lizards*, and unique grasses that thrive in the hot, sandy soil. Wildflowers bloom in the spring and summer, adding bursts of color to the golden dunes.

Because it is so rare, the desert is protected as a nature preserve. Trails allow people to explore its rolling sand and enjoy views of the surrounding bluffs and forests. Standing there, you can feel like you've been transported far from Wisconsin farmland.

The Spring Green desert is a reminder that nature is full of surprises—and that even in the Midwest, you can stumble upon a little piece of the wild, unexpected world.

To learn more about this desert, check out this blog post! (Click here)

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MELTY MOON ROCKS

Citizen Science

MOON DETECTIVE

Have you ever looked up at the Moon and wondered what happened when big rocks from space smacked into it? That's exactly what the new citizen-science project called Lunar Melt is all about!

When a giant asteroid or comet hits the Moon, it's not just a simple "crater." Some of the rock melts, flows away from the crater, and then freezes in place. It's like a lava-river, but made from impact-melted lunar rock!

The Lunar Melt project invites YOU—students, librarians, teachers and space-curious kids—to help mark craters and boulders in Moon images from the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter. You'll map where the melted rock flowed, how far it moved, what rocks got carried along—all of which help scientists figure out how hot the impact was and how easily the molten rock flowed.

Why it's fun (and easy!):

- No special science degree required—just a computer, tablet or smartphone and a few minutes to complete the tutorial.
- It's interactive: you'll click on real lunar images and use marking tools to tag craters and boulders.
- For teachers and librarians: this is a great way to bring real space-science into the classroom or library, and let young learners feel like real researchers.

Want to get started? Visit the project website, register, then complete the brief tutorial.

So if you're looking for a hands-on STEM activity that's out of this world, gather your students or library group, launch into the Lunar Melt project, and become lunar explorers from Earth!

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THE 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR IS FULL!

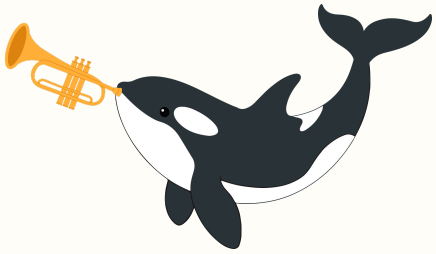
Yep, you heard it here. Forest Whales' school schedule is full through May 2026. We want to take a moment to thank the many, many (MANY!) schools that are trusting us to bring science and inspiration to their communities this school year. We are beyond excited to bring our whale to you.

And if you're one of those schools that wasn't able to schedule something this school year, know that we are already taking reservations for the 2026-27 year.

Now here's a corny whale-themed joke:

What do you call a killer whale that plays the trumpet?

An "Orca-stra" musician!



You hear about Wisconsin's glowing squirrels?

There's a critter called the **Northern flying squirrel**. These little gliding mammals live in wooded areas, including Wisconsin, and they have a surprising secret: their fur glows pink when you shine ultraviolet (UV) light on them! Scientists discovered this while doing forest work in Wisconsin.

What's going on? Under normal light they look greyish-brown. But under a UV flashlight, the fur emits a bubble-gum pink fluorescence. All three New-World flying squirrel species (in the genus Glaucomys) show this trait, and the research included specimens from Wisconsin.

They live in Wisconsin? Yes. Researchers documented the effect right here in our woodlands. So if you're in Wisconsin and you're super quiet at dusk with a UV flashlight (and lucky!) you might just see one gliding and maybe catch a glimpse of its hidden pink glow.

Why they do it is still a mystery. It might help them communicate with each other in low-light, or maybe blend into backgrounds illuminated by snow or UV-rich moonlight.

So next time you're out near the trees at twilight in Wisconsin, keep your eyes peeled for our aerial little neighbors and maybe bring a UV light to show their secret side!

Want Whale Mail?

Did you receive this copy from someone else? Whale Mail is free, and you can sign up at www.forestwhales.com/education

Each month, we will have a featured whale and fossil, plus we will include fun activities, ideas, astronomy news, videos and even the occasional contest where we give away free prizes like fossils, or an official Forest Whales school/library program!!!

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Featured Fossil:

Ammonites

Ammonites were amazing sea creatures that lived millions of years ago, long before the age of humans. They are now extinct, but their fossil shells are found all over the world. These shells are usually coiled in a spiral, a shape that looks a lot like a tightly wound snail shell. Because they are so common in rocks, ammonite fossils help scientists learn about Earth's ancient oceans.

Ammonites were related to today's squid and octopus. They had soft bodies protected by their beautiful shells. Many had ridges or patterns on their shells, which makes their fossils especially striking. These animals swam through the seas hunting smaller creatures, using tentacles that stretched out from their shells.

Their name comes from the ancient Egyptian god Ammon, who was often shown wearing ram's horns. Early people thought ammonite fossils looked like these horns, so they called them "Ammon's stones." In fact, ammonites were often seen as magical or lucky objects in history.

Although they disappeared around the same time as the dinosaurs (66 million years ago), ammonites still capture our imagination. Today, people admire them as fossils, jewelry, or even symbols of strength and endurance—reminders of the ocean's long and mysterious history.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov 7 - School event
Nov 13 - School event
Nov 15 - Appleton Public Library

NEW BOOK

Dave's new book features a library, Wisconsin history, time travel, treasure hunting, and a few surprises. You can purchase it at Orange Hat Publishing!

BOOK AN EVENT

Want to inspire kids with a life-size whale? Contact Dave today with questions, size requirements, schedules, etc.

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