

More than 65,000 Students to Hop Onboard Scripps-operated Research Platform

FLIP to be featured Feb. 26 in award-winning Electronic Field Trip program

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Without leaving the classroom, more than 65,000 schoolchildren throughout the United States and five foreign countries will hop onboard a world-renowned research platform operated by UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography on Feb. 26 during Ball State University's award-winning Electronic Field Trip program.

The virtual trip on Scripps' Floating Instrument Platform (*FLIP*), which rotates 90 degrees in the open ocean, is part of a live, one-hour broadcast called "A Whale of a Story: A South Seas Adventure." The telecast explores the epic 13,000-mile, round-trip journey that gray whales make each year from their Bering and Chukchi Seas feeding grounds to Baja's lagoons, where they breed and give birth.

Students who watch the broadcast in their classrooms will tour the facility remotely and interact in real-time with Scripps researchers who use *FLIP* to study whale acoustics. Participants also will journey to Baja's San Ignacio lagoon where gray whale experts will point out whales in the protected, shallow lagoon and share information about the majestic animals.

The broadcast is the culmination of months of activities for students participating in "A Whale of a Story," which already is one of the most successful virtual field trips in the program's 12-year history. This experience will reach approximately 66,500 students in all 50 states and Australia, Canada, England, Puerto Rico and Switzerland.

Headquartered in Indiana, Electronic Field Trips utilize today's technology to expose students to faraway museums and other destinations. The free program combines a television broadcast, interactive website materials and classroom activities to create a rich, in-depth educational experience for young learners. During the broadcast, students can interact in real-time with the show's hosts, a panel of experts and other classrooms through a toll-free telephone number and an online forum discussion.

"A Whale of a Story" is coordinated locally by Aquatic Adventures, a non-profit organization in San Diego that teaches urban youth about science, the ocean and nature through tuition-free programs. Three students from Hoover High School and two students from Monroe Clark Middle School in City Heights, who are involved in Aquatic Adventures, lend their talent to the program on air and behind the scenes through an after-school internship.

"Being from San Diego, the ocean is very important to me," said Edgar Trujillo, a junior at Hoover High School. "I am proud to be teaching students all over the world about gray whales, and about the importance of ocean research and conservation. Everyone, no matter where they live, impacts ocean and marine life, including gray whales."

The broadcast can be viewed for free at 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. on a computer through live video stream using Apple's QuickTime software. All Electronic Field Trips also are broadcast via Ku-band satellite. Participants are asked to register for the program beforehand. For more information about accessing the live broadcast and to register, visit <http://www.bsu.edu/eft>. The virtual trip will be archived on the site following the program.

Sponsors for "A Whale of a Story" include Ball State University, The Best Buy Children's Foundation, Aquatic Adventures, Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego, The Office of Naval Research's Floating Instrument Platform, Birch Aquarium at Scripps, Kuyima, Journey Mexico, Pro Peninsula, Pronatura A.C., Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Wildcoast, San Diego Natural History Museum and The Apple Learning Interchange.

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