

Alaska Crime Scene Investigations



Profile: Ozzy, the Orca

Real (scientific) Name: *Orcinus orca*

Alias: Killer Whale, the Whale Killer

Distribution: In all oceans and seas, more common in nearshore, cold temperate to subpolar waters.

Location: Prince William Sound, Alaska

Status: Protected under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act; some populations threatened, some endangered, see: (OPR website)

Weight: Newborn calf: about 180 kg (roughly 400 pounds)
Adult male: about 10,000 kg (10 times the size of an adult male Steller)
Adult female: up to 7,500 kg (16,500 pounds)

Length: Newborn calf: between 2.1 to 2.4 m (longer than the average man is tall)
Adult male: 9.8 m (32 feet)
Adult female: up 8.5 m (28 feet)

Color: Black and white

Identifying Features:

Orcas have a very large dorsal (back) fin reaching almost a meter in females and almost 2 meters in males. At least three distinct 'eco-types' of orcas occur: the residents, the transients, and the offshores. Residents are also called the 'fish-eaters' and transients 'mammal-eaters' because of their known feeding habits. Feeding habits of the 'offshores' are unknown.

Charge: Eating protected animals such as Steller sea lions, fur seals, harbor seals, sea otters, and salmon

Evidence: Transient killer whales are observed near sea lion rookeries. They were observed eating marine mammals on camera in the Kenai Fjords region of the Gulf of Alaska. Researchers found 14 plastic flipper tags from Steller sea lion pups in one dead killer whale stomach. Life History Transmitters provide indirect evidence.

Eats: Different populations have different diets: herring, salmon, large baleen whales, dolphins, fur seals, Steller sea lions, and otters. The residents eat mostly fish and the transients eat mostly marine mammals. Less is known about what offshore killer whales eat.

Average Life

Expectancy: Males: 30 years, Females: 50 years

Maximum Life

Expectancy: Males: 50 – 60 years, Females: 80 – 90 years

Known

Predators: Man