

TRANSIENT KILLER WHALE (*Orcinus orca*) HARRASMENT, PREDATION, AND "SURPLUS KILLING" OF MARINE BIRDS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Observations of transient killer whale attacks on marine birds around Vancouver Island are presented. All the attacks appear to have been on birds which were molting and unable to fly. Attacks include killer whales tail-lobbing, chasing and jumping on the birds. Attack outcomes include the bird being left alone after the encounter either unharmed, wounded or dead, or disappearing and presumably being eaten. One positive observation of consumption was recorded. Birds react to the attacks by swimming at the surface; they have not been seen to dive. All attacks were on birds at the surface, although it is possible that attacks may occur on birds below the surface but were not observed. Attacks on marine birds have been previously reported in the literature and their remains have also been reported from stomach contents of transient killer whales. These interactions appear to be energetically inefficient for the killer whales, compared to observations of predation on marine mammals. We have observed transient killer whales interact with the Common Loon, Eared Grebe, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, and Rhinoceros Auklet. We discuss possible reasons for interactions, including "play" and "surplus killing," and the potential for impacts on marine bird populations.

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Number 1

The Chair's Page.....	3
Pacific Seabird Group News.....	5
Proposed Minutes of the Executive Council Meeting.....	5
The Treasurer's Report.....	8
PSG Colony Committee.....	9
Fifteenth Annual Meeting.....	11
The Program Chair's Comments.....	11
Abstracts.....	12
Regional Reports.....	43
Central California.....	43
Northern California/Oregon.....	45
Southeast.....	47
Southern California.....	50
Reports of Soviet PSG members.....	53
Seabird News.....	54
Conservation News.....	55
New Publications.....	58
Bulletin Board.....	59