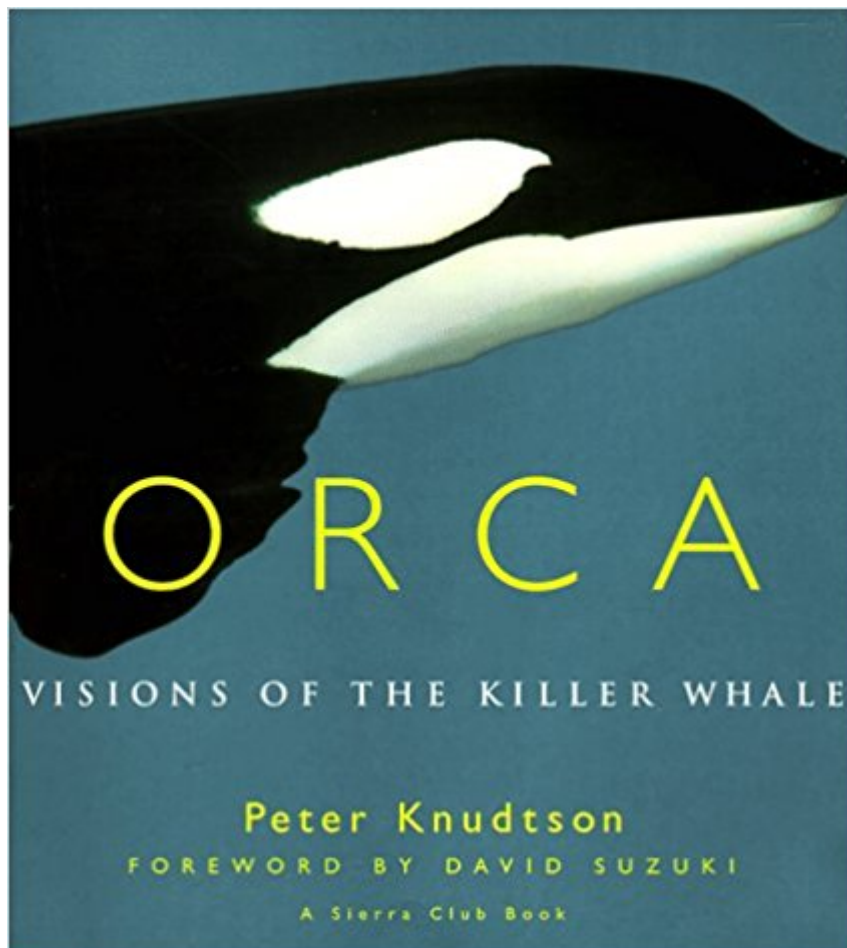


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Orca: Visions Of The Killer Whale



Synopsis

Quietly cruising through a Northern fiord, diving underwater with astonishing grace, or hurtling their bodies skyward in a leaping breach, killer whales have long been admired as one of the most intriguing and mysterious of all animals. This lavishly illustrated portrait of the killer whale, or orca, which inhabits all oceans throughout the world, presents this almost mythical sea mammal in all its mystery and grandeur. In his poetic yet scientifically precise text, author Peter Knudtson offers visions of orca throughout the ages and across cultures, from the Kwakiutl reverence for and identification with killer whales to scientists' fascination with this intelligent, large-brained counterpart to both humans and wolves on land. Knudtson also describes in vivid detail the savvy, cooperative hunting techniques of killer whales as they race in ever tighter circles around a school of herring; the dramatic birth of a calf as it shoots from its mother's body like a torpedo; and the emerging evidence about the whales' exquisitely refined sonar and communication abilities. This compelling portrait concludes with a discussion of the ethics of orca captivity, environmental threats to wild populations, and a reassessment of orca's place in our world. Throughout the book, spectacular full-color photographs capture the whales spy hopping, breaching, hunting for seals and salmon, and caring for their young. Photographs of the whales' habitat in various parts of the world are also included. The result is a shimmering vision of the magnificent, majestic orca.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

From its haunting cover to the playful shot on its last page, this book is filled with enchanting

photographs and artistic renderings of orcas by assorted contributors. It also contains detailed prose by Knudtson (*Wisdom of Elders: Honoring Sacred Visions of Nature*) about the history and evolution, habits and habitats, language and communication of the enormous animal. Although the author admits that "a human being can never fully grasp the interior reality of another life form," he notes that "few subjects present a greater challenge than does *Orcinus Orca*, the killer whale." Quotations from writers such as Cormac McCarthy and D.H. Lawrence encourage readers to reflect upon the power and beauty of orcas. A foreword by David Suzuki reminds readers, without being remotely preachy, to consider the plight of orcas kept in captivity. And there's even a little sex—the author describes the "prolonged, sensual, courtship-like interactions between resident orcas," while explaining that no one has ever captured images of these private creatures actually mating in the wild. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

YA. A visual feast with additional textual nourishment. Knudtson presents a well-rounded look at the orca species, the animal itself, and its behavior. Logically arranged, the book opens with a historical view of the killer whale by indigenous peoples. This is followed by chapters discussing biological, anatomical, and social aspects of the orca written in clear prose. The effective conclusion discusses the creatures in light of present environmental concerns. The text is divided into easily identified subsections, and the index is sufficiently detailed. Outstanding, full-page photographs with clear, full-sentence captions appear throughout. A worthy purchase for curious naturalists and oceanography students. Claudia Moore, W. T. Woodson High School, Fairfax, VA Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

A few months ago National Geographic had an article on orcas that basically persuaded me that this was an animal I wanted to learn a lot more about. I shopped around on Amazon, and decided that this would be the best book for starters. Now that I've read it, I think I was probably right: and if your situation is similar, I recommend it. Now the text is not for kids. I shared it with a young orca enthusiast, and we couldn't even get through the picture captions. But for adults without degrees in biology, this is probably the most informative and descriptive text available. For a good sample, look at the description of seal hunting technique on pages 73 and 75. (Another one to check out is "Cetacean Societies." The text is a step heavier, the subject broader; yet it just might be what the curious scientifically-literate adult ordered. This book may actually be a bit simple if you've read many science books. For instance, check out the history of evolution on p. 22. Compare that to another

pop-sci book, Carl Zimmer's "Fish with Fingers.") The pictures are great for everyone. I was a little wary after reading about the "haunting" photo on the cover, which I judge as actually very ordinary. But inside the book it gets better. On page 25, there's a great view of the mouth and teeth of an orca, as close as you'd probably ever like to get; on 59, a picture of a birth taking place; on 60, a picture of a mother petting her calf; on 87, a picture of a calf nursing; on 92, a picture of a whale playing with kelp. Those are great shots, IMO; illustrating the life of an orca, rather than merely aerial acrobatics (pictures of which are included plentifully). Some people will care a lot about the quality of the photos, which are varied: the surface photos are uniformly excellent, but underwater, I guess you take what you can get, especially in the wild. (David Suzuki's foreword argues against having orcas captive in small pools; that evidently upset a previous reviewer. Well, it's just an opinion, and a reasonable one at least.)

Good read. Beautiful pictures. Great insight on traditions amongst indigenous people's beliefs about orcas. There wasn't a lot of new information on killer whales in general, but the appreciation and photography could not be beat. A great gift for people who respect and love nature.

Great little orca book. I've read almost every book on the market. I was glad to add this one to the collection. It didn't have any info that I didn't already know, however it does have some great photos.

I was thrilled to still be able to find an edition of this book. Knudtson's vantage is balanced and insightful, backed by years of research on and beneath the waves. The photography is stunning! I can't stay away from the birthing of the calf!

nice pictures and prose about orcas.

Love this book! The author gave a lot of useful information, and the photos were beautiful! Very happy with purchase!

This is beautiful

I was very dissatisfied by David Suzuki and his biased view-points about killer whales and society. However the rest of the book, makes up for a sour start

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