

Killer whales attack a dolphin Saturday on the Monterey Bay. The transient killer whales, traveling in a pod, were photographed by Bonny Doon photographer Jodi Frediani (jodifrediani.com), who was out with marine biologist Nancy Black of Monterey Bay Whale Watch. ©JODI FREDIANI/CONTRIBUTED

A killer view

Whales + Researchers spot orcas on rare dolphin hunt

whaling

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MONTEREY BAY — The lessons nature offers on the laws of the wild can be brutal. But they also can be beautiful.

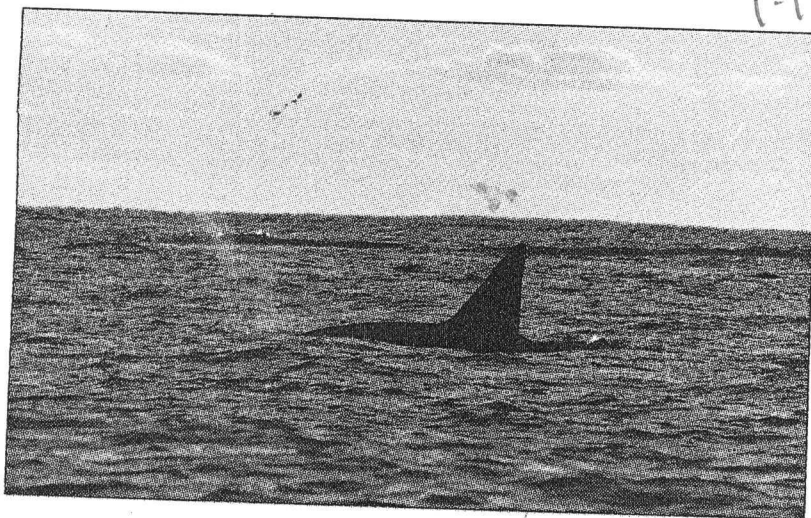
That was the case on a cool Saturday on Monterey Bay, when a whale-watching boat came across killer whales on the hunt. A rare sight for sure, but even more rare was when researchers later witnessed the whales living up to their names by making a meal of one of the bay's beloved dolphins.

"I have only seen them catch a dolphin once in 25 years," said Nancy Black, a marine biologist with Monterey Bay Whale Watch and longtime killer whale researcher. "So it's really rare to be there at the right time."

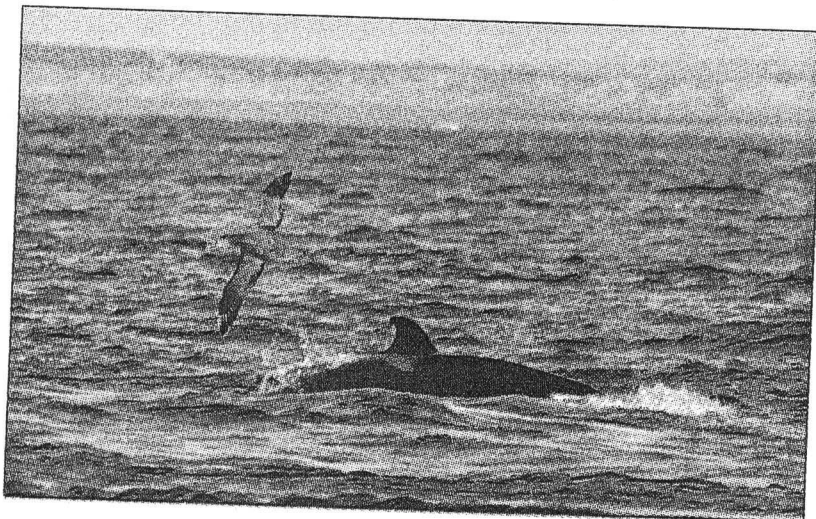
Killer whales are periodic inhabitants of Monterey Bay. The deep underwater canyons help the hunters sneak up on prey, including gray whales now passing through the bay on their annual migration.

Black said once the hunt started, it lasted about 15 minutes. The long-beaked common dolphin was isolated from other dolphins and pursued, the whales giving chase until they could make their move from below.

"The killer whales were leaping out of the water, chasing like torpedoes," Black said.



Killer whales put on quite a show over the weekend in the Monterey Bay. Here Bonny Doon photographer Jodi Frediani (jodifrediani.com), who was out with marine biologist Nancy Black of Monterey Bay Whale Watch, captures a photo of Fat Fin, an adopted son of the whale CA138, which was caught tossing the dolphin. Fat Fin's mother died when he was young. ©JODI FREDIANI/CONTRIBUTED



Bonny Doon photographer Jodi Frediani (jodifrediani.com) photographs one of the whales being visited by a seagull. ©JODI FREDIANI/CONTRIBUTED

ORCAS

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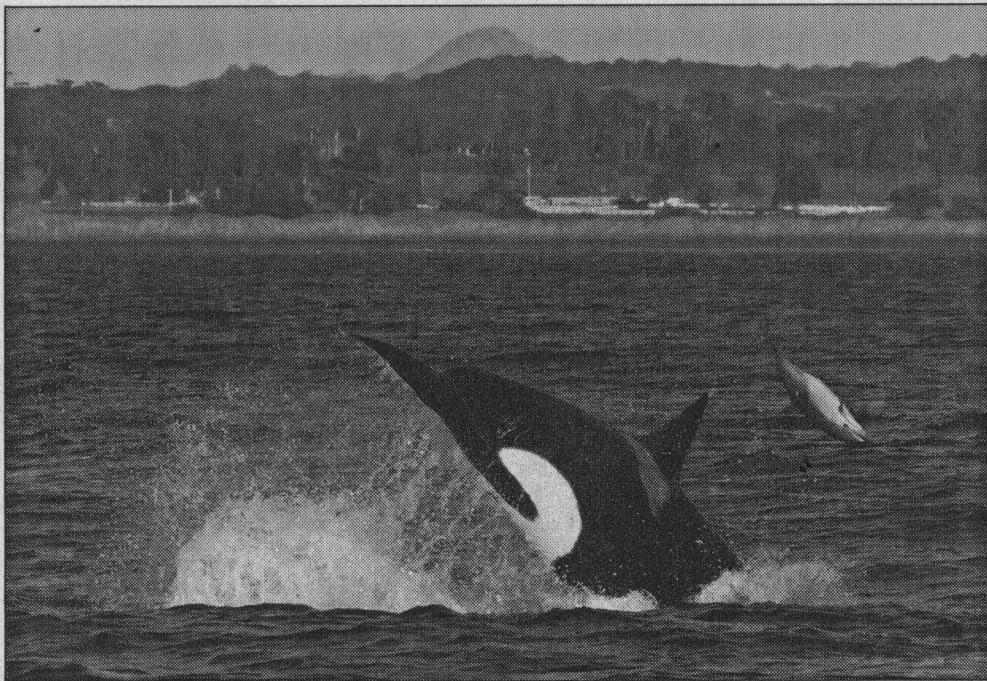
The mother whale — possibly pregnant, Black said — struck the dolphin with its head from below, the force so great it pitched the dolphin high into the air.

One way orcas kill their prey is by tossing them. As the whale, known as CA138, breached and crashed back into the water, the hapless dolphin flipped into the sky like a bowling pin.

"It's definitely exciting. This is not something you see every day," Black said.

Stunned from the impact, it was over for the dolphin quickly after that, and the whales had their meal.

Whale-watching tours spied several killer whales Saturday, including some making a snack of sea lions. Black and Bonny Doon photographer Jodi Frediani headed out in the afternoon to track them down, finding CA138 and her pod offshore from southern Santa Cruz County.



©JODI FREDIANI/CONTRIBUTED

Killer whales attack a dolphin Saturday on the Monterey Bay. The transient killer whales were captured in this photo by Bonny Doon photographer Jodi Frediani (jodifrediani.com), who was out with marine biologist Nancy Black of Monterey Bay Whale Watch.

She was with two offspring, one born in 2007 and the other in 2010. The juveniles were slapping at birds with their tails, learn-

ing another technique killer whales use to subdue prey.

Two male whales also were nearby, including one adopted by CA138 15 years

ago after his mother died.

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