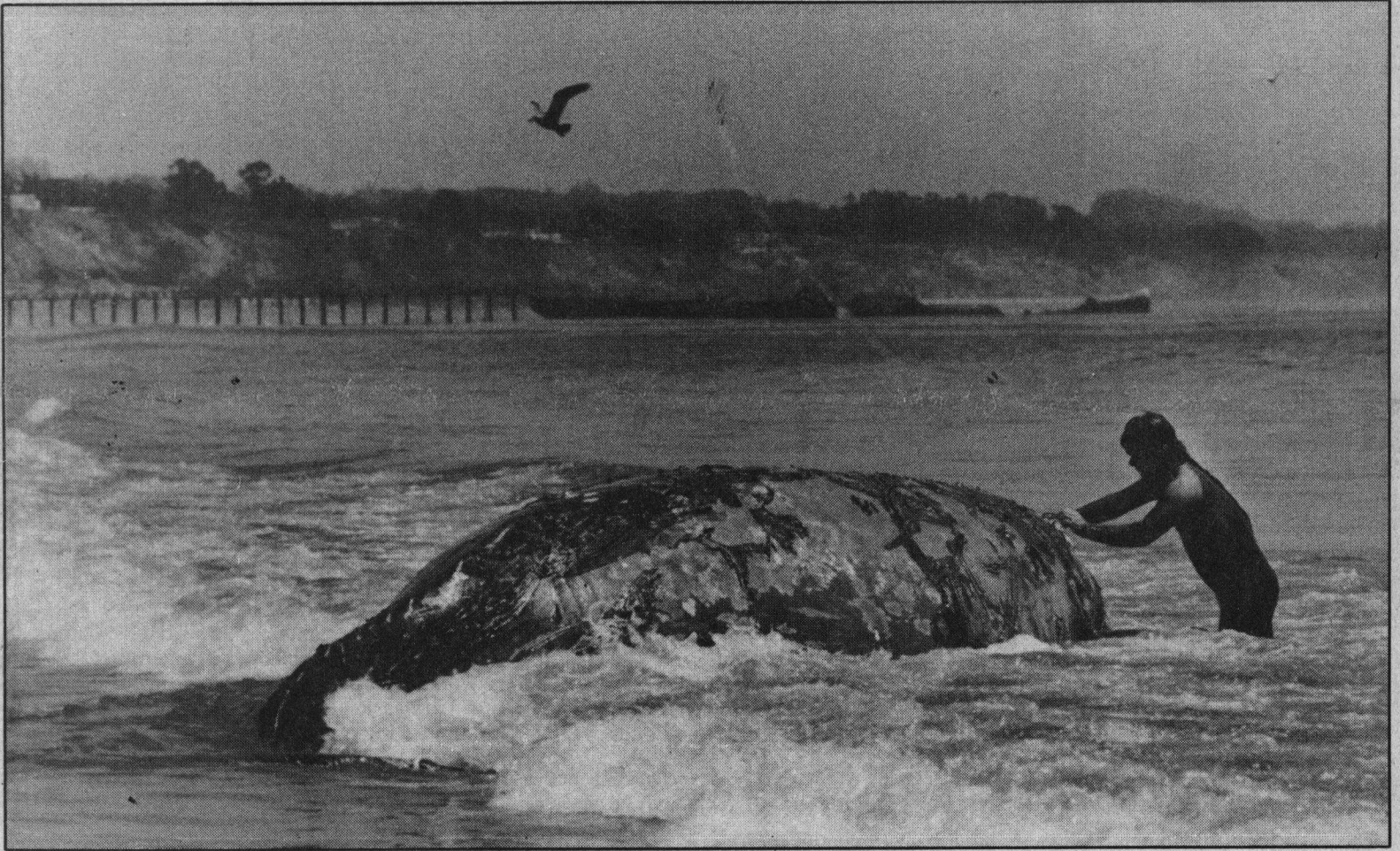


✓ CP WHALES RP
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Casualty of nature

APR 3 0 1993



Kurt Ellison

UC-Santa Cruz marine biology graduate student Guy Oliver examines the whale yesterday at Potbelly Beach in Seacliff.

Dead whale washes ashore in Midcounty

By JUDY BRILL
STAFF WRITER

What was taken for a boat overturned off a Seacliff beach Wednesday revealed itself yesterday morning as the mutilated carcass of a young gray whale.

The 24-foot female, estimated to be at least 1 year old, was apparently the victim of an attack by killer whales, Guy Oliver, a UC-Santa Cruz graduate student working with Long Marine Laboratory, said.

The whale was spotted yesterday morning about 8, south of New Brighton Beach floating

on its back. The whale's head had been damaged, exposing its upper and lower jaw bones. Rake lines crisscrossing its body had been left by the killer whales' teeth, Oliver said.

"It was probably fatally injured in the attack, but kept trying to make its way until it couldn't make it any further and just drowned," Oliver said yesterday.

Two other grays were attacked Wednesday morning by eight killer whales southwest of Santa Cruz several miles out, Oliver said. But he said there

was no way to know if this was one of the victims of those attacks. Oliver said this morning he was going to view film footage of the attacks shot by a graduate student from UC's Institute for Marine Studies.

The gray whales are making their annual migration north from breeding waters off Baja, Mexico. Their path currently stretches from Baja to Washington state.

After difficulty working out some tricky shoreline logistics, a bulldozer finally towed the carcass up to New Brighton by late

afternoon. Oliver said this morning that the Parks Department was going to dig a large hole, and a necropsy was to be performed. Oliver called the ability to examine the whale "a unique chance to find out what's going on" in the ocean environment, and said they would be studying such things as what the whale had been feeding on, and if it had any diseases or other abnormalities that might have made it a target for the killer whales.

He said blubber samples
See WHALE / back of section ▶

WHALE

▶ From Page 1 APR 3 0 1993
would also be taken to help researchers determine the type and extent of pollutants present in the whales' habitat.

"The information from an individual animal doesn't really

say much," Oliver said. But the information will be added to that already collected and under study by a network of scientists up and down the California and East coasts.

When the examination is completed, the whale's remains will be buried in the pit, probably by late today, Oliver said.