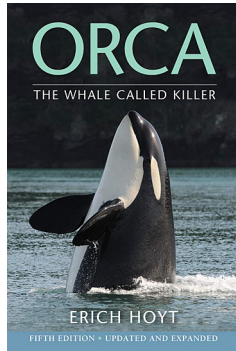


Orca: The Whale Called Killer. Fifth Edition

By Erich Hoyt. 2019. Firefly. 320 pages, 24.95 USD, Paper.

Orca: The Whale Called Killer is a really great read. Erich Hoyt has been studying whales for a long time, and his knowledge of the Killer Whale (or Orca) shines through in this book. Hoyt leads readers through his first three summers (1973–1975) documenting Northern Resident Killer Whales around Johnstone Strait, northern Vancouver Island.



Hoyt and his colleagues were filming, photographing, and recording the underwater vocalizations of Killer Whales to make documentaries on them. At this time, very little was known about Killer Whales. For example, now we know that there are four different types of Killer Whales in British Columbia (BC): the northern and southern populations of resident, salmon-eating ecotypes; the transient, mammal-eating ecotype; and the offshore shark specialist ecotype. But in 1973, biologists did not know that these Killer Whales were different. The book focusses on the timeline of Hoyt's exploits in the field, including how he learned new things about Killer Whales during his adventures. This book is partly set up like a field notebook or diary, with frequent excerpts from Hoyt's field notes, which I found an effective style to portray the story. This is the fifth edition of the book, but according to Hoyt, the last substantial update occurred in the 1990 version (third edition), so this new edition adds information gleaned about Killer Whales over the past 30 years. This new edition has a new introduction detailing important events that have happened with Killer Whales since the 1990 version of this book. It also includes an expanded afterword, epilogue, and bibliography.

Hoyt's tales of whale watching in the wild are also interwoven with the looming reality of Orca capture events that were happening concurrently. At this time, Killer Whales in BC and Washington State were actively being captured and sold to aquaria world-

wide. In many ways, the live capture events of Killer Whales and the early days of Orcas in captivity are what sparked Hoyt's interest in spending entire summers on the water to learn about the wild whales that were barely known by science at the time. Hoyt's first years in the field also happened at the same time and in the same locations as famed Killer Whale biologist Michael Biggs, who collected incredibly important information for the Canadian government about all of the Killer Whales along the coast of BC, which helped lead to the end of the live capture of Killer Whales in Canada. The historical context of this book is one of its great features.

My favourite part of this book is the way that Hoyt brings everything together in the final chapter. Hoyt was a huge proponent for an ecological reserve that was established for these Killer Whales in Robson Bight, and in this final chapter he discusses a lot of the rationale for why and how that process actually happened. Since Hoyt's early days of studying Killer Whales, he has become a global proponent for marine protected areas as a tool for conserving whales, and his early work on this ecological preserve on northern Vancouver Island clearly paved the way for his future work on marine protected areas.

This book would be a great read for any naturalists interested in learning about Killer Whales, both the natural history of populations in BC, but also the history surrounding their conservation and protection in Canada. This may be of particular interest to those who have been following the recent efforts of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to study and protect Southern Resident Killer Whales, which are closely related to the Northern Resident Killer Whales that Hoyt followed in this book. For those interested in a comparison between Killer Whales in the wild versus those in captivity, this book also provides a lot of useful context.

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