



Orca Identification

Scientists identify individual whales by differences on their flukes or fins, or by marks on their heads. Each species is identified by a specific method. Orcas are identified by the shape and size of their *dorsal* fin – a large fin on their back – and by the gray and white coloration near the dorsal fin called a *saddle patch*.

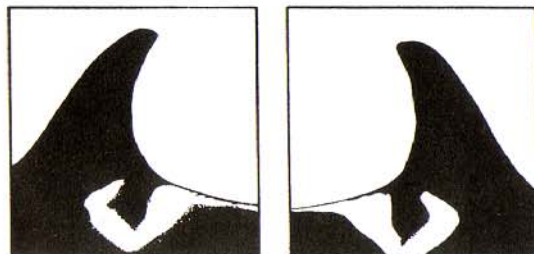
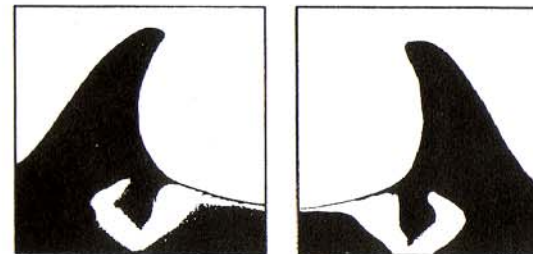
Family groups of orcas are called pods. There are three that live in Greater Puget Sound and have been named J, K and L. All together there are about 90 whales making up the three pods.

Scientists have watched these pods long enough to know each individual by its markings. They have given each whale a number and even a name! So, for example, #22 in J pod is known as "J-22" and also as "Oreo."

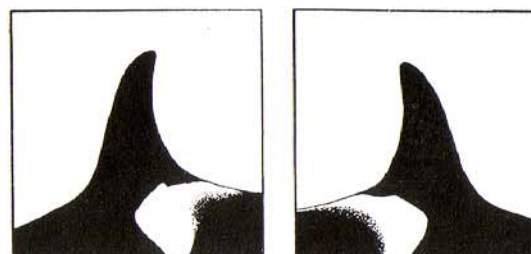
The pods are made up of a mother and her offspring, including grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Male orcas spend their entire lives in their mother's pod.

Because the study of J, K and L pods has been going on for more than 15 years, scientists and others can identify a particular whale and even know who its relatives are.

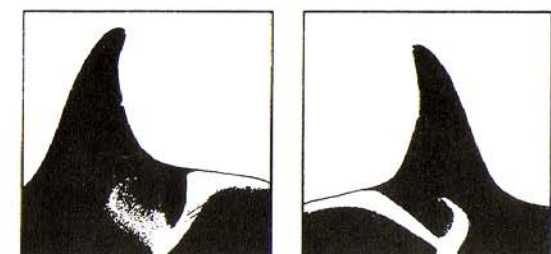
Compare the dorsal fin and saddle patch on the right with those of L pod below. Who is this whale? _____



L-43 Jelly Roll



L-58 Sparky



L-2 Grace