

## **Killer whale (*Orcinus orca*) occurrence and predation in the Bahamas.**

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Killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) are commonly observed in cold temperate waters of the world, however little is known about populations that inhabit tropical waters. Here we present 24 records of killer whale occurrence in the waters of the Bahamas from 1913-2007. Sightings were recorded throughout the Bahamas archipelago with a concentration of observations from the northern islands. Most sightings occurred during the summer months of May through August, but this may be due to greater observer effort on the water during this time. Group sizes ranged between 1 and 12, with a mean group size of 4.7 whales (mode 6, median 3.5). Eight sightings were documented with photographs and/or video of sufficient quality to recognize individual whales. A total of 25 killer whales were photographed, and 13 animals were identified. Of these 13 individuals, 7 whales have been resighted (54%). An adult female (Oo6) and her presumed offspring, an adult male (Oo4), were first seen together in 1995, and have been resighted together 3 times over an 11-year period. An adult female (Oo2) was seen three times over a 14-year period, twice with her calf (Oo1), who has now been seen a total of 3 times over a 10-year period. Killer whales were observed predated on Atlantic spotted dolphin (*Stenella frontalis*), Fraser's dolphin (*Lagenodelphis hosei*), and dwarf sperm whale (*Kogia sima*), all new records of prey items for the species. Observations during these encounters suggest that killer whales in the Bahamas specialize in feeding on marine mammals. These results suggest that a small number of animals return to the islands seasonally for foraging purposes. Further efforts are needed to document the population status of killer whales in Bahamian waters and how these whales are related to populations in the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent tropical waters.