



COSEWIC Assessment Summary

Assessment Summary – November 2008

Common name

Killer Whale - Southern Resident population

Scientific name

Orcinus orca

Status

Endangered

Reason for designation

The population is small and declining, and the decline is expected to continue. Southern residents are limited by the availability of their principal prey, Chinook Salmon. There are forecasts of continued low abundance of Chinook Salmon. Southern residents are also threatened by increasing physical and acoustical disturbance, oil spills and contaminants.

Occurrence

Pacific Ocean

Status history

The “North Pacific resident populations” were given a single designation of Threatened in April 1999. Split into three populations in November 2001. The Southern Resident population was designated Endangered in November 2001. Status re-examined and confirmed in November 2008. Last assessment based on an update status report.

Assessment Summary – November 2008

Common name

Killer Whale - Northern Resident population

Scientific name

Orcinus orca

Status

Threatened

Reason for designation

The population is small, and is limited by the availability of its principal prey, Chinook Salmon. It is also at risk from physical and acoustical disturbance, oil spills and contaminants. However, this population has been increasing slowly but steadily since monitoring began in 1975.

Occurrence

Pacific Ocean

Status history

The “North Pacific resident populations” were given a single designation of Threatened in April 1999. Split into three populations in November 2001. The Northern Resident population was designated Threatened in November 2001. Status re-examined and confirmed in November 2008. Last assessment based on an update status report.

Assessment Summary – November 2008

Common name

Killer Whale - West Coast Transient population

Scientific name

Orcinus orca

Status

Threatened

Reason for designation

This population has a very small number of mature individuals (~122). It is subject to threats from high levels of contaminants, acoustical and physical disturbance, and potential oil spills. However, the population has been increasing since the mid-1970s when monitoring began, and its prey base of pinnipeds and cetaceans is likely stable or increasing.

Occurrence

Pacific Ocean

Status history

Designated Special Concern in April 1999. Status re-examined and designated Threatened in November 2001 and in November 2008. Last assessment based on an update status report.

Assessment Summary – November 2008

Common name

Killer Whale - Offshore population

Scientific name

Orcinus orca

Status

Threatened

Reason for designation

This population has a very small number of mature individuals (~120). It is subject to threats from high levels of contaminants, acoustical and physical disturbance, and potential oil spills. However, the population is monitored and appears to be stable.

Occurrence

Pacific Ocean

Status history

The "North Pacific resident populations" were given a single designation of Threatened in April 1999. Split into three populations in November 2001. The Offshore population was designated Special Concern in November 2001. Status re-examined and designated Threatened in November 2008. Last assessment based on an update status report.

Assessment Summary – November 2008

Common name

Killer Whale - Northwest Atlantic / Eastern Arctic population

Scientific name

Orcinus orca

Status

Special Concern

Reason for designation

Threats to this population include hunting in Greenland, acoustical and physical disturbance, which will become greater as shipping traffic increases in the Arctic, and contaminants. This population's small size (fewer than 1000 mature individuals and likely less than 250) and the species' life history and social attributes justify designation as Special Concern.

Occurrence

Arctic Ocean, Atlantic Ocean

Status history

Species considered in April 1999 and in November 2001, and placed in the Data Deficient category. Re-examined in November 2008 and designated Special Concern. Last assessment based on an update status report.