

Orcas in Peril? Culture and Conservation of West Coast Killer Whales

FRIDAY, MAY 24, 2019, 6:30 - 9:30 pm

(AGM portion 6:30 - 7:00 followed by lecture)

MURRAY & ANNE FRASER BLDG. ROOM 159,

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

(Murray & Anne Fraser Bld.)

The plight of Southern Resident Killer Whales has received international attention in recent years. Too much noise, disturbance and contaminants, and — perhaps most importantly — insufficient food, have all played a role in putting this population at serious risk. But while Southern Residents are struggling, other killer whale populations along the west coast are doing fine. In this lecture, cetacean research biologist Dr. John Ford describes the importance of cultural traditions in the lives of orcas and how these dictate where they go, who they associate with, what they eat, and, ultimately, how well they can cope with a changing marine environment.

John Ford bio

Dr. John Ford has been involved in field studies of marine mammals off Canada's west coast since the mid 1970s. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Zoology and the Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries, University of British Columbia. He is also marine mammal research scientist (emeritus) at the Pacific Biological Station, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Nanaimo, BC, where he headed up the cetacean research program for 16 years. Prior to his move to the Pacific Biological Station in 2001, John was senior marine mammal scientist and Director of Research and

Conservation at the Vancouver Aquarium. His main areas of research include the life history, ecology, behaviour and acoustic communication of cetaceans, especially killer whales. He has studied this species both in BC and other global regions, including Patagonia, Antarctica, Alaska and Norway. In recent years, his research has focused on the conservation status of cetaceans listed under Canada's Species-at-Risk Act and involves assessments of population abundance and distribution, critical habitats, and foraging ecology of west coast whales. He is a member of COSEWIC's Marine Mammal Species Specialist Committee and the IUCN's Cetacean Specialist Group.

