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### **Northern Resident Killer Whale Population Update**

The northern resident killer whale population is listed as Threatened in Canada. Population censusing by photo-identification is a key research activity outlined in the action plan for resident killer whales (Fisheries and Ocean Canada 2016) and has been conducted on the northern resident population each year since 1973.

Dedicated and opportunistic census efforts are conducted year-round, but results are often incomplete due to the large range and inconsistent travel patterns of matriline in the population. Maximum population size estimates are calculated each year, but deaths are only confirmed after a  $\geq 1$  year lag period, consistent with methodology described in DFO (2023). Uncertainty due to unobserved matriline each year may result in calculated population sizes changing retroactively in future censuses.

During the census period, the northern resident killer whale population showed periods of growth and decline but overall, has grown at an annual average mean rate of 2.2% (Towers et al. 2015, 2020; DFO 2023). In 2025 the maximum population size was estimated to be 372 individuals.

Between 2020 and 2024 demographic updates were provided on the NRKW ID app (Figure 1). Due to internal delays in capacity to make updates to the app prior to the beginning of the 2026 census we have listed updates from the 2025 census below in Table 1.

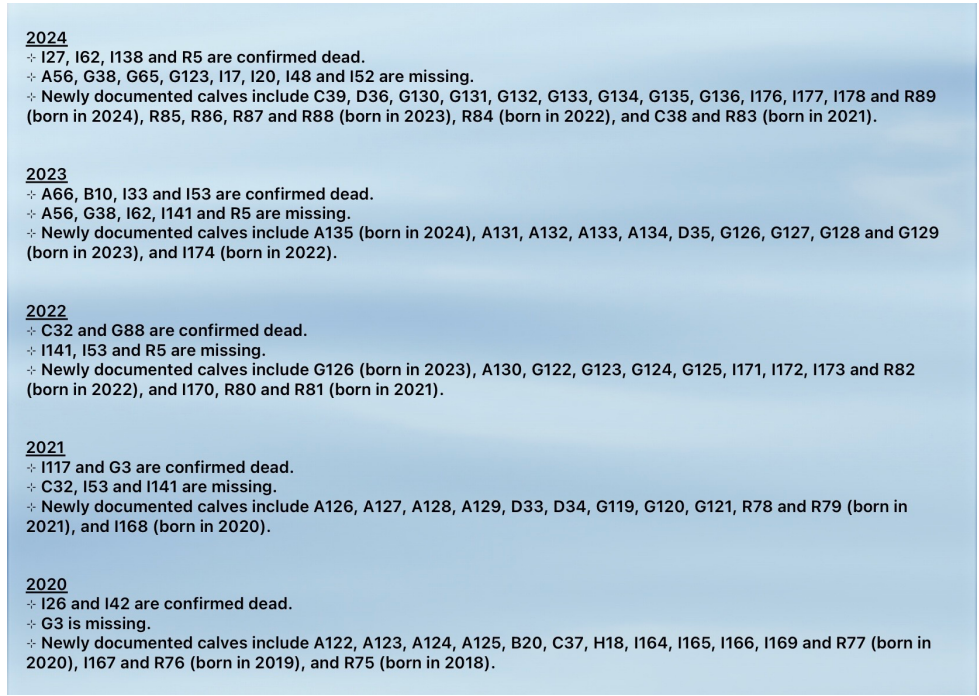


Figure 1. The identities of new calves, missing and dead northern resident killer whales confirmed by year 2020-2024.

Born (Mum)	Dead	Missing
A138 (A75)	B20	A56
A139 (A70)	I20	D36
A137 (A73)	I48	I17
A136 (A88)	I52	G123
C40 (C29)	I83	G38
I179 (I142)	I141	G65
I182 (I132)	I168	G02
I181 (I124)	G132	G122
G137 (G50)	I76	R33
G138 (G101)		R36
I180 (I65)		R79
R91 (R48)		
R93 (R40)		
R92 (R24)		

Table 1. The identities of new calves, missing and dead northern resident killer whales confirmed in 2025.

## **References**

DFO. 2023. Population status update for the Northern Resident Killer Whale (*Orcinus orca*) in 2022. DFO Can. Sci. Advis. Sec. Sci. Resp. 2023/031.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada. 2016. Action Plan for the Northern and Southern Resident Killer Whale (*Orcinus orca*) in Canada [Proposed]. *Species at Risk Act* Action Plan Series. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Ottawa. iii + 32 pp.

Towers, J.R., Ellis, G.M. and Ford, J.K.B. 2015. Photo-identification catalogue and status of the northern resident killer whale population in 2014. *Can. Tech. Rep. Fish. Aquat. Sci.* 3139: iv + 75 p.

Towers, J.R., Pilkington, J.F., Gisborne, B., Wright, B.M., Ellis, G.M., Ford, J.K.B., and Doniol-Valcroze, T. 2020. Photo-identification catalogue and status of the northern resident killer whale population in 2019. Can. Tech. Rep. Fish. Aquat. Sci. 3371: iv + 69 p.