

Examination of dead killer whale on Long Beach Peninsula, February 12, 2012

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A detailed external and internal examination was conducted on February 12, 2012 of a stranded killer whale that washed up just north of Long Beach, Washington on the morning of February 11. The 12'3" (3.75m) juvenile female was taken to a secure location for a full necropsy by biologists and volunteers from a number of organizations that are part of the Northwest Marine Mammal Stranding Network, including Portland State University, Cascadia Research, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Mammal Investigations, Seaside Aquarium, Seattle Seal Sitters, the Makah Tribe, and NOAA Fisheries.

Photographs of the dorsal fin and saddle patch were matched to catalogs of known killer whales by biologists from National Marine Fisheries Service and the Center for Whale Research. She has been identified as L112, a member of the Southern Resident L Pod. Born in 2009, she was the second surviving calf of L86.

The whale was moderately decomposed and in good overall body condition. Internal exam revealed significant trauma around the head, chest and right side; at this point the cause of these injuries is unknown. The skeleton will be cleaned and closely evaluated by Portland State University for signs of fracture and the head has been retained intact for biological scanning. Additionally, samples were taken for a variety of analyses: genetics, contaminants, bacteriology, virology, food habits, biotoxins and histopathology. The processing of these tissue samples could take several weeks or months and will hopefully provide insight into the origin of the traumatic injuries or other factors that may have contributed to the death of this whale.

There have been reports of Naval sonar activity in the Strait of Juan de Fuca in the past week and a half and members of K and L pod were reportedly in the area at the time as well. We do not know if this whale was among those in the area but the possibility is under consideration.

This is the second killer whale to strand on the Long Beach peninsula in the past three months. The first case was a killer whale calf that stranded north of the Seaview Beach approach on November 14, 2011. The carcass was promptly collected and transported to Portland State University, where thorough necropsy was conducted by Portland State University, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Marine Mammal Investigations, Cascadia Research, NOAA, and Dr. Stephen Raverty. A genetics sample was taken and the female calf has been confirmed as part of the eastern North Pacific offshore ecotype and not part of the resident population. A congenital defect was determined to be the cause of death in this case.

More information on other strandings can be found at [Cascadia's stranding response page](#). More information on killer whales can be found on the [Cascadia Research killer whale page](#), at the [Center for Whale Research](#), [Fisheries and Oceans Canada](#), and the [Northwest Fisheries Science Center](#) websites.



Whale at site for examination, prior to start. Photo by Cascadia Research



Necropsy team including personnel from Portland State University, Seaside Aquarium, Cascadia Research, Seattle Seal Sitters, and WDFW. Photo by Dyanna Lambourn, WDFW.