

= Granny ( orca ) =

Granny , also known as J2 , is an orca , or killer whale , estimated by some whale researchers to be 105 years old , which , if correct , would make her the oldest known living orca . Granny had been captured with the rest of her pod in 1967 but was too old at that time for a marine mammal park , so was released . In 1967 , Granny was estimated to have been born in 1911 .

= = Description = =

Granny is recognizable from the gray " saddle patch " just behind her dorsal fin , and a half @-@ moon notch in her fin . Simon Pidcock of Ocean EcoVentures said he has seen Granny thousands of times , and that the markings on orca fins are like fingerprints .

Now that orca studies have been going on for several decades , the exact age of many whales is known . The age of older orcas , such as Granny , is estimated by their offspring ; they give birth around age 15 , and stop having offspring around 40 ; by adding the generations together , ages can be estimated . There are also photographs of Granny from the 1930s and the size and growth of Granny and the other orcas is also used in the age estimates . In Granny 's case , she was photographed in 1971 with a male orca , J1 Ruffles , who was thought to be Granny 's son . Ruffles was estimated as at least 20 years old , and as scientists believed him to be Granny 's last offspring , her own age was estimated at about 60 . However , it was later determined through DNA that Ruffles was not Granny 's son .

= = J pod = =

Granny , along with several of her descendants , travels in the J pod , a group of about 25 orcas . J pod , along with Pods K and L , are the " J clan " , which is part of the southern resident killer whale population . They frequent the inland waters of British Columbia and Washington State in the summer months , but roam from southeast Alaska to central California . They have completed a journey as far as 800 miles in a week .

A well @-@ known male orca thought to be Granny 's son is J1 Ruffles . He was last seen in 2010 . According to researchers , Granny also has multiple grandchildren and great @-@ grandchildren travelling in the pod with her .

The southern resident killer whales are the most studied population of killer whales in the world . Many whales in this population were captured in the 1960s and 1970s for use in sea parks , and others were killed by hunters attempting to capture them .

= = Legacy = =

As the oldest known orca , Granny is used in arguments against keeping whales in captivity , referencing the allegedly reduced lifespan of whales in captivity . The oldest orca in captivity is the 50 @-@ year @-@ old Lolita who is at the Miami Seaquarium . The average lifespan for a captured orca is 20 to 30 years . Of Granny 's age , Captain Pidcock of Ocean Ecoventures Whale Watching said " [ ... ] it ? s mind @-@ blowing to think that this whale is over 100 years old . She was born before the Titanic went down . Can you imagine the things she ? s seen in her lifetime ? "

Granny was also used as a focal point of environmental efforts that resulted in the Endangered Species Act protections for orca . Environmentalists estimate that Granny may have a PCB load of up to 100 parts per million , and that her descendants ' reproductive systems may have been damaged by exposure to pollution . Additionally , Granny and her family are at risk from declining West Coast salmon populations .

Granny was featured in a children 's book on orcas titled Granny 's Clan : A Tale of Wild Orcas by Sally Hodson .

= = Orca lifespan = =

Estimates of lifespans for wild orcas vary . Seaworld says wild lifespans are 30 ? 50 years for females , and 19 ? 30 years for males . These estimates are similar to the estimates from a 2005 study . Marine conservation groups argue that these estimates are low due to the effects of hunting , pollution , and capture on the wild populations , and that natural wild orca lifespans are equivalent to that of humans , with male orcas living up to 75 years and female orcas living up to 80 years ) .