

Killer whales spotted off Cape Hatteras

June 17 2024, by Kari Pugh, The Virginian-Pilot



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Amiee Dean and her family were fishing at the Point on Cape Hatteras when they—and everyone else on the beach—had what's likely a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"We were just sitting there fishing and they started jumping out of the

water," said Dean, whose 10-year-old son captured images of what appeared to be two orcas leaping out of the water about 30 yards off shore.

Everyone on the [beach](#) saw them, and those in the water exited quickly. There was one [boat](#) in the water at the time, and Dean knows he spotted them, too.

"There was a little boat out there, and he's local, he saw them as well, one was following him," Dean said. "He hauled his hind end right out of there."

Dean's son doesn't fish, but likes to take photos of his [family's](#) catches and hopes to become a [marine biologist](#). He was the only one with a phone on him at the time.

"I said to him, 'Please tell me you got some pics,'" Dean said. "He zoomed all the way in. They were that close."

The [killer whales](#) were jumping and barrel-rolling, possibly chasing some sort of prey.

A few seconds after the orcas arrived, those fishing started catching bluefish.

"They were lighting up," Dean said.

Dean said she and others on the beach reported the sighting to the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, which did not immediately return a request for comment Saturday morning.

According to the North Carolina State Parks website, orcas are the largest members of the dolphin family and are known to visit the Outer

Banks very infrequently. A pod was last spotted near Oregon Inlet in March 2011.

Orcas are found in oceans worldwide, but are rare in the North Atlantic, especially along the coast of the Eastern United States, the website says.

Orcas are "seldom seen on boat trips, even well offshore," in North Carolina and there has been only one report of a killer whale stranding in the state, in 1926.

Orcas can grow up to 31 feet long and weigh as much as 22,000 pounds, according to Smithsonian Ocean.

Dean and her family live in Austinville and have been visiting the Outer Banks for 14 years, but has never seen anything like the recent [orca](#) show.

"It will probably never happen again unless we go on a cruise to Alaska or something, but it is enough to always remember them," Dean said.

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