

Rarely seen killer whaler duo spotted twice in one week off Scotland

June 27 2024, by Brendan Rascius, The Charlotte Observer



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The duo—known as John Coe and Aquarius—are the last surviving members of the Scottish West Coast Community of orcas, a distinct ecotype distinguished by their unique eyepatch and large size, according

to the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust, a conservation nonprofit.

After being seen around Scotland for years, the pair, both males, are now treated as local celebrities.

On June 20, passengers on a Staffa Trips boat tour noticed two [fins](#) on the horizon that turned out to belong to the duo, according to a news release from the company.

Photos released by the company show John Coe's distinctive fin, which has a small notch believed to have been caused by a shark bite, according to the BBC.

"Today was an exceptional day," the company said, adding that John Coe and Aquarius are "a couple of animals that we only see very occasionally."

Five days later, the pair were again seen swimming off Scotland by those on board another boat tour.

The [vessel](#) "had a visit from John Coe and Aquarius this morning, off Ardnamurchan, much to the delight of everyone on board," Hebrides Cruises said in a June 25 news release.

In a [video](#) posted by the company, the whales can be seen surfacing and spouting mist from their blowholes before sinking back into the water.

The skipper "was remembering his good friend Richard Fairbairns who established the first U.K. cetacean research project on Mull and was actually involved in naming John Coe, who is now reckoned to be at least 60 years old," the company said.

The whales' sighting is considered "rare," according to The Herald, a

Scottish newspaper.

Given their ages—Aquarius is also believed to be around 60—sightings of the pair always come as a relief, according to the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust.

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