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Icelandic killer whale (Orcinus orca) predation on lumpfish (Cyclopterus lumpus)

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Killer whales in Iceland are known to largely feed on herring, but sporadic predation accounts of a variety of prey point to a potentially more complex foraging ecology. Preliminary results from our ongoing year-round research and monitoring project of killer whales in West Iceland, which started in 2014, show that Icelandic killer whales pursue lumpfish in addition to herring. At least in some years, lumpfish feeding events might be quite common. This was seen in data from spring and summer 2021 where confirmed killer whale - lumpfish interactions (of killer whales chasing and/or catching lumpfish) comprised 33% of all observed foraging/feeding events (n=33). We present our future goals for investigating hunting strategies used by killer whales to pursue and catch lumpfish in Icelandic waters. Methods include both dedicated and opportunistic research.