

Orcas Display Unusual Sunfish Hunting Behavior in Mexican Waters

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MEXICO CITY: Researchers have documented a rare and unusual behavior among orcas in Mexico's Gulf of California, where the marine mammals were observed repeatedly ramming giant sunfish, possibly as part of hunting practice, food preparation or social learning. The findings, published in the peer reviewed journal *Frontiers in Ethology*, are based on two documented encounters involving pods of killer whales and sharp tail sunfish, one of the world's largest bony fish species.

During one observation, a female orca held a dead sunfish by its tail while a male struck it at high speed, breaking the carcass into smaller pieces. A juvenile orca then fed on the fragments, prompting researchers to suggest the adults may have been making the prey easier for younger whales to consume.

Scientists said the coordinated behavior could also help young orcas develop hunting skills, improve teamwork and strengthen social bonds within the pod. They noted that slow moving sunfish provide a low risk target for practicing timing, communication and precision.

While researchers believe the behavior may represent cooperative

feeding or parental teaching, they said other explanations, including play and social interaction, cannot yet be ruled out. Further observations are needed to better understand the purpose of this unusual behavior.

Post Date: July 23, 2026 PDF Created On: Mon, Jul 27 2026 02:11:20 am

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