



NATURE



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**THIRTEEN's *Nature* Reveals a New Arctic Predator
in *Invasion of the Killer Whales*
Wednesday, November 19, 2014 on PBS**

Western science and Inuit knowledge are collaborating for the first time to document the arrival of a deadly hunter

A shift of power is taking place at the top of the world. The Arctic is undergoing a dramatic change, and with this change one iconic Arctic hunter may soon have to give way to another as solid ice turns to open sea. The polar bear, once king of the North, needs ice to stalk its prey. Killer whales, or orca, on the other hand, are unable to hunt in an ocean locked in ice. As the ice increasingly disappears, the tables have turned. Polar bears are struggling to survive while the now open ocean provides bountiful new hunting grounds for the whales. There appears to be no stopping these voracious predators, whose fearsome presence has been formerly unknown so far north in Canadian waters. Hunters and hunted in this once frozen world must now make way for the arrival of the most successful ocean predator of them all.

Invasion of the Killer Whales presents information gathered by research scientists and a film crew documenting the movements and behavior of the Arctic killer whales and their impact on predator and prey. Augmenting their work are reports and reflections provided by

Inuit hunters, who have long had first-hand experience with polar bears and the prey animals polar bears once survived on – seals, narwhal, belugas and bowhead whales – which are longtime food sources for the Inuit, as well. The program airs Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 8 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings). After broadcast, the episodes will be available for online streaming at pbs.org/nature.

The documentary includes interviews with several Inuit who have seen and even filmed killer whales attacking narwhal. Inuit hunters were the first to witness the arrival of killer whales in the rich Arctic hunting grounds and some feel the herding strategy the whales use to attack the narwhal have in fact made their job easier. But scientists caution that with killer whales going after the same food sources as the Inuit, their way of life could undergo a change in the future.

Invasion of the Killer Whales follows an August 2013 expedition to satellite tag and track killer whales launched by Steve Ferguson, a marine biologist at Fisheries and Oceans, Canada, whose 2012 study first reported the killer whales' arrival so far north. A group of 20 tagged killer whales traveling at fairly rapid speed is followed as they head straight toward the summer nursery grounds of a pod of narwhal and their young. The science team and film crew are stunned as they arrive to see the killer whales lunging at the beach, pinning the entire pod of narwhal in shallow water before devouring them all. The orca are organized and ruthless, and stop at nothing. Even bowhead whales, twice the length of killer whales, are a target, especially mothers and their young. Their only recourse is to hide in the sea ice close to the shoreline, where the orca cannot follow.

Polar bears may be classified as marine mammals, like killer whales, but they are not adapted to hunting in the water despite being able to swim huge distances. They need the ice to hunt and as it vanishes they can no longer reach their traditional prey. With each Arctic summer providing more water and less ice, some polar bears are forced to try their luck with seaweed, birds, and Arctic char, a type of salmon, as they migrate upstream to spawn. Their ability to find food and develop new hunting skills may prove crucial to their survival in a changing Arctic.

Nature is a production of THIRTEEN Productions LLC for WNET. For ***Nature***, Fred Kaufman is executive producer. ***Invasion of the Killer Whales*** is a production of Terra Mater Factual Studios and Brian Leith Productions in co-production with NDR Naturfilm/Doclights and THIRTEEN Productions LLC for WNET.

Nature pioneered a television genre that is now widely emulated in the broadcast industry. Throughout its history, ***Nature*** has brought the natural world to millions of viewers. The series has been consistently among the most-watched primetime series on public television.

Nature has won over 700 honors from the television industry, the international wildlife film communities and environmental organizations, including 12 Emmys and three Peabodys. The series received two of wildlife film industry's highest honors: the Christopher Parsons Outstanding Achievement Award given by the Wildscreen Festival and the Grand Teton Award given by the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. Recently, the International Wildlife Film

Festival honored **Nature** executive producer Fred Kaufman with its Lifetime Achievement Award for Media.

PBS.org/nature is the award-winning web companion to **Nature**, featuring streaming episodes, filmmaker interviews, teacher's guides and more.

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About WNET

As New York's flagship public media provider and the parent company of [THIRTEEN](#) and [WLIW21](#) and operator of [NJTV](#), WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than 5 million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as [Nature](#), [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [PBS NewsHour Weekend](#), [Charlie Rose](#) and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings available on air and online. Pioneers in educational programming, WNET has created such groundbreaking series as [Get the Math](#), [Oh Noah!](#) and [Cyberchase](#) and provides tools for educators that bring compelling content to life in the classroom and at home. WNET highlights the tri-state's unique culture and diverse communities through [NYC-ARTS](#), [Reel 13](#), [NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams](#) and [MetroFocus](#), the multi-platform news magazine focusing on the New York region. WNET is also a leader in connecting with viewers on emerging platforms, including the [THIRTEEN Explore App](#) where users can stream PBS content for free.

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