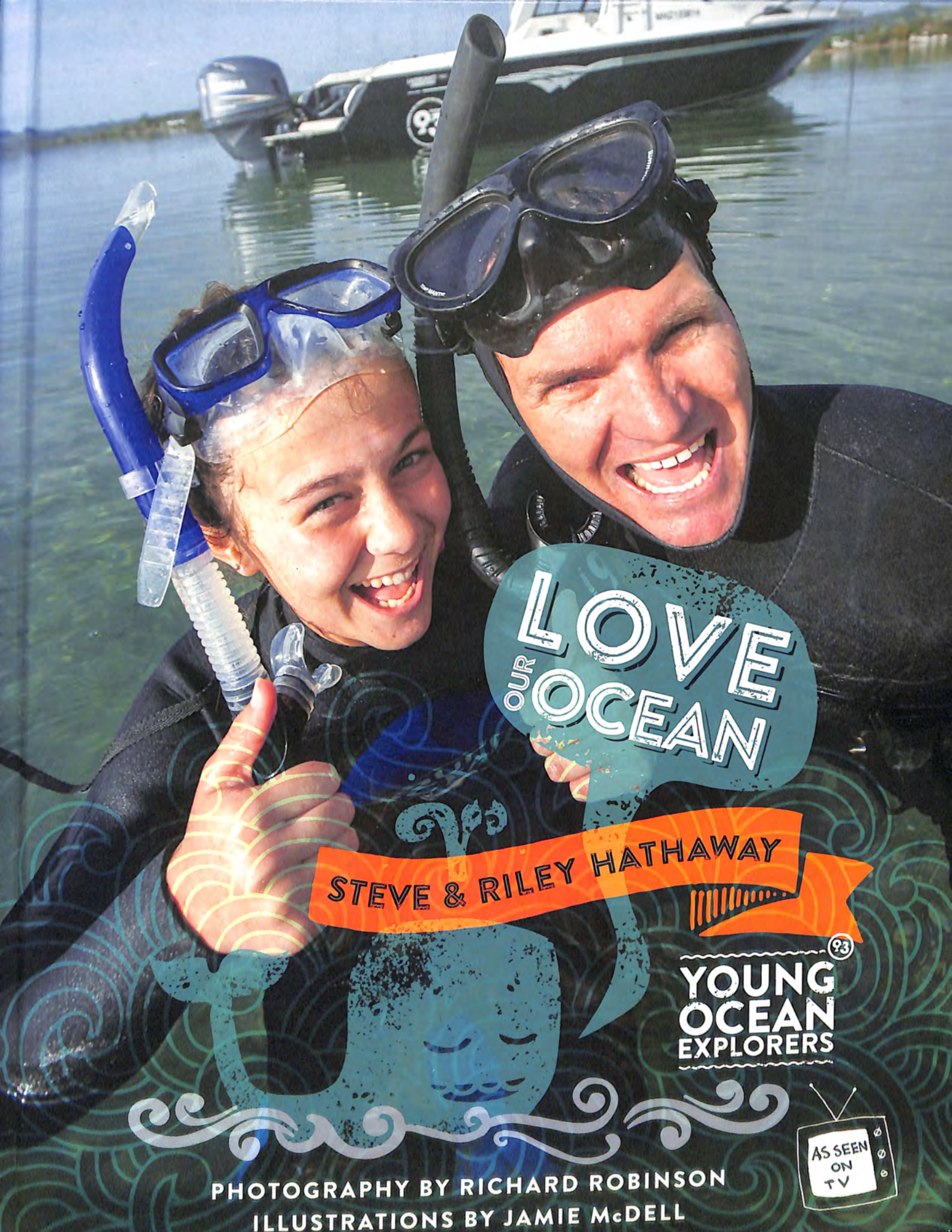

LOVE
OUR OCEAN
STEVE & RILEY HATHAWAY
YOUNG OCEAN EXPLORERS
AS SEEN ON TV
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD ROBINSON
ILLUSTRATIONS BY JAMIE McDELL

LOVE OUR OCEAN

YOUNG OCEAN EXPLORERS®

MAKI

ORCA

ORCINUS ORCA

MAKI ORCA

ORCINUS ORCA

"AN APEX PREDATOR that eats sharks for breakfast! ~ the loveliest animal on the planet?"

WHAT!?... IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?

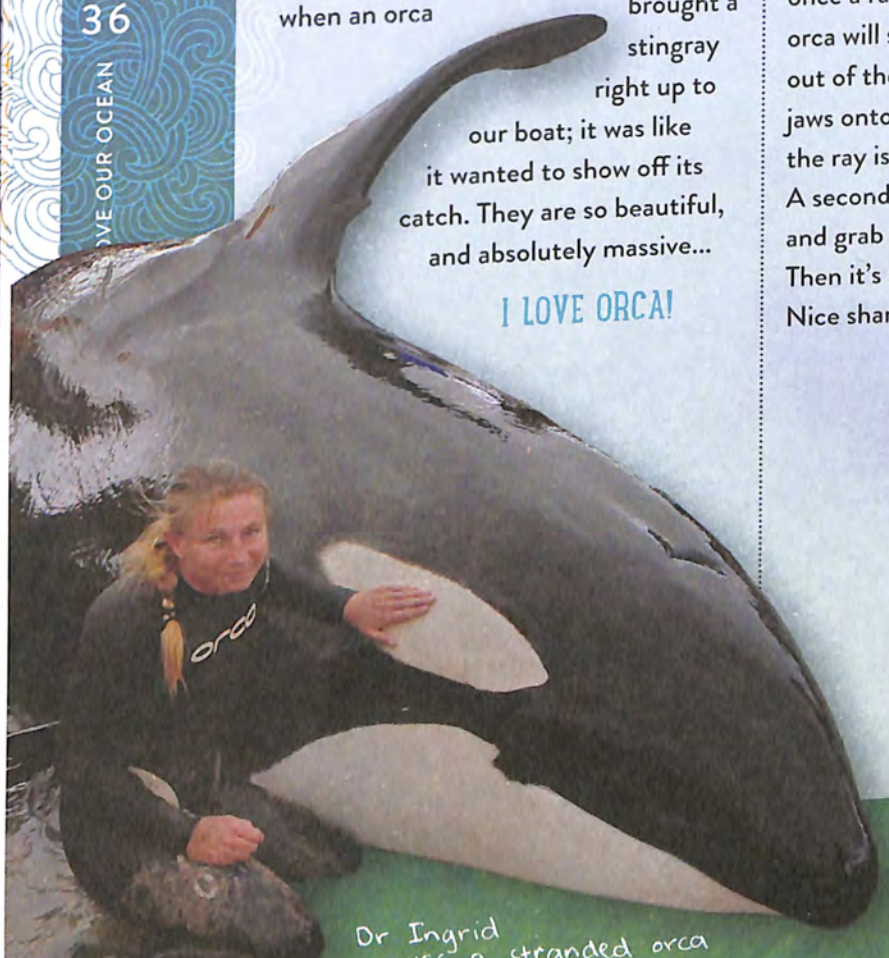
Well that's what dad's good friend Dr Ingrid Visser says – and she's the world expert! She's completely orca-crazy and she spends her whole life trying to help these black and white feeding machines. I've had a few encounters near orca; but one of my favourites was when an orca brought a stingray right up to our boat; it was like it wanted to show off its catch. They are so beautiful, and absolutely massive...

I LOVE ORCA!

I was so excited about going looking for orca with Dr Visser! We went to the Whangarei Harbour, to a sandbank where orca often hunt stingrays. While the rays are busy looking for crabs and shellfish, orca will cruise into the shallow water and try to nab them. If it's quick, a ray can try to dig into the sand and stay hidden, but once a ray has been spotted, a pod of orca will spend ages trying to nudge it out of the sand. When an orca gets its jaws onto one of those graceful wings, the ray is toast – orca toast that is. A second orca will come alongside and grab the ray's other wing. Then it's riiiiiiip...and snack time. Nice sharing guys.

Orca seem to know who Dr Ingrid is

Dad picking up orca leftovers.... They dropped them in front of him

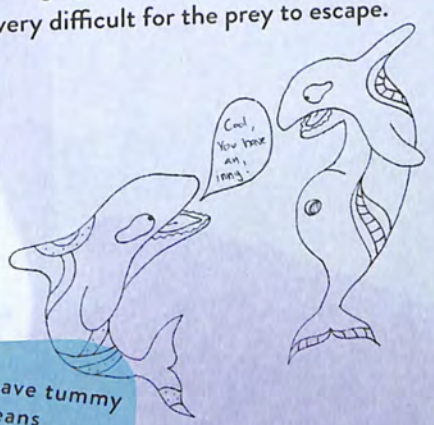


Dr Ingrid rescues a stranded orca

Male orca fins grow MASSIVE!

Hunting rays

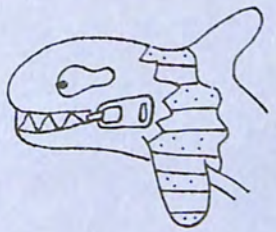
Actually, the orca is kind of special in the animal kingdom because, just like human parents, orca mums teach their children about teamwork, cooperation and sharing. Hunting in groups gives orca a big advantage over ocean creatures that swim solo. A pod of orca will work together to surround larger prey such as a shark, bringing it to the surface where it is very difficult for the prey to escape.



DID YOU KNOW?... Orca have tummy buttons – in fact all cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) do!

Once the prey is surrounded, orca have a range of hunting techniques to choose from. They sometimes stun their prey by bashing their tail flukes onto it. Another method is for one orca to grab the prey and swim down. Held between the orca's sharp teeth, the prey finds it nearly impossible to break free, and eventually drowns.

Orca can hold on really tightly, even when their prey is thrashing and jerking. Their teeth are like a zipper, closing together perfectly; the top teeth fit down neatly into the gaps between the bottom teeth. No wonder these guys are at the top of the food chain!



Orca also communicate a lot when they hunt. They're like a sports team, calling out suggestions and encouragement. A particular click, call or whistle sends a message that the other orca in that pod can understand. It's all about family traditions; for a long time, orca have been working out how to hunt in their area and passing that knowledge on. In different parts of the world orca are taught local hunting techniques by their parents.

In Patagonia, Argentina, it's how to beach themselves briefly to grab a sea lion pup from the sand; in New Zealand, it's how to catch stingrays without getting poisoned by barbs; in Antarctica, it's how to wash a seal off an ice-floe.

DID YOU KNOW?... Orca like to move and they can travel up to 150km in a day. That's like going around a running track 375 times! Orca cruise at about 10km an hour, although when hunting, they can reach nearly 50km per hour.

DID YOU KNOW?... Baby orca are usually born tail first – unlike humans which come out head first.

I've actually seen orca working as a team. Once I went out on the water with my Dad and Dr Visser to rescue an orca that had her tail tangled in the rope of a crayfish pot. The other orca worked together trying to rescue her and pushed her to the surface so she could breathe. They kept coming up to our boat like they were asking for our help to free her!

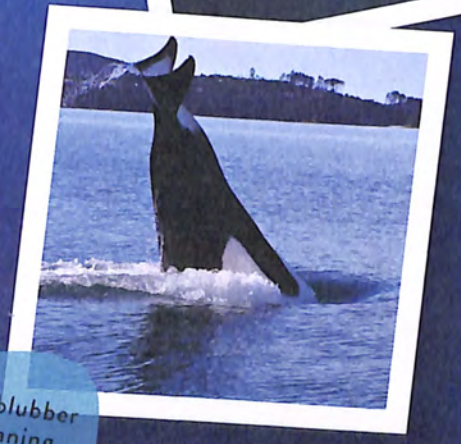
As the rope was cut off the entangled orca, there were two others just under the surface next to the rescuers' hands, watching closely. It was like they knew we were helping them. This orca was so lucky and would have drowned if we didn't rescue her.

It was the best feeling to watch all six of the pod swim off together after being saved!

After that day I got a taste of how awesome Dr Visser's work must be.

Dad in his happy place

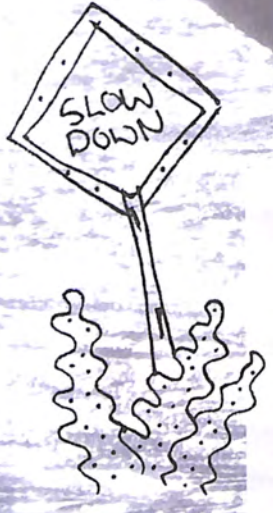
This orca kept coming up to Dad's camera for a look



DID YOU KNOW?... The word blubber comes from a Dutch word meaning to wobble!

It's awesome watching orca from on top of Dad's boat

DID YOU KNOW?... Orca are true mammals – they give birth to live young, provide milk for their young, are warm-blooded, breathe air and are even hairy. Until it's six months old, a young orca has between six and ten whiskers on its upper lip.



Although orca have no natural predators, it's us humans that threaten them, with increasing pressure on ecosystems and their food supplies, and with pollution levels affecting water quality. Jet-skis and boat engines can also be disruptive and dangerous to orca. It's important to remember that we are visitors to their world, and to be respectful.

These beautiful creatures should be left alone for us to admire and enjoy.

ORCA ARE SO AMAZING!...

I hope you're lucky enough to see one in the wild one day!

MAKI

ORCA

ORCINUS ORCA

Meet the GURUs

ORCA GURU >

DR INGRID VISSER

Nationality? Kiwi

Who do you work for?

Orca Research Trust (www.orcaresearch.org)

What did you want to do when you grew up? From about five or six years old all I wanted to do was work with orca. But I was told that the only way I could do that was to work at Seaworld. Even at that age I knew it was wrong to have orca in captivity, so I looked for a way to work with them in the wild.

Do you have any hobbies?

I love reading autobiographies and used to collect stamps, but now I only collect stamps that have orca on them.

Wow! so how long have you studied Orca for? Since 1992 officially, but I have absorbed every bit of information about them since I was a kid.

You must have been clever at school! I actually had real issues at school as I have dyslexia. I really struggled with spelling and maths.

You swim with Orca. You can't be scared of anything in the ocean!

Ha ha that's not true, I saw the movie Jaws as a kid and because of that I became terrified of sharks, but that doesn't keep me out of the ocean. In fact I'm now fascinated by sharks and swim with them as often as I can.

Has anyone inspired you? Three women scientists: Dr Diane Fossey (gorillas), Dr Jane Goodall (chimpanzees) and Dr Birutė Galdikas (orangutans). They respected the animals they studied and were willing to work with them in the wild.

What's the best and most satisfying part of your job? Getting to rescue orca and other cetaceans that have become stranded on the beach and to see the public become more aware and more caring about orca because of my research.

What's the worst part of your job? There is no worst part, but the hardest part is the constant struggle to find funding to keep the Trust going and to continue to research orca.

What do you want to achieve? I want to see better protection for animals in their natural habitat and no more orca in captivity.

DID YOU KNOW?... New Zealand orca are unique in that they eat a lot of sharks and stingrays. Scientists call this 'specialising' in a particular food. Antarctic orca eat lots of seals and penguins.

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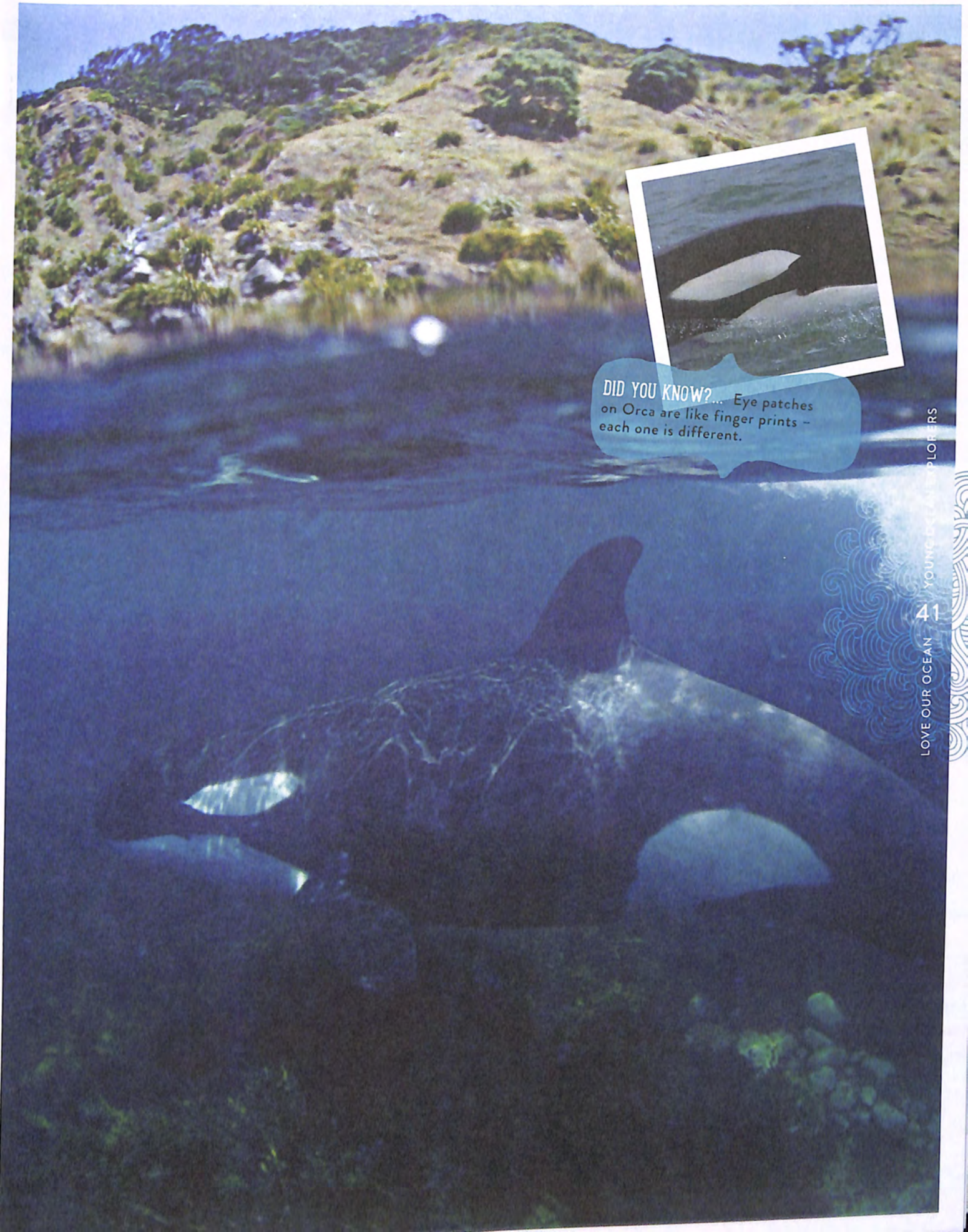
DID YOU KNOW?... Eye patches on Orca are like finger prints – each one is different.

Young Ocean Explorers TV Series:
Producer/Director: Craig Henderson (Symphony)
Producer/Writer: Steve Hathaway
Camera Operators: Matt Gerrand and Catriona Goodey
Camera Assistant: Frederick Muller
Editors: Julian Currin and Alex Mitchell
Sound mixes: Native Audio
Color Grading: Dave Gibson (Toybox)
Show Pilot Camera: Jared Brandon
Show Pilot Editing: Steven Baker

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M (Main photo) - T (Top) - R (Right)
C (Centre) - L (Left) - B (Bottom)
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www.youngoceanexplorers.co.nz

Hang out with us on...

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