

Emma Luck
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Heidi Pearson

2017 URECA Report

The goal of this project was to identify the most common killer whale ecotype in the Juneau area. Over 400 photographs of killer whales taken from the years 2012-2015 were collected from Juneau photographers and marine naturalists on various whale watching boats. The photos were analyzed and the killer whales were identified as either resident, transient, or offshore based on morphological characteristics. Additionally, the individual whales were compared to published killer whale identification catalogs and identified when possible.

As of this writing, the project is complete. It was found that resident killer whales are the most common ecotype seen in Juneau, followed by transients. Offshore killer whales were recorded once, which was a surprise as it is only the second record of them in Juneau.

In order to share the results of this project with the public, two posters were created. An 11 x 28 in poster was made with a selection of photographs that were sent in various people from around Juneau. The main poster was a 36 x 48 in conference style poster that showed the goals, methods, and results of the project. The posters were much cheaper than what was budgeted for, and thus, there was a surplus of roughly \$40. Both posters are currently on display in the UAS Anderson building.

Participating in this project was an extremely rewarding experience. I gained valuable experience in writing a grant proposals, creating budgets, establishing my own research methods, and communicating my results to the public in a clear and effective way. Most importantly, I was able to answer a question that I had been curious about for quite some time! I am grateful for the URECA program and for the opportunity to conduct my own research for the very first time.