

A remarkable story is unfolding in the Arctic. As the ice melts and the polar bear struggles to survive in a fast-warming world, another animal is rapidly moving into the northern regions of the planet, and it is starting to usurp the polar bear's dominant role. Welcome the new top predator of the Arctic: the killer whale.

For centuries, the Arctic has been dominated by an animal uniquely adapted to this brutal environment — the polar bear. It is perfectly insulated against the extreme cold and blessed with one of the most sensitive noses in nature.

But what happens when the environment that the polar bears are perfectly adapted to begins to change? In the last 50 years — and at an apparently accelerating rate — one third of the Arctic ice cap has melted, and more and more open sea is revealed in the summer months. The polar bear's home ground is vanishing from under its feet. Although classified as a marine mammal, it is not adapted to hunting in the water despite being able to swim huge distances. And polar bears are certainly no match for the world's greatest aquatic hunter — the orca or killer whale.

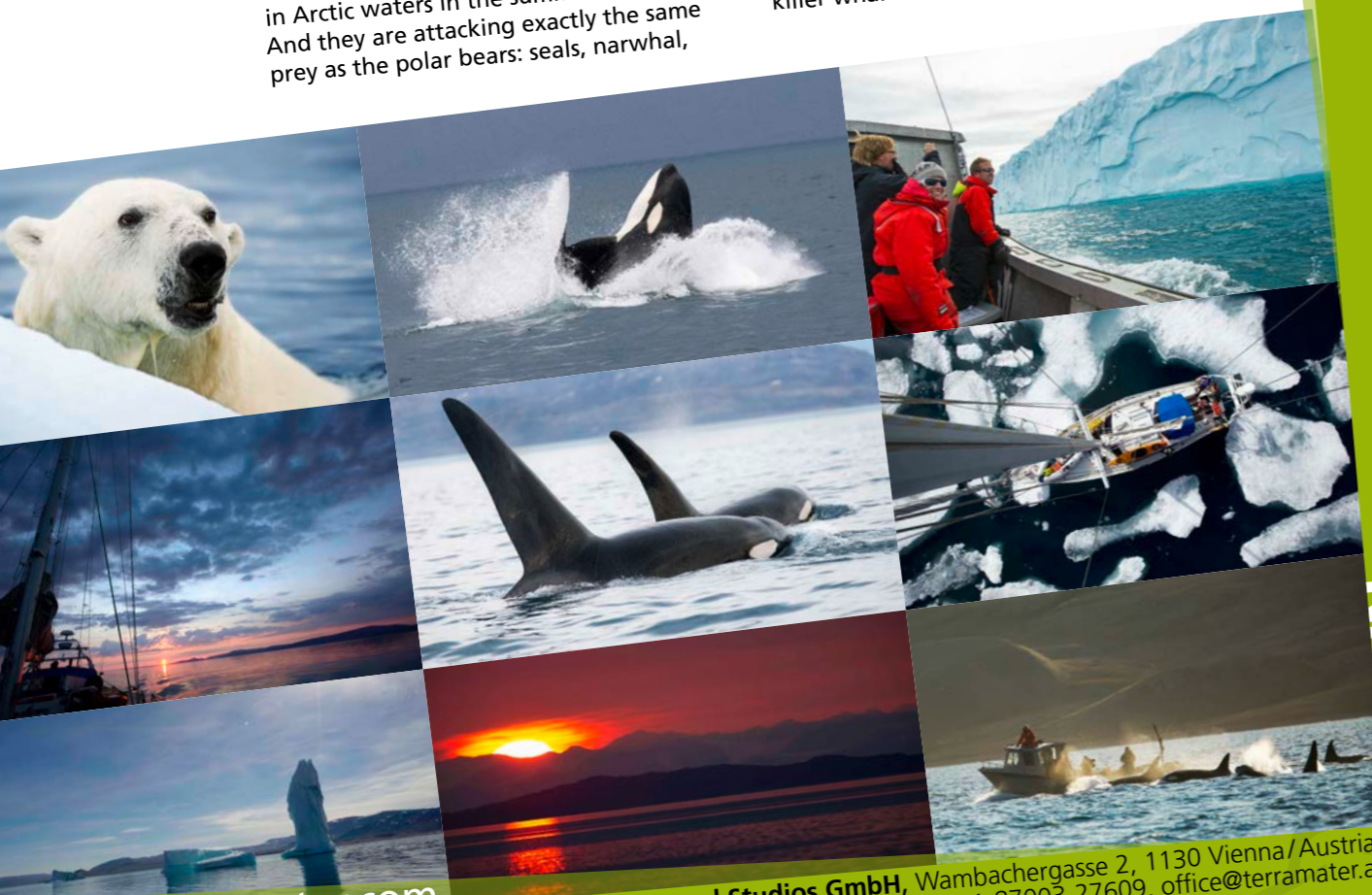
In the last few years, scientists have started noting an ever-growing number of orcas in Arctic waters in the summer months. And they are attacking exactly the same prey as the polar bears: seals, narwhal,

belugas and bowhead whales. As the polar bear's world is shrinking, the orca's is growing.

Professor Steve Ferguson has not limited his research to wildlife surveys. The local Inuit confirm his suspicion: they too have seen changes in behaviour and increasing orca predation on the local cetaceans. The lives of the Inuit are intimately entwined with this harsh and cold environment. The introduction of a new aquatic predator impacts their own hunting opportunities — in both a positive and negative way.

We accompany Steve on a summer trip deep into the Arctic waters — to film new behaviours, to meet the Inuit and learn from their first-hand experiences, and to try and understand the impact orcas are having on Arctic wildlife. Tagging the orcas helps to interpret their comings and goings. With the help of Steve's findings, we will explore the fast-changing world of the Arctic.

As the television premiere of this story, this documentary will be the first to chart the dramatic events as they unfold: the changing Arctic environment that pits one of the world's greatest land predators against one of the world's greatest ocean predators. Clear the ring for polar bears vs. killer whales.



NATURE



KILLER WHALES FINS OF CHANGE

1 x 53 min. | Written and directed by Ben Wallis

HD, 5.1 and Stereo | Executive producers: Ivo Filatsch, Sabine Holzer



TERRA MATER
Factual Studios

www.terramater.com

Terra Mater Factual Studios GmbH, Wambachergasse 2, 1130 Vienna/Austria,
phone +43-1-87003-0, fax +43-1-87003-27609, office@terramater.at