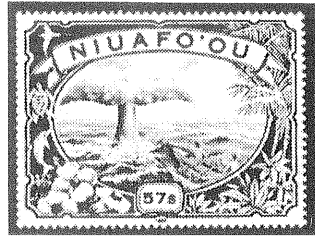


*Beauty, Grace, and Diversity***Whales, Dolphins, and Porpoises***Dagmar Fertl and Stephen Pomes*

Cetaceans (pronounced *suh-tay-shuns*) are highly adapted aquatic mammals, more commonly known to most people as whales, dolphins, and porpoises. They are a diverse group of at least 70 species of toothed whales (odontocetes) and at least 13 species of baleen whales (mysticetes) ranging in size from under five feet to over 90 feet in length. Cetaceans are ecologically diverse; they live in rivers and oceans and in tropical and polar latitudes.

The first known cetaceans evolved approximately 50 million years ago from land mammals which were related to the ancestors of the modern-day ungulates (hoofed mammals). Baleen and toothed whales differ from one another by anatomy, physiology, and ecology. Toothed whales are all thought to be capable of echolocation, using sound to navigate and locate food. Instead of teeth, baleen whales capture their prey using baleen which are plates of keratin (the protein humans have in their fingernails and hair) hanging from the inside of the upper jaw of the animal. The fringes on the baleen whales are used to filter small schooling fish or invertebrates (such as zooplankton) from the water.

All cetaceans are whales, either baleen or toothed, but the term "whale" to many means a larger-sized cetacean like the baleen whales and the sperm whale. Four families of baleen whales are recognized by morphology (body shape) and feeding style. They include the Finback (Senegal, *Scott C118*), and the Bowhead or Greenland Right Whale (Greenland, *Scott 66*). Feeding methods used by baleen whales include the bottom-feeding Gray Whale (Guyana, *Scott 3481*) which sucks its prey from the mud, while Blue Whales (British Antarctic Territory, *Scott 67*; South Georgia, *Scott 15*) skim their prey by actively lunging with their mouths open wide



**Whale Diving Beneath Outrigger
Niuafo'ou (*Scott 130*)**

to capture small fishes and krill.

Nine families of toothed whales are currently recognized, though this number depends on the taxonomic approach. With the exception of the sperm whales (Norfolk Island, *Scott 783*) that can reach lengths of at least 56 feet, toothed whales are small to medium-sized cetaceans. The toothed whales include Sperm Whales, Beaked Whales, Porpoises (Romania, *Scott 214*), Dolphins (Jamaica, *Scott 686*), Beluga Whales, and the Narwhal whose males have a long, spiralled "tusk" (Canada, *Scott 480*).

Many people ask "what is the difference between a dolphin and a porpoise?" The public often uses these terms interchangeably, but scientists place these animals in two different families. Dolphins have distinctive snouts or beaks and cone-shaped teeth, whereas porpoises have a smooth forehead lacking beaks and have flattened, spade-shaped teeth.

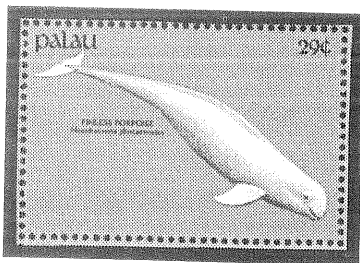
To add further confusion, there is a fish called "dolphin" seen on restaurant menus which is known also as mahi-mahi or dorado; therefore many fishermen refer to "dolphins" as "porpoises" to avoid confusing the mammal with the fish. The dolphin family is the largest of the cetacean families, with about 33 species. This group includes the familiar Bot-



**A Pair of Blue Whales
British Antarctic Territory (*Scott 67*)**



**Aggressive Killer Whale
Bulgaria (*Scott 3666*)**



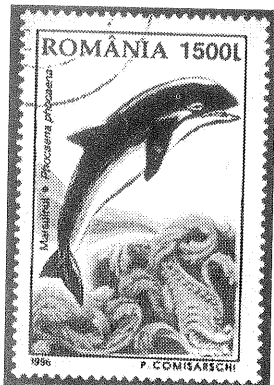
Finless Porpoise
Palau (*Scott 289i*)

tenose Dolphin ("Flipper"); recently recognized species, such as the Clymene Dolphin (officially recognized as a species since 1981); and the largest member of the family, the Killer Whale which can be extremely aggressive and feeds on warm-blooded animals (Bulgaria, *Scott 3666*; Senegal, *Scott C116*).

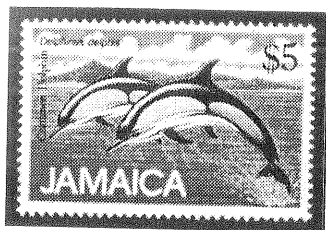
Cetaceans enthrall many people and the interest in these ocean dwellers continues to spark our imagination. There appears to be a shift in focus from killing these animals to a more aesthetic interest, at least for some countries and peoples. Postage stamps offer a novel means of promoting the conservation of cetaceans (and their environment) by stimulating public awareness of these animals and highlighting their beauty, biology, grace, and diversity.

We have compiled a detailed and annotated list of stamps containing cetacean images through the year 2003. We included the issuing country, *Scott* catalog number, cetacean species, description of the issue, and denomination of the stamp. We thoroughly reviewed the *Scott* stamp catalogue, the ATA checklist, and studied many articles, books, and the Internet to verify catalog listings.

The popularity of issuing stamps depicting whales, dolphins, and porpoises is evident;



Porpoises Have Smooth Foreheads
Romania (*Scott 214*)

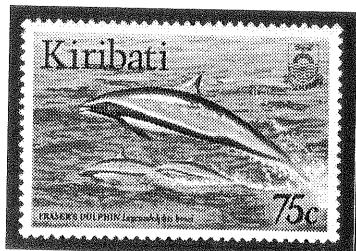


Synchronizing Common Dolphins
Jamaica (*Scott 686*)

our survey yielded 1,478 images (some stamps depicted multiple species on the same stamp) from 173 countries or stamp-issuing authorities. Grenada had the most images (81), followed by Gambia (53), the Turks and Caicos (39), Palau (39), Ghana (31), Sierra Leone (31), and Tanzania (31). Several resource-poor countries produce topical stamps, seeing them as a useful form of income since they are collected and not used.

In May 1901, the United States was the first country to issue a stamp with a cetacean depiction (*Scott 299*); it is a tiny stylized dolphin within the frame of the stamp that depicts fast ocean navigation as part of the Pan-American Exposition issue. Since then, the presence of cetaceans on stamps has dramatically increased, particularly since the early 1980s, with a noteworthy peak in the 1990s. This also coincides with the general marketing growth of marine mammal images through the 1980s and 1990s.

Many stamps feature cetaceans as the main subject; others are shown as part of a composite image on souvenir sheets or in the border design. Many images reflect an increased awareness and interest in cetaceans as well as marine life in general. In particular, the 1998 International Year of the Ocean generated many depictions of cetaceans. In our study, some stamps display ancient cetaceans, the role of cetaceans in culture and art, and conservation/management-related issues such as whaling and ecotourism. Interestingly, many stamp issues had no relevance to cetaceans, yet an image of this group of animals was included in the souvenir sheet.



Spinner Dolphin Is Spinning
Kiribati (*Scott 676*)



**Sperm Whale With Giant Squibb
South West Africa (Scott 440)**

Over 1,260 stamps depict cetaceans where species identity could be determined. A number of stamps incorrectly depict a species, often taking artistic license with the animal's image or behaviors which made verification of species identifications difficult and oftentimes amusing to the experienced cetacean biologist.

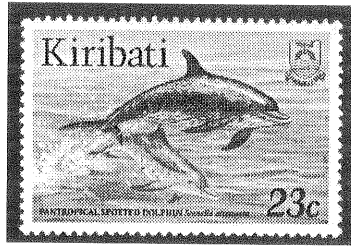
Over 60 species of cetaceans are represented on stamps, with the humpback whale (Norfolk Island, *Scott 575*) being the most popular species featured on 164 stamps. This is followed by the Sperm Whale (111), Killer Whale (106), and Bottlenose Dolphin (104). Lesser-known species, such as Fraser's Dolphin (Kiribati, *Scott 677*), occasionally appear on stamps. Over 160 stamps were of stylized whales or dolphins where we were unable to determine a species identity. Stylized and heraldic dolphins and whales were sometimes part of a coat of arms (Barbados, *Scott 290*; France, *Scott 621*), and on flags and banners (Sweden, *Scott 197-208*). Twenty-four stamps feature cartoon dolphins or whales (Gambia, *Scott 1736*).

Interest in marine mammals continues to grow, and the marketing of marine mammals has proliferated. Such is the case with the depiction of marine mammals as an art form. Postage stamps offer a novel means of promoting the conservation of whales, dolphins, and porpoises, as well as stimulating an interest in their biology.

We thank Kathy Foley and Samuel Hung for their assistance in obtaining Chinese stamp



**Humpback Whale Breaching
Norfolk Island (Scott 575)**



**Pantropical Spotted Dolphin
Kiribati (Scott 675)**

articles. Ingrid Visser allowed us to view her large stamp collection.*

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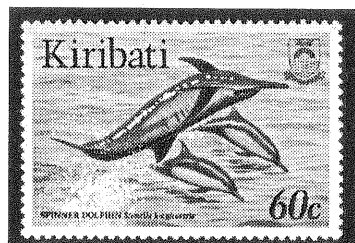
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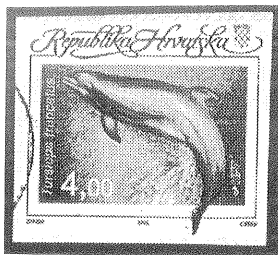
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**Sperm Whale With Calf
Norfolk Island (Scott 783)**



**Fraser's Dolphin Rarely Seen
Kiribati (Scott 677)**



**Flipper Is a Bottlenose Dolphin
Croatia (Scott 249)**

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More on Whales and Dolphins

The earliest checklist on whales on stamps was published in the May-June 1958 issue of *Topical Time*, and Betty Rutherford published an article on whales depicted on pictorial cancellations published in the March-April 1988 issue of *Topical Time*.

Legends of whales and dolphins are described in Frederick P. Schmitt's *The Whale's Tale As Told on Postage Stamps* (Picton Publishing, Great Britain, 1975). There are at least a half-dozen mentions of whales in the *Bible* beginning with the Book of Genesis which records, "God created great whales." But no *Bible* story is more fascinating than that of Jonah and the Whale which is depicted on 1963 stamps of Israel (Scott 242-244).

There is no more fitting tribute to the whale than Herman Melville's immortal 1851 novel, *Moby Dick*, which was originally published under the title of *The Whale*. This was commemorated by a U.S. stamped envelope (Scott U554).

Many ancient Greek and Roman legends center around dolphin lore. In the fable of the "Voyage of Dionysos," Apollo supposedly turned himself into a dolphin to save some Cretans lost in a terrible storm. Pliny described the story of a boy named Hermias who loved to ride on the back of a dolphin which is depicted on a 1929 stamp of the Netherlands (Scott B37-B40).



Dagmar Fertl received a Master's degree from Texas A&M University, and currently works for Geo-Marine, Inc, an environmental consulting firm in the Dallas area. She has authored a number of scientific publications as well as two children's nonfiction books on terrestrial animals. She recently became interested in the diversity of animals pictured on postage stamps worldwide. Her mailing address is Geo-Marine, Inc., 550 East 15th Street, Plano, Texas 75074.

Stephen Pomes holds a B.A. in history from the University of New Orleans, and a Master's degree in library and information science from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. For the last eleven years he has been the librarian at the New Orleans office of the Minerals Management Service, an agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior.

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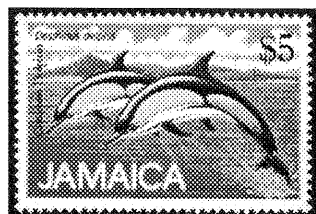
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Plus Annual Index



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