

STUDIES ON THE FAUNA OF CURAÇAO AND OTHER  
CARIBBEAN ISLANDS: No. 160.

PRELIMINARY LIST OF THE CETACEANS  
OF THE SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN

by

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Students working at the Caribbean Marine Biological Institute (CARMABI) on the island of Curaçao asked the present author to provide them with a list of Cetacea occurring in the Caribbean. Until recently, compiling such a list was of little use as our knowledge concerning the cetaceans in the area was very poor indeed. During the last few years, however, mainly through the studies by D. K. CALDWELL, M. C. CALDWELL and their collaborators on the lesser cetaceans taken by the small whaling industry on the island of St. Vincent, so much information has become available that it may be now useful to publish a preliminary checklist and a selected bibliography. The preliminary character of this publication must be emphasized, however, and the paper must be seen as a short introduction to the subject for the use of local students. In connection with the last mentioned use, in addition to the Latin and English names, the Dutch names of the cetaceans are given.

Because of inadequate knowledge, the northern part of the Caribbean (the area between Cuba, Jamaica, the coasts of Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and the eastern side of Mexican Yucatán) has not been included.

Besides using published records and his own notes, the author has made use of unpublished sight-records by Captain W. F. J. MÖRZER BRUYNS, Drs. R. VAN HALEWIJN, and Drs. D. M. C. POPPE. I gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of these gentlemen. I also want to thank Dr. W. F. PERRIN and Prof. D. K. CALDWELL for critically reading an early draft of this paper.

It is evident that we are still in the initial phases of the study of Cetacea in the Caribbean. It is therefore of great importance that biologists and interested laymen

in close cooperation collect as much information as possible about whales and dolphins from the area. It also should be made clear to the local authorities that stranded cetaceans represent important scientific material from which much can be learned instead of being only odiferous sources of possible hazards to public health. Furthermore it would be most useful if the work on Cetacea by zoologists of all the nations situated around the Caribbean could be coordinated by an international organization as, for example, A.I.M.L.C. (Association Island Marine Laboratories in the Caribbean) or C.I.C.A.R. (Cooperative Investigations of the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions); the latter being a UNESCO-sponsored organization, which has done much useful work in the area recently.

#### MYSTICETI

##### **Balaenoptera musculus** (Linnaeus, 1758)

Blue Whale, Blauwe Vinvis.

Cristóbal, Panamá (HARMER, 1923).

##### **Balaenoptera physalus** (Linnaeus, 1758)

Fin Whale, Gewone Vinvis.

Sightings at sea (SLIJPER *et al.*, 1964).

##### **Balaenoptera borealis** Lesson, 1828

Sei Whale, Noordse Vinvis.

Sightings at sea (SLIJPER *et al.*, 1964; ERDMAN, 1970 and ERDMAN *et al.*, 1973).

##### **Balaenoptera edeni** Anderson, 1878 (Synonym: *Balaenoptera brydei* Olsen, 1912)

Bryde's Whale, Bryde's Vinvis.

Caught near Grenada, stranded on Curaçao (SOOT-RYEN, 1961).

##### **Balaenoptera acutorostrata** Lacépède, 1804

Minke Whale or Piked Whale, Dwergvinvis.

Not yet observed but may occur. A stranding known from the Surinam coast (SLIJPER *et al.*, 1964).

**Megaptera novaeangliae** (Borowski, 1781)

Humpback Whale, Bultrug.

Sightings at sea (SLIJPER *et al.*, 1964), observed near Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (ERDMAN, 1970; ERDMAN *et al.*, 1973), observed and caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971).

## ODONTOCETI

**Physeter macrocephalus** Linnaeus, 1758

Sperm Whale, Potvis.

Sightings at sea (SLIJPER *et al.*, 1964), observed near Puerto Rico (ERDMAN, 1970), stranded on Puerto Rico and Hispaniola (ERDMAN *et al.*, 1973), caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971), stranded on Curaçao.

**Kogia breviceps** (de Blainville, 1838)

Pygmy Sperm Whale, Dwergpotvis.

Not yet observed but may occur.

**Kogia simus** (Owen, 1866)

Dwarf Sperm Whale, no Dutch name.

Caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1973).

**Ziphius cavirostris** G. Cuvier, 1823

Cuvier's Beaked Whale, Dolfijn van Cuvier.

Sightings at sea, strandings on Puerto Rico (ERDMAN, 1970; ERDMAN *et al.*, 1973), on Barbados (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971), St. Martin (VAN BREE *et al.*, 1973), Curaçao (VAN BREE *et al.*, 1973), Bonaire (VAN BREE & KRISTENSEN, 1974), caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971).

**Mesoplodon europaeus** (Gervais, 1855)

Gervais' Beaked Whale, no Dutch name.

Stranding on Trinidad (FRASER, 1955), strandings on Jamaica (RANKIN, 1953; CALDWELL, 1965).

**Mesoplodon densirostris** (de Blainville, 1817)

Blainville's Beaked Whale, no Dutch name.

Not yet observed but may occur.

**Orcinus orca** (Linnaeus, 1758)

Killer Whale, Zwaardwalvis.

Sightings at sea, observed near St. Thomas (ERDMAN, 1970), caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971).

**Pseudorca crassidens** (Owen, 1846)

False Killer Whale, Zwarte Zwaardwalvis.

Sightings at sea, stranded on one of the Islas Las Aves (MILLER, 1912), caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971).

**Globicephala macrorhynchus** Gray, 1846

Short-finned Pilot Whale, Tropische Griend.

Sightings at sea (see e.g. CALDWELL & ERDMAN, 1963; ERDMAN *et al.*, 1973), mass stranding on Nevis (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1970), caught near or stranded on Barbados (TURNER, 1912), caught near or stranded on Guadeloupe, caught in large numbers near St. Lucia, Dominica and St. Vincent (MORICE, 1958; CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971).

**Feresa attenuata** Gray, 1875

Pygmy Killer Whale, Dwerg Zwaardwalvis.

Caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971).

**Peponocephala electra** (Gray, 1846)

Melon-headed Dolphin, no Dutch name.

Not yet observed but may occur.

**Delphinus delphis** Linnaeus, 1758

Common Dolphin, Gewone Dolfijn.

Sightings at sea, observed near Antigua (ERDMAN, 1970), caught near or stranded on Jamaica (TRUE, 1889), stranded on or caught near Isla de Barlovento (Las Aves) (VAN HALEWIJN & VAN BREE, 1972).

**Stenella coeruleoalba** (Meyen, 1833)

Striped Dolphin, Gestreepte Dolfijn.

Sightings at sea (e.g. between Curaçao and Bonaire on March 13, 1972 – see Figure 174), caught near or stranded on Jamaica (TRUE, 1889).

**Stenella species**

Spotted Dolphins, Gevlekte Dolfijnen.

At least two taxa of Spotted Dolphins can be recognized in the Atlantic and the Caribbean. The available names are *Stenella attenuata* (Gray, 1846), *Stenella dubia* (G. Cuvier, 1812), *Stenella frontalis* (G. Cuvier, 1829), and *Stenella plagiodon* (Cope, 1866), but as long as the taxonomic problems concerning the taxa are not solved it is better to refrain from using latin names.

Sightings at sea, observed near St. Croix (see Figure 175), observed near Puerto Rico and near the Virgin Islands (ERDMAN, 1970; ERDMAN *et al.*, 1973), caught near or stranded on Barbados (TURNER, 1912), caught off the coast of Venezuela (MITCHELL, 1970), stranded on the coast of Venezuela, caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971).



**Stenella longirostris** (Gray, 1828)

Spinner Dolphin, no Dutch name.

Sightings at sea, observed near Puerto Rico (ERDMAN *et al.*, 1973), caught near or stranded on Isla de Margarita (VAN HALEWIJN & VAN BREE, 1972), caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971).

A closely related and possibly still undescribed taxon may also occur in the Caribbean (LEATHERWOOD *et al.*, in press). It is too early yet to take that taxon into account in this preliminary review.

**Tursiops truncatus** (Montagu, 1821)

Bottle-nosed Dolphin, Tuimelaar.

Sightings at sea, observed around Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (ERDMAN, 1970; ERDMAN *et al.*, 1973), caught near or stranded on Barbados (TURNER, 1912), stranded on Trinidad (BACON & VAN BREE, in Ms), caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971), caught near La Blanquilla off Venezuela (CALDWELL & CALDWELL, 1971).

**Grampus griseus** (G. Cuvier, 1812)

Risso's Dolphin, Grijze Dolfijn.

Sightings at sea, observed near St. Croix (ERDMAN, 1970), caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971).

**Steno bredanensis** (Lesson, 1828)

Rough-toothed Dolphin, Snaveldolfijn.

Caught near St. Vincent (CALDWELL *et al.*, 1971).

Fig. 174. Striped Dolphins (*Stenella coeruleoalba*) observed between Curaçao and Bonaire on March 13, 1972.

Fig. 175. Spotted Dolphins (*Stenella spec.*) observed N.E. of St. Croix (about 17°45' N, 64°16' W) on October 5, 1972.

[Both photographs taken by Mr. D. M. C. POPPE, Free University, Amsterdam.]

**Sotalia fluviatilis** (Gervais, 1855)

Tucuxi, Suriname Dolfijn.

Stranded at the border of Lake Maracaibo (HERSHKOVITZ, 1963), stranded on Trinidad (BACON & VAN BREE, in Ms).

## INCERTA SEDIS

**Inia geoffrensis** (de Blainville, 1817)

Boutu, Zuid Amerikaanse Rivierdolfijn.

A lower jaw of a specimen is said to have been found on Isla de Margarita (TREBBAU & VAN BREE, 1974).

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