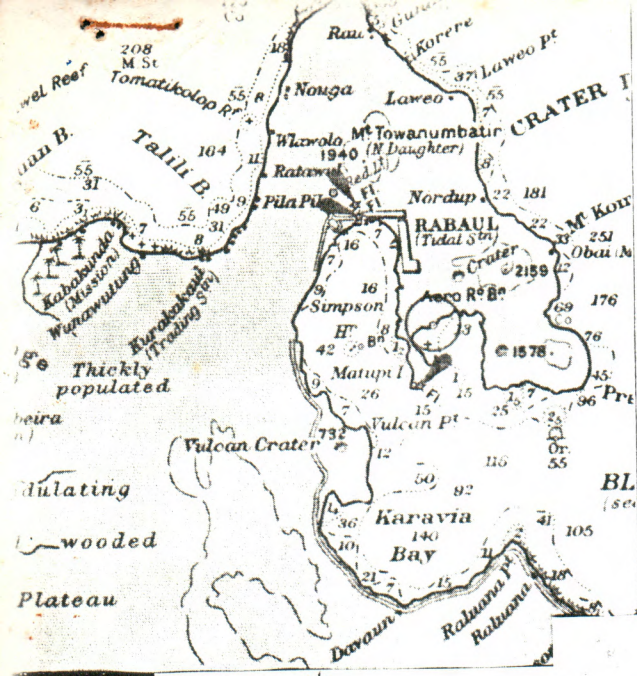
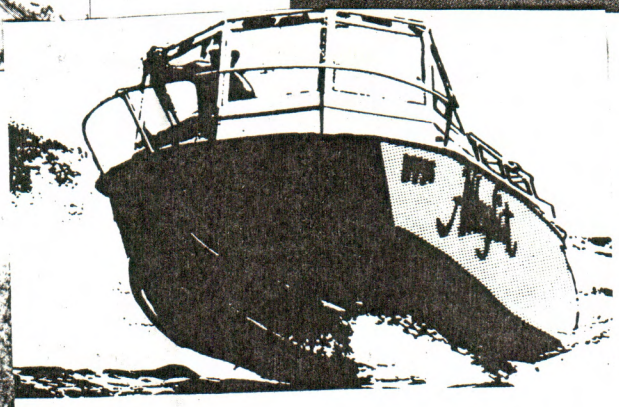
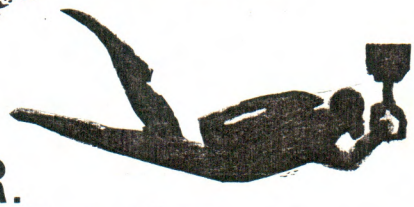
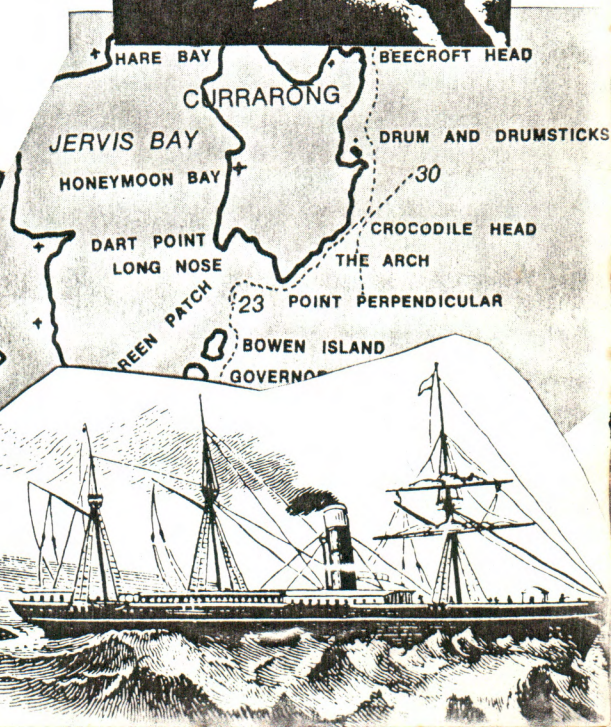




SOUTH PACIFIC DIVERS CLUB

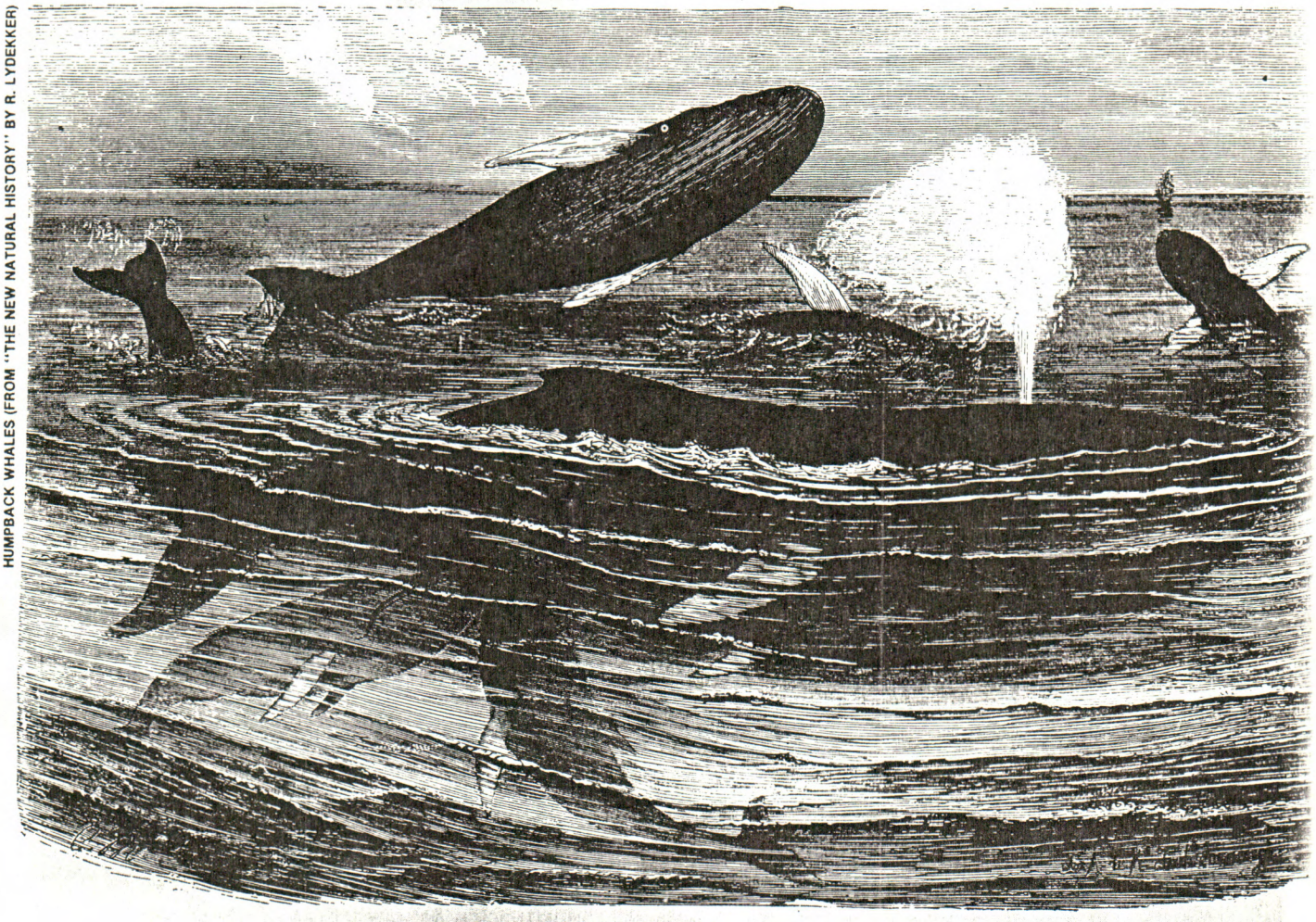


NEWSLETTER.



A Coast-Watching Scheme for Marine Mammals

from the South Australian Museum



HUMPBACK WHALES (FROM "THE NEW NATURAL HISTORY" BY R. LYDEKKER)

It was proposed at a recent symposium held in Adelaide on endangered species of Australasian wildlife that the great public interest in marine mammals should be harnessed into a coast-watching system to improve our knowledge of these fascinating creatures of the sea. These include the dugong of northern Australia, several species of seals along our southern coasts and whales and dolphins almost anywhere around Australian and New Zealand shores.

Many reports of marine mammal strandings and sightings are already made to museums and wildlife authorities, and these have resulted in some very important discoveries about marine mammal visitors to this region. However, it is believed that a public appeal for more of such information, coupled with assitance from the experts as to how and what to report, plus simple identification guides, should greatly increase the coverage of our long coastline by a network of voluntary whale watchers — although we don't want them to just report whales.

Most reports are the result of chance findings. Very, very rarely can one set out at a certain time to look for whales at a particular spot along the coast and be successful. They are so mobile and remote that they are very rarely seen from land. Seals are more sedentary and there are of course many seal colonies on islands in southern Australasia. Nevertheless, seals occasionally come ashore (i.e. haul out) on mainland beaches or enter bays and inlets as far north as Coffs Harbour in New South Wales and Shark Bay in Western Australia.

Armed with appropriate information and guidance, travellers to remote parts of our coast may be in a position to report findings of marine mammals which will greatly assist our better understanding of the distribution, biology and status of these animals.

Accurate reports of animals actually stranded on the shore are the most valuable from a scientific point of view. Chance sightings at sea which cannot be positively identified are of little use.

WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A SIGHTING

1. REPORT THE FINDING IMMEDIATELY BY TELEPHONE TO THE NEAREST FISHERIES AND/OR WILDLIFE OFFICE OR THE MUSEUM IN THE STATE WHERE THE ANIMAL WAS FOUND.

The primary objective of the scheme is to alert experts as quickly as possible to the presence of a marine mammal that may be of interest to science — particularly in the case of a stranded species, whether it is alive or dead. If alive the animal **may** be saved; if dead it must be examined as quickly as possible before decomposition proceeds too far. This is particularly important from the point of view of getting fresh material for the examination of stomach contents, breeding condition, and other autopsy material which may throw light on the cause of stranding.

2. REPORT THE LOCALITY EXACTLY.

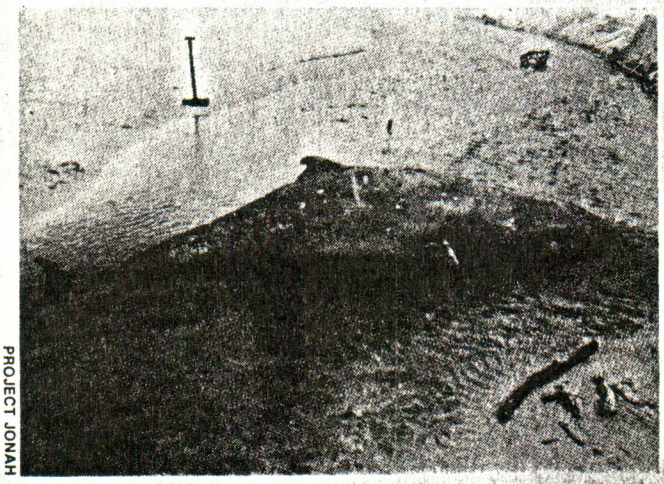
Make careful notes of **exactly** where the animal was found in relation to the nearest town and road, etc., and also relative to tide height.

3. AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, TAKE GOOD COLOUR OR BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS, OR MAKE AN ANNOTATED SKETCH OF YOUR FIND.

Good sketches or photographs of live or freshly dead marine mammals are very important for identification. Side-on photos of the whole animal, as well as close-ups of the head, fins and flippers, are essential; additional photos of any wounds or other unusual features are also desirable. Be sure to provide something to indicate size either by having someone stand by or by placing an object of known size next to the animal.

4. SOME ATTEMPT SHOULD BE MADE TO ASSIST THE AUTHORITIES IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANIMAL SO THAT ITS IMPORTANCE CAN BE ASSESSED AND A DECISION MADE REGARDING RECOVERY OPERATIONS, OR OTHER PROCEDURES.

This pygmy sperm whale, a comparatively unknown species, stranded and died on Sunshine Beach north of Brisbane despite attempts by residents to return it to the sea.



PROJECT JONAH

Compare the animal with the silhouette figures accompanying this article and refer to them when reporting the find, as this may help the experts to make a preliminary identification and thereby gauge the importance of the discovery. Do not mutilate it in any way or remove anything from it.

In the case of toothed whales, count the number of teeth on **one** side of the upper or lower jaw, beginning with the first tooth just off centre at the tip of the jaw. Refer to the accompanying table for possible identity.

If the animal is alive do not disturb it — particularly if it is a seal; otherwise it may attack you or go back to sea before it can be identified or even photographed. However, in the case of a whale that is still alive, immediate assistance should be sought with a view to returning it to the sea.

5. COLLECT IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Of all the information which can be obtained from stranded marine mammals the following is the most useful:—

Species
Date of stranding, capture or discovery
Time of stranding or capture
Locality
Number of individuals
Sex of each
Condition
Length (tip of upper jaw to tip of tail (seals) or notch (whales).)
Number and longitudinal extent of throat grooves (whales)
Number of teeth each side of jaw (whales)
Colour description (plus diagram or photograph)
Remarks (circumstances of stranding etc.)
Observer's name and address
WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN. DO NOT RELY ON MEMORY.

IDENTIFYING MARINE MAMMALS AT SEA

Identification of marine mammals at sea requires a lot of experience and skill, since so little of any animal is usually visible, the water may be rough, or they are moving too quickly.

However the nature of the spout, shape of the back and method of diving together provide a good key to the identify of the great whales.

These are depicted in the Blowing and Diving Figure.

Useful information about marine mammals at sea includes the date, time and place of the sighting; their identity, number, size, composition (i.e. presence of young); and direction and speed of travel.

Acknowledgements

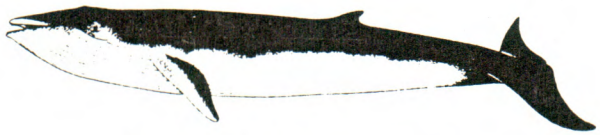
Grateful acknowledgement is expressed to the Biological Society of Victoria, University of Wellington, New Zealand, for permission to reproduce the figures of the cetaceans used in this article. These pictures were first published by the Society in their book "New Zealand Whales and Dolphins" by Dr Alan N. Baker, National Museum of N.Z., to whom thanks are also due for his help and approval to use his illustrations which were prepared for publication by Roman Ruehle. The seal and dugong figures were drawn from photographs by Jenni Thurmer who also designed the lay-out of the pictorial charts and prepared the Blowing and Diving Figure. The final lay-out was prepared by Ralph Prentice.

SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE *Balaena glacialis australis*
up to 18 metres

SOUTHERN BLUE WHALE *Balaenoptera musculus intermedia*
up to 31 metres

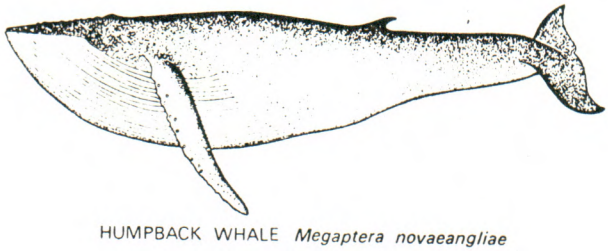
SOUTHERN FINBACK WHALE *Balaenoptera physalis quoyi*
up to 25 metres

SEI WHALE *Balaenoptera borealis schlegeli*
up to 18 metres



MINKE WHALE *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*
up to 10 metres

BRYDE'S WHALE *Balaenoptera edeni*
up to 16 metres

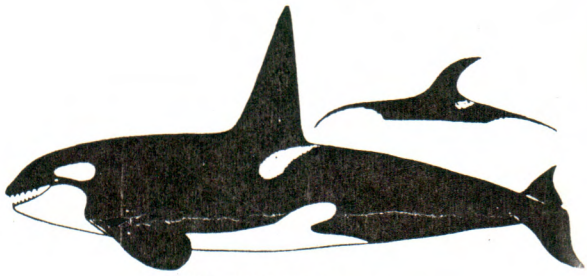


HUMPBACK WHALE *Megaptera novaeangliae*
up to 16 metres

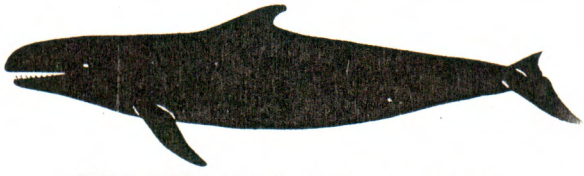
PYGMY RIGHT WHALE *Caperea marginata*
up to 6 metres

SPERM WHALE *Physeter catodon*
12 to 19 metres

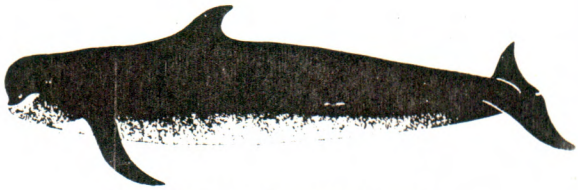
PYGMY SPERM WHALE *Kogia breviceps*
up to 4 metres



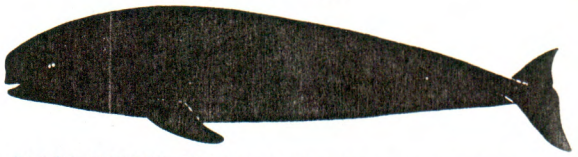
KILLER WHALE *Orcinus orca*
up to 10 metres



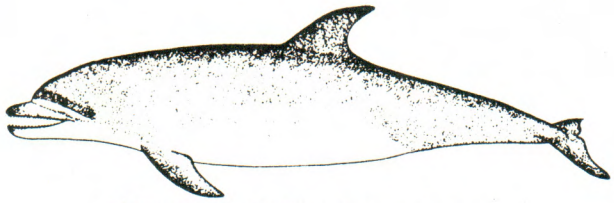
FALSE KILLER WHALE *Pseudorca crassidens*
up to 5 metres



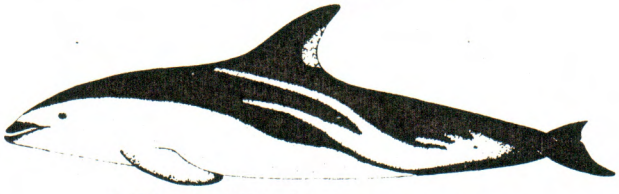
PILOT WHALE *Globicephala melaena*
up to 8 metres



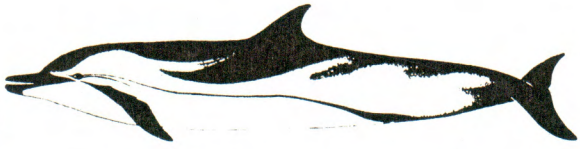
BLACK FINLESS PORPOISE *Neophocaena phocaenoides*
up to 1·5 metres



BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN *Tursiops truncatus*
up to 4 metres

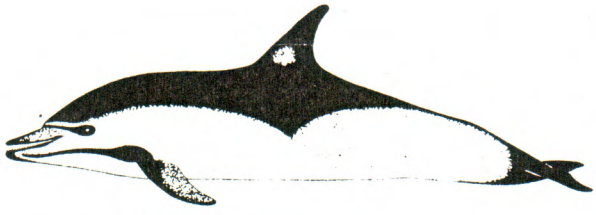


DUSKY DOLPHIN *Lagenorhynchus obscurus*
up to 3 metres

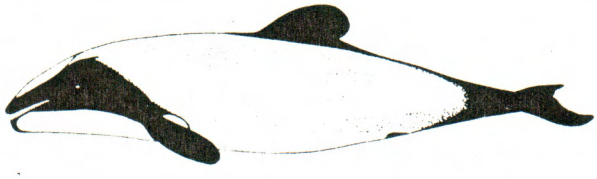


STRIPED DOLPHIN *Stenella caeruleoalba*
up to 3 metres

RIGHT WHALE DOLPHIN *Lissodelphis peroni*
up to 3 metres



COMMON DOLPHIN *Delphinus delphis*
up to 3 metres



HECTOR'S DOLPHIN *Cephalorhynchus hectori*
up to 1·5 metres

RISSOS DOLPHIN *Grampus griseus*
up to 4 metres

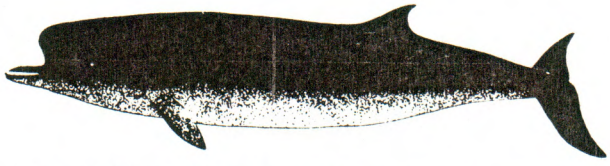
SHEPHERD'S BEAKED WHALE *Tasmacetus shepherdi*
up to 9 metres

CUVIER'S BEAKED WHALE *Ziphius cavirostris*
up to 8 metres

SCAMPERDOWN WHALE *Mesoplodon grayi*
up to 4 metres

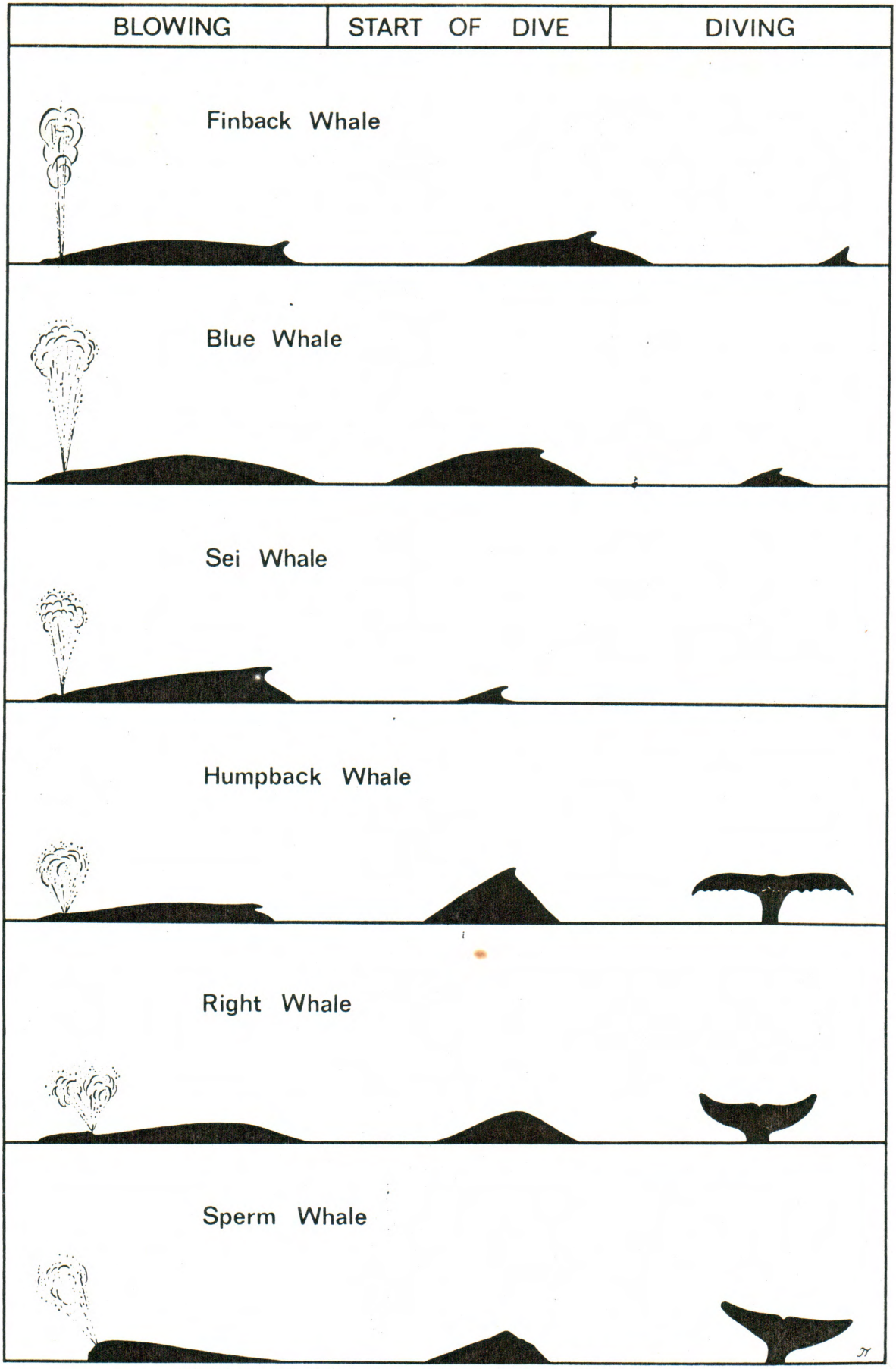
STRAP-TOOTHED WHALE *Mesoplodon layardi*
up to 6 metres

LARGE BEAKED WHALE *Berardius arnouxi*
up to 10 metres



SOUTHERN BOTTLENOSE WHALE *Hyperoodon planifrons*
up to 10 metres

DUGONG *Dugong dugon*
up to 3 metres



Blowing and diving characteristics of some large whales