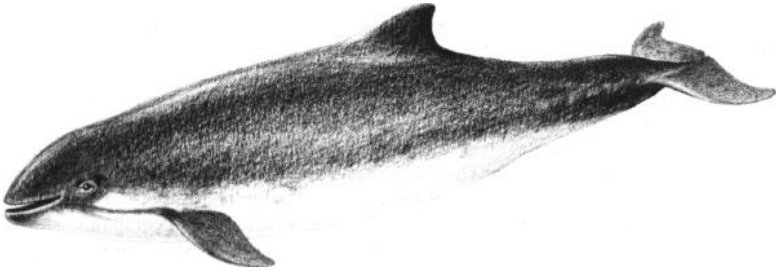


HARBOR PORPOISE

Phocoena phocoena



This small, chunky, beakless species reaches a length of 6 feet and a weight of 160 pounds. (Newborn calves are about one-half the mother's length.) Its color is dark gray to nearly black on the back, fading to light gray or white on the underside, sometimes with a pinkish cast on the belly. There is a black or gray line from the corner of the mouth to the flipper. The dorsal fin is low and triangular; most other dolphins found off California have a much higher fin and one that is falcate.

This is the Pacific relative of the Atlantic harbor, or comon porpoise, a familiar species around the British Isles. The latter was the first to be given the name of porpoise, derived from the Latin *porcus piscis*, or "pig fish". Porpoises are sometimes known in Great Britain today as "herring hogs," from their habit of robbing the herring nets.

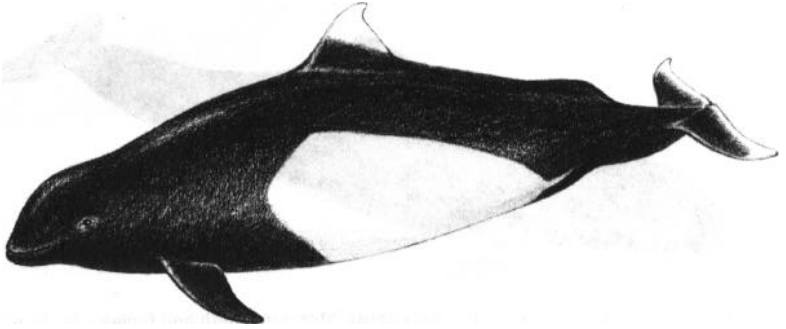
In the Pacific, the harbor porpoise ranges from Pt. Barrow, Alaska, to central California. (San Luis Obispo Co.) and occasionally into southern California. It frequents bays and harbors and other inshore waters, occasionally even running up rivers. A small porpoise seen in San Francisco Bay would almost certainly be this one; I do not know of any records from San Diego Bay and only one from Los Angeles Harbor. It has been reported offshore as far as 20 miles. It rarely runs with a boat, and rarely if ever jumps clear of the water.

The food of the harbor porpoise consists mainly of fishes, with some squid and an occasional clam or crustacean. The fishes are primarily bottom-dwelling forms.

In 1958, a new species of harbor porpoise, *Phocoena sinus*, was named from the Gulf of California. It is mentioned here because so many Californians visit the Gulf. It is smaller than the Californian species, 5 feet or less in length, and some at least are brown rather than blackish above. Porpoises at Banderas Bay, in the state of Jalisco (further down the coast of the mainland of Mexico), and at the nearby Tres Marias Islands, formerly thought to be the same as the California one, are instead probably the new species. While the describers of this species saw some live ones, the only specimens they were able to collect were three skulls found on the beach at San Felipe.

DALL PORPOISE

Phocoenoides dallii



The Dall porpoise is a small, chunky, beakless species, a typical porpoise (as opposed to the dolphin type). It reaches a length of 7 to 7 - 1/2 feet and a weight of 450 to 475 pounds. Dall porpoises range from off Japan into the Bering Sea and south to central Baja California. They are year-round residents in the northeastern Pacific but range further south and nearer to shore during winter months.

It is a rapid and vigorous swimmer. According to one writer, "It is among the easiest of small cetaceans to identify from a distance by the habit of literally throwing itself along through the water." It is certainly an easy animal to identify when seen close enough to make out the pattern. It is black, with a sharply contrasting large white area extending from the midline of the belly high up on the side. The dorsal fin usually has a light posterior margin, though it is not as white as the area on the side. No other cetacean found in California has such a conspicuous pattern with the exception of the killer whale. The almost triangular dorsal fin is comparatively low.

The Dall porpoise usually occurs in small groups of 2 to 12 individuals, but sometimes in schools of 200 or more. It will sometimes run with a ship. It feeds on squid, mainly, but remains of hake, herring, saury, jack mackerel and deepwater fishes also have been found in their stomachs.

Some marine mammalogists believe the harbor, Dall, and other true porpoises should be placed in a separate family, Phocoenidae. There is some justification for this since the skulls of recent and fossil porpoises are symmetrical while those of delphinids are asymmetrical, being twisted toward the left. Phocoenids also have smaller teeth than delphinids.