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## WHITE DALL'S PORPOISE SIGHTED IN THE NORTH PACIFIC

Several studies on the population and distribution of marine mammals were conducted between 1978 and 1981 in the North Pacific Ocean under a United States-Japan cooperative agreement of the International Convention for the High Seas Fisheries of the North Pacific Ocean. During that period, two white Dall's porpoise, *Phocoenoides dalli*, were sighted.

Two of the authors (Joyce and Ogasawara) sighted one such color variant (Fig. 1) at 1410 h (JST) on 29 July 1980, 8 km south of Kushiro, Japan (lat. 42°52.5'N, long. 144°21.5'E), while aboard the RV *Hokushin Maru*. The water depth was 70 m and the sea surface temperature was 17.5°C. The animal was estimated to be 190 to

210 cm long and was accompanied by a normally colored Dall's porpoise, dalli type, of the same size. Both animals approached the vessel and rode the bow wave for 5 min. The white animal surfaced once every 5 to 6 s and created a "roostertail" splash, typical of the Dall's porpoise. It was completely white except for a slight gray shading along the dorsal ridge between the dorsal fin and the flukes, and along the posterior edge of the blowhole. There was no color differentiation where the black-white border usually occurs on the lateral surface. Other than color, there were no physical or behavioral characteristics to distinguish this animal from other Dall's porpoise.

Another white Dall's porpoise was sighted by Rosapepe on 13 August 1980, 25 km west of the Washington State coast (lat. 45°26.5'N, long. 124°15.6'W), while aboard the NOAA vessel *Miller Freeman*. The animal was all white except for a brownish area on the dorsal surface, between the blowhole and the dorsal fin. It was seen with three Dall's porpoises, dalli type, of normal coloration. All four animals approached the vessel and rode the bow wave for 7 min.

The Dall's porpoise is known to exhibit two and possibly three color variations (Morejohn 1979). The dalli type, the original type described, is mostly black, with a white area on the ventral and lower lateral surfaces, originating in line with the anterior insertion of the dorsal fin and extending posterior of the genital slit (True 1885). The truei type is differentiated by the anterior extension of the white area to the anterior insertion of the pectoral flipper (Andrews 1911). The truei type was once classified as a separate species by Andrews (1911) but was later described as a color variant (Cowan 1944). The taxonomic status of this type is still in question. All black Dall's porpoise have been described (Wilke et al. 1953; Nishiwaki 1966), as has the gray or striped variant (Wilke et al. 1953; Morejohn et al. 1973). However, the white variant has not previously been described, indicating that this colormorph, possibly caused by albinism, occurs rarely.

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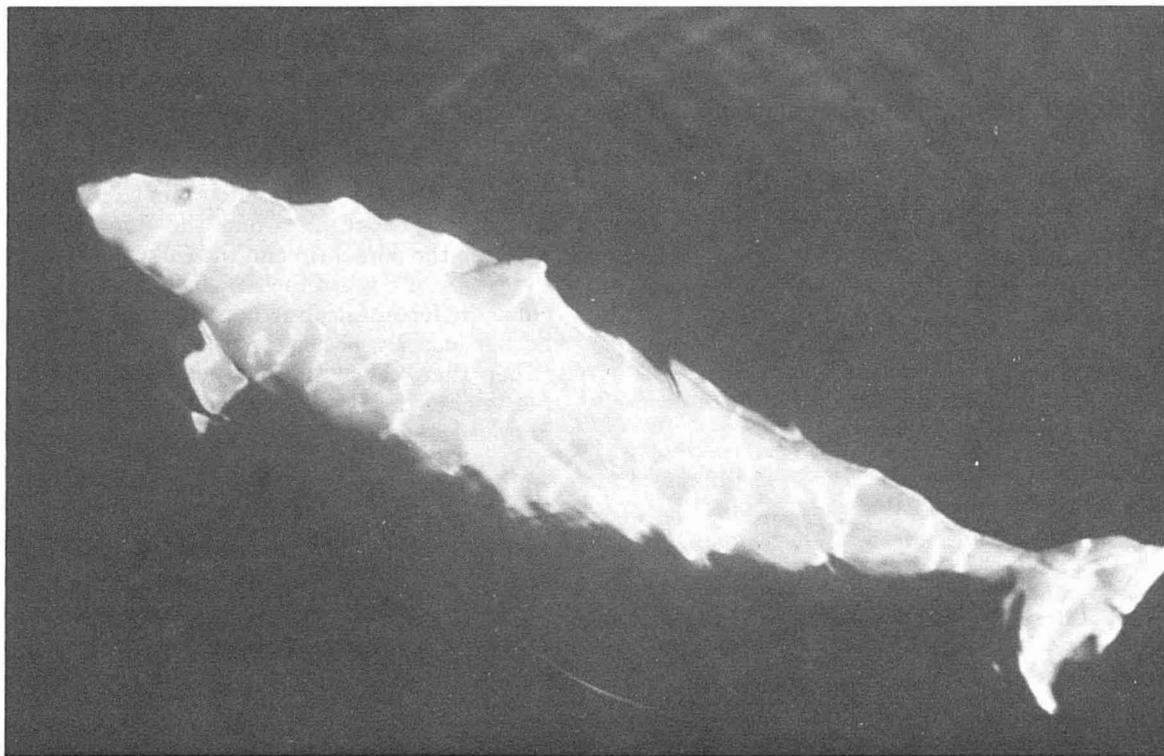


FIGURE 1.—A color variant of a white Dall's porpoise, *Phocoenoides dalli*, sighted 8 km south of Kushiro, Japan, from the Japanese research vessel *Hokushin Maru*.

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