This species has been exhibited at several oceanaria in California where it has been kept and trained successfully. Its high leaps out of the water are particularly breathtaking.

The white-sided dolphin occurs in the Pacific from Alaska (Valdez) south to Baja California (Gorda Bank). In southern California, it is one of the most abundant species, frequently traveling in large schools, some estimated to contain about 1,000 animals. It may be the most abundant dolphin north of California, and it is reported to occur in large numbers along the coasts of Japan. Like the common dolphin, it often may run before a ship. It may school alone or with common dolphins. Occasionally they are taken incidentally by purse seiners along with a school of fish. Feeding schools are scattered over a wide area, while traveling schools are more compact. The animals tend to frequent inshore areas during the winter and spring, offshore during the summer and fall. They feed extensively on anchovies, sardines, and herring in the inshore areas and on sauries offshore. Squid are also taken. Captive specimens are fed mainly on Pacific mackerel.
This dolphin reaches at least 7 feet in length; and occasionally more. An exceptionally large individual was 90 inches long and weighed probably 330-350 pounds when in good condition. The snout is pointed, but the beak is short and only faintly defined. The body is blackish dorsally, white ventrally, and has a clear line of demarcation. When seen in the water, it can be most readily identified by the light streak running along either side of the posterior portion in the back. There is usually a light patch on the dorsal fin.

**NORTHERN RIGHT WHALE DOLPHIN**

*Lissodelphis borealis*

This is a slim, handsome, beaked dolphin, velvet black or brownish-black above and on the sides, sharply contrasting white below. It differs from most other dolphins, and from all found in Californian waters, in lacking a dorsal fin (hence its name, after the finless right whale). It reaches 10 feet in length. It is found in the Pacific Ocean off Japan and from the Bering Sea south to California. Groups of 200 are quite common, but herds containing an estimated 2,000 individuals have been seen off southern California. Numerous groups have been seen and photographed far offshore. Records from outside the state are few, though the original description was based on observation of a large school 500 miles off the Columbia River.

The right whale dolphin is probably an oceanic species, which might account for the comparatively few records of it. The few stomachs that have been examined have contained lanternfish, sauries, and an assortment of other pelagic and mesopelagic fishes and squids. It travels rapidly when alarmed, in a “series of regular low-angle leaps,” showing the head very little and showing only a small area of the back.
The killer whale is one of the largest of the dolphin family. Unlike most of the other dolphins, which appear to man to be playful, friendly, gentle animals, menacing only to the small fishes, etc., upon which they feed, the killer whale gives the impression of being a very savage and bloodthirsty animal. This is perhaps a highly subjective point of view, since we feel more sympathy with the warm-blooded animals, and particularly some of the larger ones, than we do with other animals; no doubt the mackerel or the squid regards the playful common dolphin as an equally vicious predator. Be that as it may, the killer whale is the only cetacean that habitually preys upon warm-blooded animals. In addition to fish and squid, it eats sea birds, seals, walruses, and other dolphins, and even attacks whales larger than itself. There are several reports of individuals found with remains of prodigious numbers of dolphins or seals in their stomachs. Members of a school cooperate in attacking their prey. They attack nursing calves of the large whalebone whales or may tear out just the tongues of the adults.

Killer whales are potentially dangerous to man, and people running small boats should be cautious about alarming or annoying them, as there are alleged instances of boats being attacked. I do not know of any instances of humans being killed and eaten by them, however. Peter Freuchen, who spent many years in the Arctic, said in one of his books that he had never heard of any attacks on humans, but that when the Eskimos were out in their kayaks and saw one, they headed for shore with all possible haste. (Religious beliefs may affect their behavior; this is the case with some Eskimos.) Also, there are instances of killers bumping the underside of ice floes while men were standing on top: a member of the Scott 1911 expedition, for example, just managed to scramble to safety when the floe upon which he was standing was broken to bits. Killers are said by some to do this deliberately to get seals into the water, though other people think the bumping may be accidental.

A man spilled into the water from a boat or ice floe might be grabbed by a killer without the animal’s stopping to find out what he was. On the other hand, I know of several instances in which they had plenty of time to look over swimmers and displayed in some cases interest and curiosity, but did not attack the men.

One of these cases occurred near Anacapa Island in 1960. Three men had dived from a boat and were below the surface when a group of nine or more killers approached. One submerged where the bubbles were coming up from the divers. A diver surfaced, saw the whales, and dived again to warn his friends. All three men surfaced and got aboard, with the nearest killer 25 feet away. In another case, two divers at Pt. Hueneme were in the water when a killer came near; they swam as quickly as possible to their boat. The killer followed, raised up and looked them over, and swam away. One of the same men, on
another occasion, had just climbed onto his boat when a whale that he had not seen emerged in pursuit of a sea lion, grabbed it, and carried it away. On still another occasion, at Pismo Beach, divers were followed through the surf by one or more curious killers. In 1962, at a competitive skindiving meet at Leo Carrillo State Park Beach, a school of killers worked upcoast just outside the kelp, while one large male traveled slowly through kelp checking each skindiver in turn, finally disappearing to the northward.

It is obvious in almost every one of these cases that the killers might have seized people had they wanted to. The theory has been advanced that these animals, unlike sharks, are so intelligent that they realize that man is not one of their normal prey.

During recent years, numerous killer whales have been captured and kept alive by aquaria for various periods of time. The first, caught off British Columbia in 1961, survived only three months, but two others, captured in 1965, did much better. One of these,
displayed at Seattle, became quite tame and seemed to enjoy cavorting with its trainer and others who spent time in the water with it. This whale, called “Namu”, was the subject of at least one movie and numerous magazine and newspaper articles prior to its accidental death by drowning in 1966, presumably while trying to join “friends” during the breeding season. Captive killer whales have proven very gentle and show remarkable intelligence, having learned several “tricks” which they perform for the public each day. Trainers claim killer whales are smarter and easier to train than other delphinids with which they work. Worldwide, there are probably about 25 in captivity at the present time.

Captive killer whales have presented on occasion some behavioral problems which have been attributed to various causes. One source says that when a whale feels good it may playfully buck a trainer off its back, or suddenly submerge to the bottom of the tank. A trainer in another oceanarium states that killer whales like human companionship but don’t like having them ride on their backs; a female that he worked with kept knocking him off her back, and finally when he fell against her dorsal fin, turned and nipped him (only bruising him). I have theorized that whales occasionally have “off days” when they are feeling a bit cranky, as is known to happen with other trained animals. A third authority denies this, believing that they merely want to keep people to play with in the tank. He does admit that one male presented a seriously aggressive and dangerous behavioral problem, fortunately at a time when no one was in the water. However, there have been incidents of possible aggressive behavior when swimmers were in the water. In one the whale refused to bring the trainer to the landing stage upon a whistle signal, and when the trainer finally made a jump for it, pinned him against the tank wall, underwater; he was reportedly unconscious when pulled out. In another, a girl who was new to the whale was on his back while some publicity pictures were being made. She slipped off, whereupon the whale grabbed her by the leg and at first refused to let go even when she was pulled to the side of the pool by means of a pole which was extended to her. It required a number of stitches to close the wounds in her leg. It should be noted that in all these cases, the animal could easily have killed the person had it wished to do so.

The killer whale is a strikingly marked animal, black with white underparts, the white extending up on the side a little past the midpoint of the body. There is a white spot on the side of the head, just above and in back of the eye. There is also a light-colored saddle-shaped patch, but not as strongly contrasting (gray rather than white) on the mid-back just behind the dorsal fin. The dorsal fin is sharply triangular and very high. The flippers are rounded. In old males, the dorsal fin becomes particularly high, reaching as much as 6 feet; the flippers and tail flukes also become longer. Off the west coast of North America the largest male measured has been 25 feet, the largest female 20 feet; in other parts of the world, males have been known to reach 31 feet. A 20-foot female weighed 7,000 pounds. These whales, as well as sperm whales, are unusual among cetaceans in that the male reaches a much greater size than the female. Breeding appears to occur year-round but seems to peak from May to July. Most northern hemisphere births occur in autumn. Newborn calves are about 8 feet long and weigh about 400 pounds.

The jaws are heavy, and the conical teeth are strong and set close together so that they interlock.

The killer whales are worldwide in distribution, found in both tropical and polar waters, though they are most abundant in the latter, perhaps due to the greater abundance of food there. They are usually considered one species. In the Pacific, they are known to range from Alasaka to Costa Rica.

The killer has also been known by the generic names of *Ocra* and *Grampus*, and by the specific name of *rectipinna*.