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## Introduction to the Special Issue of Anecdotes

In 1972, the *Aquatic Mammals* journal began publishing mostly narrative accounts related to the care, nutrition, transport, and housing of aquatic mammals, with a focus on dolphins and pinnipeds. Over the years, as our understanding and knowledge of aquatic mammals increased, contributions shifted to focus on topics and samples that could be assessed quantitatively. It is understood that scientific studies (research generally) are based on a foundation of reproducible methodologies with multiple observations and data points assessed statistically. Now, 50 years later, we are pleased to offer a special issue of *Aquatic Mammals* that acknowledges how the journal began and welcomes the insight to be gained from anecdotal or rare observations of aquatic mammals in both *in-* and *ex-situ* settings.

Most marine mammals are cryptic, difficult to observe, and often require large costs and time to compile samples that allow for a rigorous assessment. Even in the 2020s, for many species, a simple dated geographic location or single observation of behavior provides invaluable insight and direction for research. Unforeseen and unique behaviors (actions and interactions) may offer unexpected insight into the nature and society of a cryptic species. Rare behaviors (e.g., tool use, infanticide) or unusual circumstances allow the observer a more refined view of an individual, small group, or species, yet these observations are usually not available for distribution through the peer-review platform. The current scientific, peer-review literature does not typically encourage publication of “anecdotal” observations. As such, these insights, if not archived in some manner, may be lost from the collective record.

This special issue of *Aquatic Mammals* is intended to celebrate the insight that can be gained from rare or opportunistic observations in the field or in a managed care setting and is dedicated to capturing these observations for the record. Contributors set their accounts into the literature as much as possible and contextualized their anecdote(s) such that its scope, generality, and potential application are recognized. Our goal has been to offer this special issue as a collective record so these insights and observations may provide perspective to our research and the animals we study. We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we have during the review and publication process.

We would be remiss not to thank our copyedit and business teams—Brittany McIntosh, Sandy Larimer, Shanee Plate, and Gina Colley—for their effort and support. Similarly, a huge thank you from *Aquatic Mammals* journal AND all contributing authors to Zoomarine Algarve in Portugal for sponsoring the costs associated with this special issue. Happy Birthday to the journal and here’s to 50 more years!

James D. Darling, Ph.D., Whale Trust, Guest Editor

Kathleen M. Dudzinski, Ph.D., Managing Editor, *Aquatic Mammals*

Thank you to the generosity of Zoomarine Algarve for their sponsorship of this Special Issue of Anecdotes that commemorates the 50th anniversary of *Aquatic Mammals*! We applaud Zoomarine Algarve for their stalwart and continued commitment to supporting, promoting, and celebrating Science, Education, and Conservation!



***Thank you to all the authors who provided photographs for  
the cover of this special issue!***

**Cover Photos**

***Front Cover***

*Top:* Two young male bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) socialize at The Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences, Anthony's Key Resort

Courtesy of K. M. Dudzinski, DCP

*Bottom left:* Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) "Sivuqaq" with Ron Schusterman and Colleen Reichmuth

Courtesy of Colleen Reichmuth, Long Marine Laboratory, Institute of Marine Sciences, University of California Santa Cruz

*Bottom right:* Postmortem view of the first live sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) stranding in Alabama showing placement of sling and lines to lift the animal from the water using a crane

*Photo credit:* DISL/ALMMSN 2020; NMFS Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Permit #18786)

***Back Cover***

*Top:* Immature male leopard seal (*Hydrurga leptonyx*) observed on Bird Island, South Georgia

*Photo credit:* Claire Stainfield, British Antarctic Survey

*2nd row left:* A member of the 27s group of killer whales (*Orcinus orca*) tracking a harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*) as it seeks refuge from predation between the headlines of mussel farm infrastructure (Dury Voe, Shetland, UK, on 6 March 2022)

*Photo credit:* Nick McCaffrey, Southspear Media & Surveys Ltd

*2nd row center:* Female Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) and her pup resting on an open beach in Greece

*Copyright:* P. Dendrinis/MOM

*3rd row left:* "Poli," a young adult female bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*), and two mother-calf pairs swim near Bailey's Key at The Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences, Anthony's Key Resort

Courtesy of K. M. Dudzinski, DCP

*3rd row center:* A harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*) barrel rolling as it follows a Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) during a dyadic interaction near Aith Pier, Shetland, on 2 April 2022

*Photo credit:* Nick McCaffrey, Southspear Media & Surveys Ltd

*3rd row right:* A group of long-finned pilot whales (*Globicephala melas*) including a neonate, within Yell Sound, Shetland, on 27 September 2019

*Photo credit:* Nick McCaffrey, Southspear Media & Surveys Ltd

*Bottom:* Two walruses (*Odobenus rosmarus*) resting on sea ice north of Svalbard, Norway

*Photo credit:* Christian Lydersen, Norwegian Polar Institute