

## More on Gigi

Being on the coast of California in 1852, when the "gold-fever" raged, the force of circumstances compelled me to take command of a brig, bound on a sealing, sea-elephant, and whaling voyage, or abandon sea-life, at least temporarily. The objects of our pursuit were found in great numbers, and the opportunities for studying their habits were so good, that I became greatly interested in collecting facts bearing on the natural history of these animals.

With such forthright 19th century prose does Charles Melville Scammon open his classic account of "The Marine Mammals of the North-Western Coast of North America and the American Whale Fishery." The book was published just a century ago, in 1874. It sold poorly, according to Victor Scheffer's introduction to the 1968 Dover edition. But over the years it became increasingly popular, rare, and expensive. First editions are now bibliographic treasures. Luckily, there are today excellent and relatively inexpensive facsimile editions, including reproductions of the striking lithographs that illustrated the first.

Scammon was born in 1825 and hence was 27 when he began his career as the captain of a whaling ship. He eventually joined the U.S. Revenue Marine, a predecessor of the Coast Guard, and the byline of the book gives his affiliation as a Captain of that organization. He died in 1891.

There is an extensive literature on the California gray whale. For a brief, authoritative, and well-written scientific summary of what was known of the creature before the Gigi studies, I highly recommend "The life history and ecology of the gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*)," by Dale W. Rice and Allen A. Wolman, Special Publication No. 3, The Ameri-

can Society of Mammalogists. This was published in April 1971, almost coincidentally with the capture of Gigi, an event which made possible a host of studies previously impossible. A very good popular account of contemporary whale studies, including those on Gigi, was written by Faith McNulty and appeared in *The New Yorker* last year.

- The name Gigi, one supposes, was borrowed from the enchanting heroine of Colette's short novel. Three delightful actresses portrayed the fictional Gigi: Danielle Delorme in a French movie version that was one of the funniest and least widely seen pictures ever made (it was bought up by the producers of the American screen "Gigi"), Audrey Hepburn, who first made her name by playing the part on the stage in London and New York, and Leslie Caron, who starred in the unforgettable screen musical. And there is still another Gigi, playing in a stage version of the musical now running in New York. It is difficult to equate these slender and girlish beauties with a creature that was almost 20 feet long and weighed 2 tons at capture and who for some months gained weight at a rate of three pounds an hour.

- William C. Cummings of the Naval Undersea Center in San Diego has been studying marine mammals for a decade or so. (We published a paper he wrote with Paul O. Thompson, "Gray whales, *Eschrichtius robustus*, avoid the underwater sounds of killer whales, *Orcinus orca*," in the *Fishery Bulletin*, Vol. 69, p. 525.) Shortly after the 1973-74 holidays he wrote a letter I think will be of interest to some of our readers:

During the past 10 years of my involvement with marine mammals, I have experienced and heard incidents of their unfortunate collisions with large and small watercraft. The animals doubtlessly try their best to avoid these contacts, but are we doing our share?

In a few moments of introspection over the holidays an idea came to mind which may offer some mitigation of man's burdening threat to the living environment. If we could learn more of the circumstances involved, perhaps a means may be found for helping to reduce the mutually harmful collisions between aquatic mammals and watercraft. And if this should not appeal to your altruism alone, think of the benefits to science, including possible new information on visual capability, hearing, activity rhythms, or general awareness of these animals. A good behaviorist could design and implement field experiments to satisfy both requirements, given enough time and funding. However, in this austere period for research, a promising start seems to be in calling upon the experiences of all boat users, whatever their purpose.

Cummings has designed a one page data sheet, headed "Collisions with aquatic mammals," which he hopes boat users will fill out and return to him so as to make a beginning on the project. "To avoid obvious biases," he says, "reported incidents should not include contacts involving unintentional observers who may have been overzealous in their attempt to view seals, whale, porpoises, or others at close range. Perhaps you may not have had a pertinent experience, but could possibly help us to uncover additional information from an acquaintance with this experience, or from something already published. Participants will receive a report of the findings and acknowledgement of their assistance.

"It is gratifying to find tangible effects already emerging from man's attempts to protect aquatic mammals, and it is my sincere wish for the New Year that this survey will in some way contribute to this effort."

Readers of this publication would be performing a valuable service to our increasing understanding of the whales and other marine mammals if they would make their knowledge available to Dr. Cummings. T.A.M.