

OUR DELICATE PLANET

WORDS & ART BY ROBERT C. WILSON

This special section of the North Coast Times Eagle is essentially a chance to celebrate the Born Again Bird's silver anniversary with four pages of color, a first in the paper's bifurcated lifespan. The idea first occurred when Robert Wilson displayed the original paintings of the turtles and dolphins on these pages. The Times Eagle has printed portions of the original black & white renditions of his two charts, 'Fishes of the Pacific Coast' and 'Sea Creatures of the Pacific Coast', which evolved into color. He credits the NCTE with inspiring him to create the popular charts after a two page display in the June 1989 issue of sea life he had drawn as a project in pursuit of an associates of science degree in oceanographic technology from Clatsop Community College and a bachelor of science degree in Marine Biology from Evergreen State College at Olympia, Washington. He was raised in the midwest and has lived on the Pacific Coast for more than 30 years, most of which he has worked as a commercial fisherman. He served in the Vietnam War as a U.S. Marine and organized the Astoria chapter of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. 'Our Delicate Planet' is from a coloring book for school children he wrote and illustrated, "Fishes of the Pacific Coast".

~Michael Paul McCusker, editor & publisher

The oceans cover more than 75% of our planet. In comparison to the neighboring landmass, humanity has a narrow understanding of it.

Instead we look toward the stars, dreaming about what it would be like to venture to other worlds when we have such a limited knowledge about our own. Those worlds can wait, but concern for our own cannot.

In the past and the present there have been a few great adventurers who have probed the dark mysterious depths of the oceans and have found life forms far beyond their own imaginations, life that has evolved very little over millions of years.

Some of the fishes along our own Pacific Ocean coastline have remained unchanged for millions of years.

Humanity is the newcomer to this planet, yet billions of pounds of toxic wastes are being dumped into the oceans every day worldwide, eliminating many of the special groups of species that help make up our ecosystem.

The more densely populated an ecosystem is, the more delicately it is balanced. Pollution and overfishing have greatly upset this balance.

Humanity with its efficient mechanized equipment for taking advantage of

large schools of fish may well shift the balance and bring disaster to many groups of these species of fish.

Toxic chemicals that are dumped into the ocean drastically reduce the plankton population which most of the smaller fish live on.

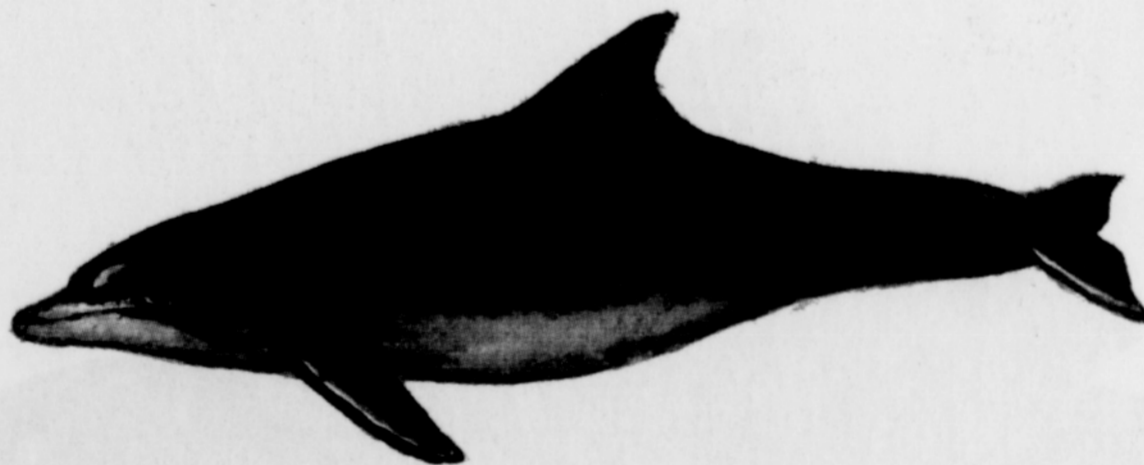
When a major food supply is depleted it also causes a decrease in the predator species. No other species has had such an effect on the earth as homo sapiens.

We have already cropped the ocean's fisheries dangerously close to the upper limits of biological possibilities. Only wise and careful management practices will enable us to maintain even the present level of cropping without destroying species most useful to us. Some of these fish have been so overfished that it has caused total collapse of the fishery.

Conservation regulations should be made more enforceable and the regulatory agencies put under the charge of competent biologists whose primary concern is the preservation of ecosystems rather than the extraction of maximum annual profits from them. More efficient use of so-called "trash" fish would eliminate much of the unnecessary waste which occurs in some fisheries.

Conservation starts with individuals like you, so make the difference!

DOLPHINS



BOTTLE NOSED DOLPHIN (*TURSIOPS truncatus*)

Length: 12 ft. (3.7 m.)

Range: In the Atlantic Ocean from Nova Scotia to Venezuela, including the Gulf of Mexico. In the Pacific Ocean from Southern California to the tropics.

The Bottle Nosed Dolphin feeds on a variety of fish such as squids, shrimp and crabs, but will also feed on discarded fish from trawlers.

Also known as Bottlenosed Porpoise, Gray Porpoise, Common Porpoise and Black Porpoise.



NORTHERN RIGHT WHALE DOLPHIN (*LISSODOLPHIS borealis*)

Length: 3m.

Range: From S. British Columbia to N. Baja California.

Northern Right Whale Dolphins are often timid, but are commonly seen riding the bow wave of vessels. Feeds mainly on squid and mid-water fishes.