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Whale and dolphin
portfolio, water
conservation efforts in the
Panama Canal, humor in the
field AND MORE.

WHALES AND DOLPHINS AROUND THE WORLD

BY ANNIKA HIPPLE | SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

I've often said that in a different life I would have been a marine biologist, specifically one who studies cetaceans. Few things make me happier than watching whales or dolphins, whether from a boat or from shore. I'm lucky to live in Seattle, where marine life abounds, including various species of whales that frequent Puget Sound and can often be seen from land. I've also been fortunate enough to see many numerous other species in other parts of the world, including Massachusetts (where I grew up), Alaska, Quebec, British Columbia, Argentina, Mexico, New Zealand and other places. One of my life goals is to see (and with luck, photograph) every species of cetacean in the wild. Though I have a long way to go to fulfill that dream, here is a selection of photographs of several of the whale and dolphin species I have seen so far.

My original home state, Massachusetts, is one of the best places in the United States for whale watching, thanks to the productive feeding grounds just offshore at the Stellwagen Bank. On one trip from Gloucester, we were lucky enough to come across a group of bubble net-feeding humpback whales. See more of Annika's work at annikahipple.smugmug.com and on Instagram @annika.hipple.



ABOVE: Washington state is home to numerous whale species, none more beloved than our endangered resident orcas, a salmon-eating ecotype that is completely distinct from other orcas that frequent the region and hunt marine mammals. Thanks to local community forums where people share whale sightings, I was able to be in the right place to see a large group of resident orcas pass by at close range on New Year's Day last year. Although the light was fading when I took this photo, I was thrilled to capture two Washington icons — an orca and Mount Rainier — in a single image.



ABOVE: Every year from June to December, large numbers of endangered southern right whales congregate in the Golfo Nuevo, a sheltered gulf along the coast of northern Argentinian Patagonia. I photographed this breaching southern right whale on a small-boat whale-watching excursion from Puerto Piramides on the Peninsula Valdes.



ABOVE: The Saint Lawrence River estuary in Quebec, Canada, is home to many species of cetaceans. On one visit, I captured this photo of sunlight dappling the back of a minke whale as it arced gracefully through the calm waters.



ABOVE LEFT: Endemic to New Zealand, the Hector's dolphin is the world's smallest dolphin species. On a day cruise from Akaroa, near Christchurch, I spotted these Hector's dolphins riding the bow waves in front of our boat and was lucky enough to capture the moment when they leaped out of the water directly ahead of us.

ABOVE RIGHT: On a whalewatching tour in Argentina's Golfo Nuevo, I was lucky enough to see a large pod of common dolphins porpoising very close to our boat.

RIGHT: Every summer, thousands of beluga whales migrate from offshore areas to the mouth of the Churchill River where it meets Hudson Bay in Manitoba, Canada. When I visited in early August, beluga numbers were at their peak. Belugas are rather challenging to photograph, but I was lucky enough to get this shot where the whale's eye, beak and characteristic bulging forehead are clearly visible.



MIDDLE: Commerson's dolphins are often called ocean pandas due to their black-and-white coloring. I was fortunate to see these speedy little dolphins in Rawson, Argentina, though they were somewhat challenging to photograph.



BOTTOM: A humpback whale tail slaps rhythmically against the water off Massachusetts. This behavior, also called lobtailing, appears to serve various purposes, including corralling fish, attracting mates and warding off rivals.



— Annika Hipple is an award-winning bi-cultural (Swedish/American), multilingual freelance writer and photographer whose specializations include travel, wildlife, conservation, sustainability, history and Scandinavia. In addition, she is a professional tour director and guide who leads trips throughout the world and is available as a travel consultant for individuals and travel companies seeking destination expertise and/or itinerary planning services.

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