

The Blue Whale

Exhibit Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this one-frame Topical exhibit is to show a comprehensive variety of philatelic items, each of which illustrates The Blue Whale, *Balaenoptera musculus*, in its design. South Georgia issued the first postage stamp of a realistic image of the blue whale in 1963 – since then another **144** stamps depicting the blue whale have been issued worldwide (1963-2013). Blue whale images have also been incorporated in cacheted first day covers, maximum cards, pictorial postmarks, meters, Cinderellas, and on postal stationery. Examples of these diverse philatelic items, a signed die proof, plate proof, colour separations, and few ephemera items will show the oceanographic distribution, life history, industrial whaling exploitation, and conservation of The Blue Whale.



**Well proportioned and accurate depiction of living Blue Whale.
Largest size and highest denomination postage stamp of Canada (2010).**

VERY RARE First Day Cover, official city, signed by *Jorge Peral* stamp designer / engraver, **16 known***
High value definitive: whale image by intaglio; multiple security printing features incorporated.

Background & Historical Context

The largest animal ever: the longest, the heaviest, the loudest, the fastest whale alive ... the Blue Whale summons many superlatives in its biological life – unsurpassed biggest of the biggest!

These gargantuan denizens of the deep have always attracted attention when beachcast. First western account was by Sibbald (1692), whence known as Sibbald's rorqual (grooved throat); Turner (1872) detailed a more complete and illustrated description of a 24 m female, stranded in the Firth of Forth, Scotland. First use of the term "blue whale" was in Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851). Blue Whales are distributed worldwide in all oceans, with regionally distinct genetic and acoustic populations.

Despite its colossal dimensions (longest to 33 m, heaviest estimated in excess of 150,000 kg), the blue whale with its mottled blue-gray smooth skin, and long sleek, slim streamlined body has been called "the swiftest whale afloat." They are excellent divers, searching below for food and mates, yet constantly returning to the surface to breathe. Their tallest baseball bat like exhalation (10-12m), identifying this whale keenly sought by early whalers – "Thar she blows!"

Topical text & analytic comment immediately beneath item in serif bold font, philatelic text is in san-serif font.

This the only known Topical exhibit on Blue Whale.

Exhibit Plan

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|-----------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Title page | | 1 p |
| The BIG Blue Whale | — First View | 3 pp |
| Oceanographic Distribution | | 4 pp |
| Life History | | 3 pp |
| Whaling — Industrial Exploitation | | 2 pp |
| Conservation | — The Last Whale | 3 pp |

Denotes original research / significant item.

References:

Blue Whale https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_whale
[accessed 10 Feb 2018]

Watson, A. (2014) *Maxis on maxis: The biggest whales on maximum cards*. Amer. Phil. 128(3):248-55, cover.

Watson, A. (2017) *Blue Whale on NZ Stamps*.
Topical Time 68(1):36-39.

* McClelland, B. 2011 *Pers. Com.*