

FOREWORD

It is April 2012. Howard Martenstyn, already en route to Kalpitiya, is calling to say he is proceeding to investigate reports of a large number of sperm whales. Soon he is at sea with the whales, reporting a northward movement. Focusing on the sea around, he observes squid on the surface, leading us to believe this was perhaps more a gathering for feeding than a suspected migration; a theory yet to be conclusively established scientifically proposes that these sperm whales move between Oman and Sri Lanka. In the coming days, an estimated feeding aggregation of one hundred and fifty sperm whales will be observed off the Kalpitiya peninsula. It is perhaps the largest gathering recorded off Sri Lanka.

Following an early retirement from an outstanding career in telecommunications and project management in Canada, Howard returned to his native Sri Lanka early in the new millennium. He soon devoted himself to observing groups of spinner dolphins off Kalpitiya, where his brother Dallas had started a successful marine mammal observation and tourist hotel operation. Several years of such observations gave him insight into the daily routine of the various schools of dolphins. Ideas about their behaviour began to form in his mind - their inshore and offshore movements, day-night activities, feeding and rest-periods, numbers and seasonal variations, as well as the relevance of bathymetry. He began keeping notes on his observations.

Howard is the third in a family of five, with three adventurous brothers who were greatly inspired by their father. Douglas Martenstyn, who was a great enthusiast of boats and the outdoors, passed away in his prime, leaving behind a young family. The eldest, Howard's brother Cedric, joined me at the National Aquatic Resources Research & Development Agency (NARA) following its inception in the early 1980s. He became a member of that small band of pioneers who became the first generation



The author's father, Douglas Martenstyn, on the River Thames, London

of Sri Lankans to engage with whales, work towards understanding them through research and become committed to their long-term management. A master PADI diver, he brought with him an interest in the outdoors, seagoing, and an innate ability to make important connections when observing nature and wildlife. He immediately took to whales. Cedric later became the Director of the National Marine Mammal Programme. He was involved in the establishment of CRIOMM and its field station at Trincomalee, and in the early development of whale-watching in Sri Lanka.

Cedric and I attended the IWC sessions in Argentina in 1984, after which we recommended that our country stay out of that organisation in order to avoid international political pressures. With the outbreak of civil war, Cedric volunteered - much against my wishes - and eventually joined the Sri Lanka Navy with my most reluctant recommendation. In the Navy he excelled as an officer - and was mainly responsible for the establishment of the Special Boat Service (SBS). He was serving as its commanding officer when he went missing in action following the shooting-down of his helicopter and a reported period of captivity.

It is fitting that Howard has dedicated this book to his brother Cedric. More so that he should follow in his footsteps with this avid interest. His emergence satisfies a long-felt need for developing marine mammal expertise in the country, which requires very special people who can combine the ability to stay at sea for long periods, often enduring considerable discomfort on small platforms while continuing to record data - with the ability to discern trends and phenomena, as well as to share and communicate them.

On hearing of Howard's lone efforts studying marine mammals, I invited him to CRIOMM, which we had established in the 1980s. In December 2011 a marine mammal symposium was convened in Sri Lanka by CRIOMM, which functions under the auspices of Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Co-operation (IOMAC). Knowing of Howard's efforts to keep records, I encouraged him to compile and present a paper reflecting his findings. It transpired that this was his first public presentation on the subject. His presentation was refreshing, and immediately acclaimed by the meeting. Afterwards, Howard was encouraged by CRIOMM's long-standing Director of Studies, Anouk Ilangakoon, and CRIOMM's International Advisory Panel member Abigail Alling (of the original 1980s *Tulip crew*) to work towards a publication. This book is the result. It was completed in under twelve months of sustained effort, at times even telling on his health.

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Out of the Blue is composed of four parts: an introductory first part gives a general overview of marine mammals, attempting to provide answers to questions people often ask about them and somewhat more. Next, a carefully worked-out catalogue gives individual profiles of species encountered in and around the island; this makes up the main body of the book and makes it a valuable reference work.

The third section, growing from Howard's experience with dolphins and sperm whales off Kalpitiya and his discovery of the relevance of bathymetry to their habits, reflects his progression to a fascination with oceanography and their correlation with marine mammal occurrences, especially concerning the larger whales. He offers explanations on currents and various deep sea parameters. Food, that vital ingredient, must be understood in terms of sources and relevant factors. Some of these elements he has begun to test and observe at sea, and has detailed them for the convenience of new comers in a most welcome, holistic approach to understanding the oceans and the life in them. In the same way, he attempts to discern the reasons for Sri Lanka's significance as a special destination for whales - reasons that will be long debated.

The final part of the book deals with whale-watching. This is one of the fastest growing areas of tourism worldwide, with Sri Lanka being an outstanding destination. This book caters to the whale-watching enthusiast, providing some indication as to known places for observation and guidelines for good conduct at sea.

This publication appears in the light of recently promulgated national marine mammal regulations which go beyond whale-watching, these constitute a long-awaited but rudimentary step in a long-term marine mammal management regime for Sri Lanka. They provide a legislative embodiment for the concepts of non-consumptive use and benign research reflected in Sri Lanka's policy, adumbrated since the 1980s and giving expression to Article 65 of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which allows a coastal state to 'to prohibit, limit or regulate the exploitation of marine mammals *more strictly* than provided for in this part...'

In recognition of his passion, devotion, growing skills, intensity of effort and interest in the interrelated nature of observations, Howard Martenstyn was appointed Director of Research at CRIOMM in 2012. I have found in him



Howard Martenstyn with a sperm whale superpod, Kalpitiya

not only an admirable obsession with his own work, but a great willingness to share, motivate and help others who take an interest in marine mammals.

He is dedicated and systematic in the recording of information and is currently at work on consolidating the CRIOMM marine-mammal distribution database. CRIOMM is currently launching a revitalized programme of research work at sea, which makes this book unusually timely. It is expected that the author will continue his work in contributing to the development of a better understanding of marine mammals in our waters.

Out of the Blue, will, I believe, augment our efforts to revive marine mammal research in Sri Lanka, which has been largely stalled since the mid-1980s. It is a timely and valuable contribution to the growing community of nature lovers in one of the world's fastest-growing areas of tourism. I hope it will become a standard, if not essential handbook for the serious student as well as casual observer and visitor.

Hiran W. Jayewardene

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