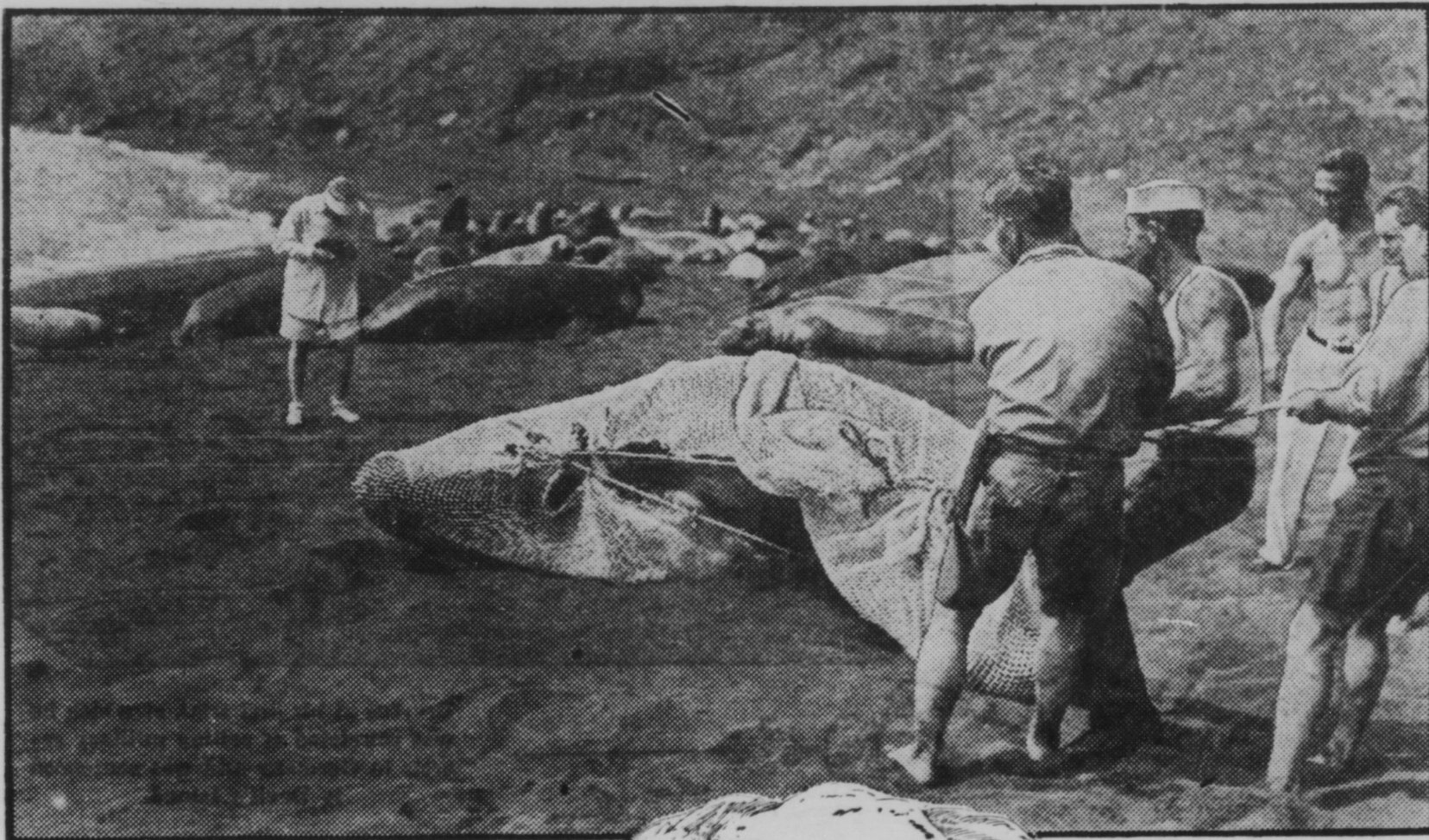


Capt. Hancock's THRILLING DISCOVERIES of STRANGE ANIMALS and HUMAN EXILES



Capturing elephant seals for the San Diego Zoo, on Guadalupe.

By Mary June Burton

THEY were after hideous, prehistoric lizards—things out of the past, still living on South Seymour Island in the Galapagos. The beasts they were looking for were land iguanas, three and four feet long, with brick-red hides and wrinkled yellow necks. In ancient days they were called dragons.

Cautiously, Capt. G. Allan Hancock and the nine men who had landed from the captain's famous cruiser, the sleek, white *Velero III*, toiled over the sharp lava rocks. Suddenly one man saw what they were looking for, an unbelievable reptile. It was placidly nibbling on a cactus stalk.

"Got it!" the man yelled, and made a lunge for the thing's tail. But he was not quick enough; like lightning it slithered away, disappeared among the rocks.

They found more—and discovered they had arrived on the island in time to prevent a tragedy. The lizards were starving to death. They had stripped every stalk of cactus as far up as their necks could reach, and still their bones stuck out through their hide like the ribs of a drouth belt cow. The land iguanas of South Seymour were facing extinction.

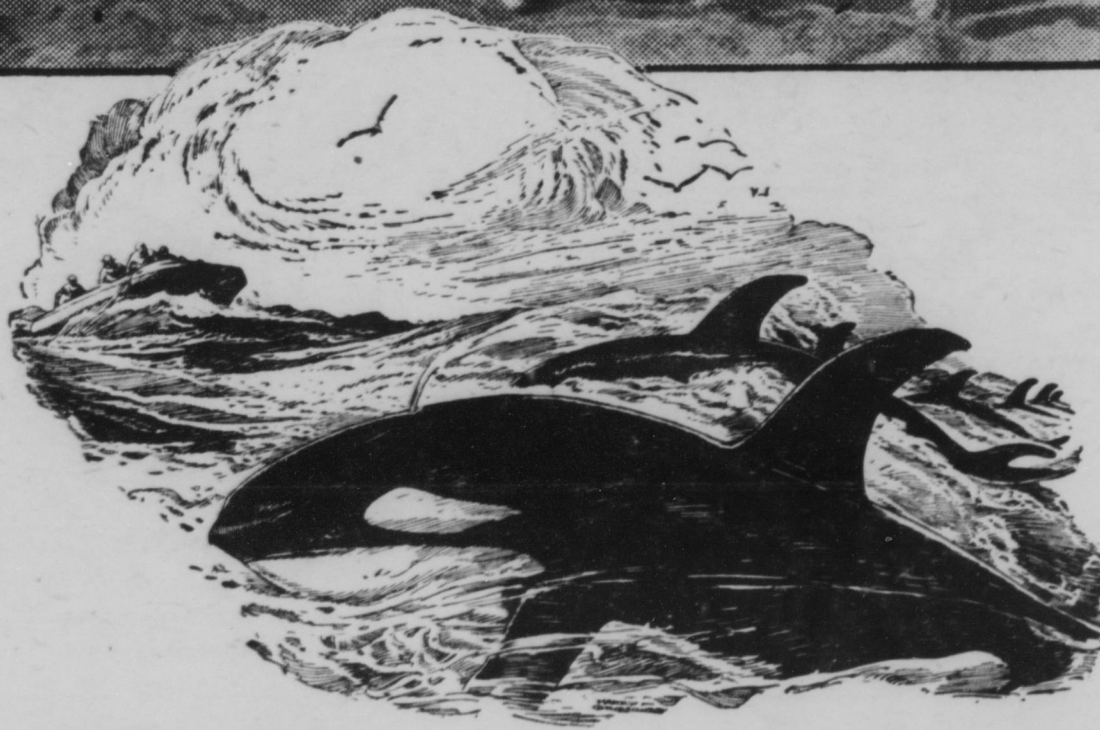
Then began a "round up" such as one could imagine only in a nightmare—men chasing "dragons" over the rocks, grabbing them by the tails, dumping them kicking and squirming into sacks. A few hours later the iguanas were munching away at food on another island, half a mile away, an iguana paradise.

"A year later we visited them, found them healthy and fat, and propagating," Captain Hancock said, discussing his scientific adventures in his office in Los Angeles.

Thus fate, and a man with an adventurous soul, caught, just as it was about to fail, the lifeline of one of the world's weirdest species, preserved it for perhaps more ages of time.

Captain Hancock, patron of science and master mariner, is a unique type among modern seagoing adventurers. He has a tremendous interest in science and leading scientific expeditions is his passion.

SEVERAL times a year Captain Hancock sets sail from Los Angeles harbor in his 195-foot cruiser. The *Velero*



—Photos on this page by W. Charles Swett; courtesy the G. Allan Hancock Expedition.

Heading directly for the small boat was a school of killer whales, most vicious creatures of the sea. If they attacked and overturned the boat, it would mean death.

III is an amazingly complete floating laboratory. It carries thousands of glass vials for specimens, apparatus for dredging the bottom of the sea, diving helmets, cages for animals and tanks for tropical fish.

For the Captain collects practically everything—hermit crabs and tortoises that weigh 500 pounds, sea elephants and booby birds, boa constrictors and ringtail monkeys, walking fish and microscopic insects—and presents them with his compliments to zoos, museums, and science laboratories.

Captain Hancock and W. Charles Swett, who has accompanied him on his expeditions, have taken some spectacular motion pictures of rare animals and birds in their native haunts. They have shot reels of the great booby birds with a six-foot wingspread, remarkable for their habit of carrying their eggs on their feet; guano birds which live by the million on the islands off the coast of Peru and cover the ground so thickly they look from a distance like a dark moving carpet acres and acres in extent; and most amazing of all, the "mating dance" of the albatross, the mysterious bird sailors never kill, fearing its death would bring them bad luck as it did to the Ancient Mariner in Coleridge's poem.

On Guadalupe Island Hancock's party captured an elephant seal, also called sea elephant, for the San Diego Zoo. She had a great mountain of fat for a

body, tiny flippers and a wiggling, wrinkled nose—and she weighed three tons. They named her Pansy.

She wasn't hard to catch. The men simply walked along the beach where hundreds of unsuspecting sea elephants were sunning themselves, picked out the largest and healthiest, and threw a net over her. The tricky part of the job was trussing her up and towing her out to the ship.

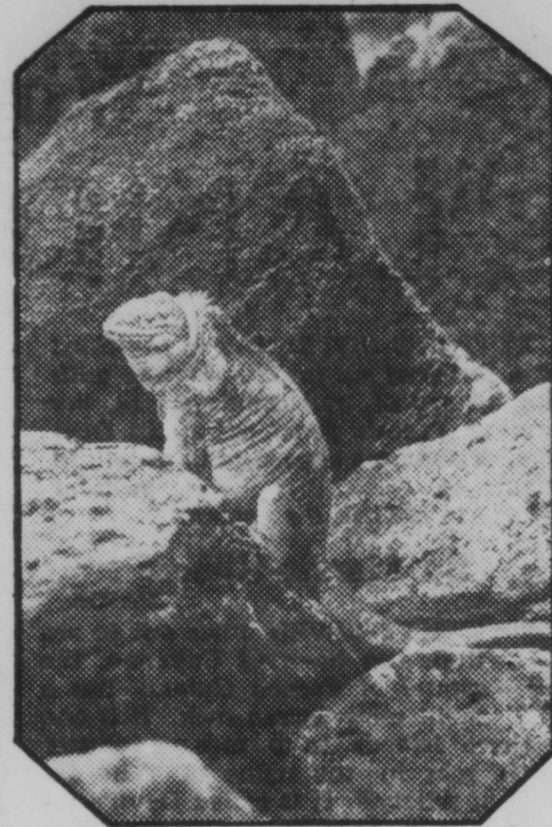
On Guadalupe they also watched an exciting battle between two bull seals for possession of a harem of females. The two bulls were in a murderous rage.

They tore great gashes in each other's sides. All about, the water was churned to froth, and so bloody it looked as though great buckets of paint had been poured in it. At last after hours of fighting the weaker bull gave up, its body a mass of wounds.

THE stellar seals at San Miguel Island weren't as large as sea elephants, but catching them was a much bigger thrill. A great net was stretched between the ship's launch and a small rowboat holding Captain Hancock and two other men. One by one, curious seals swam out to investigate the boats and were trapped.

Suddenly someone in the launch shouted, "Killer whale!"

Heading directly for the small boat was a school of the monsters, the most



Rare type of land iguana found on Galapagos—creatures saved from extinction by Captain Hancock's party.

savage, vicious creatures of the sea. They were 20 feet long; their wicked-looking fins stuck six feet out of the water.

The men in the launch watched in horror, but there was nothing they could do. If the killers attacked and overturned the rowboat, it would mean death for Hancock and his companions.

And then, miraculously, a few feet from the rowboat the whales swerved off their course. They had seen the seals struggling in the net! They threw themselves on the helpless seals with fury, slashing and tearing with their brutal jaws.

In 20 minutes the slaughter was over. As for the Captain, he had spent the time taking motion pictures! "It was an excellent chance," he said with satisfaction, "to photograph killer whales at close range."

When Captain Hancock visited Charles Island, in the Galapagos, in 1931, he found two settlers with a romantic story—Dr. Frederick Ritter and Frau Dore Koerwin. He had been a brilliant young surgeon in Berlin. She a patient in his hospital. They fell in love. Though both were already married, they resolved to leave their families and go together to the lonely Galapagos Islands.

There they could cast off the shackles of civilization—they would have the time and quiet to write profound studies in philosophy. They could be Adam and Eve in their own Garden of Eden.

When the *Velero* arrived, they discovered the two nature lovers had built themselves a neat stone house with a tin roof. They had planted a garden of papayas, pineapples, eggplant and melons, tamed a wild burro for a pet, and even rigged up a shower bath.

But their Eden wasn't perfect—Adam and Eve needed teeth! Before he left Berlin, Dr. Ritter explained, he had had all his teeth pulled so he would run no chances of toothache. He ordered a steel set made to take their place, but unfortunately he forgot to allow for the shrinkage of gums. His teeth would not stay in.

Frau Koerwin wasn't much better off. A dentist in the *Velero* party pulled her few remaining, badly decayed teeth.

The Captain found another weird colony on Indefatigable Island in the Galapagos. Only a handful of settlers lived on the desolate island—yet they were divided into two bitter armed camps. A German named Kuppler headed one faction. In the second camp were Ecuadorian fishermen.

Grudgingly the two camps traded with each other. Kuppler had a monopoly of the island's only drinking water, brackish and nauseating because the well was so near the ocean that sea water seeped in. He doled it out to the Ecuadorians in exchange for food.

Captain Hancock gave them generous supplies. They chattered their thanks for flour, rice and sugar, but there was one gift that made them caper along the shore with joy. It was several bottles of plain water from the *Velero*'s tanks.