

NEWS RELEASE



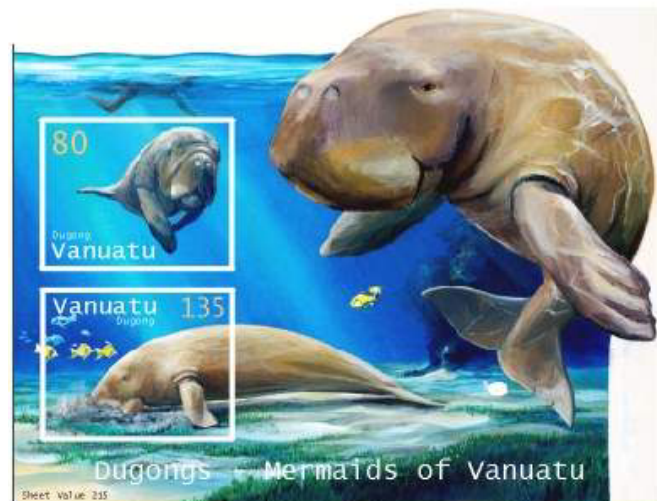
DUGONG



MERMAIDS OF VANUATU

The Dugong *Dugong Dugon*, (otherwise known as Sea Cow), is the sole member of the family *Dogongidae* and is found in limited numbers from east Africa to the western Pacific. The Dugong is often confused with the Manatee found around the estuaries of Florida and coming from the same order *Sirenia*. They are easily differentiated by their tail configuration. Early sailors likened the sea cows to Sirens or Mermaids, whose singing lured ships onto the rocks in ancient mythology.

Vanuatu's population was surveyed in 1988 and showed several hundred dugongs distributed in nearly 100 localities throughout the archipelago with the exception of Futuna. They are usually found as one or two animals with herds of up to ten animals being rare. The most accessible individual is found in Lamén Bay on the island of Epi and has become a major tourist attraction as was the famed Dugong of Port Resolution in Tanna before its recent death. In many locations as in other countries, they have been and are being hunted, but are now protected under the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources), as being vulnerable to extinction.



The Dugong is the world's only herbivorous marine mammal, consuming around 30kg of aquatic plants, mainly sea grass, daily. They will normally live up to 75 years with the females giving birth to a single calf about every 3-7 years. The young are suckled for 18 months and reach sexual maturity at around 10 years. The adults can reach over 3 metres in length and over 400 kg in weight.

They prefer warm (18°C) tropical and subtropical coastal waters and as such, Vanuatu is an ideal location for them to make their home. With ongoing protection, they will hopefully survive for future generations to admire.

Collectors Notes:

Designer:	Rick Youmans, Sydney, Australia
Printer:	Joh Enschede, Haarlem, The Netherlands
Process:	Offset Litho
Perforation Gauge:	13.75 x 2
Stamp Size:	29.13mm x 38.00mm horizontal
Mini Sheet Size:	120mm x 93mm horizontal
Denominations:	35, 75, 80 and 135 vatu.
Paper:	110 gsm, PVA gum stamp paper.
Period of Sale:	25 Sept, 2002 for a period of 2 years.

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