

A NOTE ON A JUVENILE INDIAN PORPOISE  
*NEOMERIS PHOCAENOIDES* (CUVIER) CAUGHT OFF CALICUT

V. BALAN

*Calicut Research Centre of CMFR Institute, Calicut.*

ABSTRACT

A juvenile Indian porpoise *Neomeris phocaenoides* (Cuvier) measuring 669 mm in total-length and weighing 4520 g was caught in gillnet, off Calicut, in February 1973. The morphometric data and the diagnostic features relating to the specimen are given.

A young female specimen of *Neomeris phocaenoides* (Cuvier) was caught in the gill net 'Mathichala Vala,' off Calicut, about 2 km away from the shore on the 10th February 1973. It weighed 4.520 kg. The occurrence of the porpoise is rare off the Calicut coast\* though Pillay (1926) recorded its frequent occurrence off Trivandrum, and Dawson (1959) reported the capture of 19 specimens in the shore-seine, Rampani, off Malpe.

The present specimen of Indian porpoise, belonging to the family Delphinidae and sub-family Delphininae, is characterized by the absence of both the dorsal fin and the beak. It is mostly in agreement with the brief description given by Dawson (1959). The mandibular and the maxillary teeth having spatulate crown and cylindrical root, are prominent.

The nostril is crescentic in shape. The dorsal and ventral parts of tail peduncle are thin as knife-edge. The colour of the porpoise is deep black over the upper  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the body on the right side, whereas, the black colour extends to only about  $\frac{1}{4}$  over the anterior upper left side of the body (Fig. 1). The caudal fluke, pectoral flippers and upper part of belly are deeply black. The rest of the body is grayish white. The bulged forehead is almost rounded. There is a slight constriction of the body above the pectoral flippers. The area in the middle of the back of the body is distinctly depressed in which the skin carries

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\* Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*) is sighted frequently in association with the oil sardine shoals either singly or in school in the inshore waters almost throughout the year off Calicut which is very helpful in locating sardine (Balan 1961).

a number of minute horny scales believed to be the remnants of the bony and horny armour which protected the extinct Zeuglodont whales (Lydekker 1922, Pillay 1926 and Norman and Fraser 1937). The posterior half of the body is highly streamlined.

*Distribution:* The species is abundant off the coast of Bombay, Madras and Travancore, and has also been met with off Japan and China (Lydekker 1922). Dawson (1959) stated that the species has a wide distribution in the Indo-Pacific, ranging from Cape of Good Hope to Japan and is often known to ascend the estuaries of larger rivers. Pillay (1926) mentioned that it is fairly common during certain seasons of the year at Trivandrum and the northern parts.

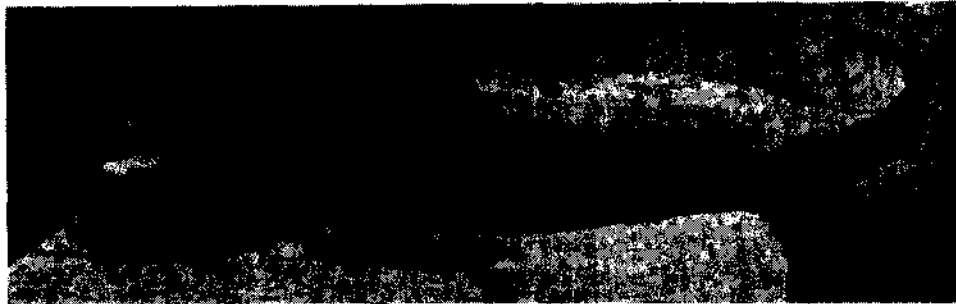


FIG. 1. The young specimen of *Neomeris phocaenoides* caught off Calicut.

*The different body measurements in mm:* Total length of specimen from tip of nose to tip of caudal fluke notch: 669. Length of head from snout tip to eye: 79. Horizontal length of eye: 9. Vertical height of eye: 6. Length of snout from nostril: 92. Length of pectoral flipper from its mid-base insertion: 129. Width of pectoral flipper at the widest part: 53. Width of base of flipper: 42. Length from nostril to angle of mouth: 66. Horizontal length of caudal fluke up to the fluke notch: 60. Total width of caudal fluke (between extreme tips): 202. Height of body at head region across nostril: 130. Maximum circumference of body: 431. Circumference of body across origin of pectoral flippers: 390. Distance from angle of mouth to origin of pectoral flipper insertion: 119. Width of gape of mouth (horizontal): 64. Distance from posterior part of pectoral flipper base to the origin of caudal fluke: 414. Width of nostril (blow-hole 16.): Inter-orbital width: 158. Length of one side of mandible: 52. Length of one side of maxilla: 51. Tip of mandible to anterior point of genital orifice: 385.

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