Seahorses along Thoothukudi coast

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During routine visit to the Mottaigopuram fish landing centre at Thoothukudi on 27.7.2015 and on 20.10.2015, five numbers of seahorses were collected from the fish catch kept for auctioning. These were caught in indigenous trawl operated along the near shore sea grass beds at Thoothukudi. This gear mainly targets juveniles of prawn (especially *Penaeus semisulcatus*), crabs, cephalopods and fishes. Occasionally stray numbers of seahorses are also caught. The species obtained in the present collections were *Hippocampus fuscus*, *H. trimaculatus* and *H. spinosissimus*.

1. *Hippocampus fuscus*
   Height: 104.2 mm; Trunk rings: 11; Tail rings: 35; Head length: 22.9 mm; Snout length: 8 mm; Head length/Snout length: 2.86; Dorsal fin rays: 16; Pectoral fin rays 15; Coronet: Low, arch of neck is a smooth curve or is slightly raised and rough; Spines: low, slightly developed; head large compared to body; deep head; slightly dark

2. *Hippocampus trimaculatus*
   Height: 94.1 mm; Trunk rings: 11; Tail rings: 40; Head length: 21.3 mm; Snout length: 9.9 mm; Head Length/Snout length: 2.15; Dorsal fin rays: 20; Pectoral fin rays: 17; Coronet: Low, in line with arch of neck, visible as five tiny points; Spines: low and small; Sharp, hook-like cheek and eye spines (appear flat); narrow head; no nose spine; Colour pattern: Golden orange, sandy coloured; large dark spots on the dorso-lateral surface of the first, fourth and seventh trunk rings

3. *Hippocampus spinosissimus*
   Height: 98 mm; Trunk rings: 11; Tail rings: 37; Head length: 21.1 mm; Snout length: 9.9 mm; Head Length/Snout length: 2.2; Dorsal fin rays: 20; Pectoral fin rays: 16; Coronet: five sharp spines; Spines: well developed, sharp, longer on first, fourth, seventh and eleventh trunk rings; Single cheek spine; small nose spine; spine in front of coronet rather undeveloped. Males have strongly

Fig. 1. *Hippocampus fuscus*

Fig. 2. *Hippocampus trimaculatus*
The entire genus of *Hippocampus* is listed in Appendix II of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) effective from May 2004. *H. trimaculatus* is listed as vulnerable and *H. fuscus* as data deficient by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). In India, all species of *Hippocampus* have been placed under Schedule –I of the Wild Life Protection Act (1972) in 2001 which bans any collection or trade of seahorses. According to the fishermen, earlier there were agents who would purchase live seahorses for `25 per piece. However, due to the intervention of the Forest Department and for fear of punishment, this trade has now stopped. Any seahorse noticed while sorting the catch is therefore released back to the sea. This feedback from the fishermen might be true as the traders did not show any objection when these seahorses present in the catch to be auctioned were collected for the present study.

Unprecedented heavy landings of juvenile Kiddy shrimp, *Parapenaeopsis stylifera* along Karnataka coast

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*Parapenaeopsis stylifera* is one of the most abundant and highly valued shrimp species in India. It forms about 20% of the penaeid shrimp catch of Karnataka with the period from January to June contributing the majority of the catch. In general, the post-monsoon months of August to December is considered as a lean period for *P. stylifera*. During this period single day fishing trawlers land catch of a mixture of fish, prawns, stomatopods and other crustaceans. The contribution of prawns in the catch is around 10 to 20%. Traditionally, the single day operating trawlers of Bhatkal and Gangoli fisheries harbours go for bottom trawling immediately after the lifting of mechanised fishing ban in early August, whereas the trawlers based at Mangalore and Malpe...