

**NOTE ON THE FOOD OF THE SPINNER DOLPHIN  
*STENELLA LONGIROSTRIS* GRAY, CAUGHT OFF MAHARASHTRA COAST**

**ABSTRACT**

The morphometric measurements of two spinner dolphins and the stomach contents analysis of one of them are presented here.

THE INSTANCES of landings of dolphins incidentally caught in the fishing gear from Indian waters have been recorded earlier by Ferguson (1903), Lal Mohan (1985) and Rajaguru and Natarajan (1985).

The dolphin locally called 'Gada' or 'Himra', accidentally caught in Gill nets locally known as 'Waghra' operated in 45 m depth off Bombay High (near O.N.G.C. offshore base) was landed at Sassoon Dock on 11th February 1986 and the one caught

in Gill nets laid in 48 m off Janjira-Murud was landed at New Ferry Wharf on 5th March, 1986. Both the specimens were uniformly dark gray in colour.

The morphometric measurements of two adult male spinner dolphins *Stenella longirostris* Gray were recorded as given in Table I. The measurements were taken point-to-point on the right side of the specimen with a metre tape.

Table 1. *Morphometric characters (Measurements in mm)*

| Morphometric characters   | Place        |                 |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
|   | Sassoon Dock | New Ferry Wharf |
| Total length (from mid-caudal bifurcation point to the tip of snout)        | 1900         | 2280            |
| Length between mid-caudal bifurcation point and origin of flipper           | 1460         | 1760            |
| Length between origin of flipper and eye                                    | 185          | 223             |
| Length between anterior end of eye and tip of snout                         | 410          | 492             |
| Length between eye and base of upper beak                                   | 52           | 61              |
| Length of upper beak  | 215          | 258             |
| Length of lower beak upto base of eye                                       | 550          | 659             |
| Base of upper beak  | 335          | 395             |
| Length from blow hole to the tip of snout                                   | 411          | 488             |
| Width of blow hole  | 29           | 34              |
| Base of dorsal fin  | 258          | 310             |
| Height of dorsal fin  | 182          | 218             |
| Circumference of body at origin of dorsal fin                               | 375          | 448             |
| Circumference of body at origin of caudal fluke                             | 137          | 163             |
| Length from mid-caudal fluke bifurcation point to the basal insertion point | 137          | 164             |
| No. of teeth in each jaw (either sides)                                     | 108/108      | 108/108         |
| Weight of the specimen  | 128 kg       | 148 kg          |

*Stomach contents*

The stomach contents of a dolphin landed at Sassoon Dock were brought to the laboratory for analysis which is presented in Table 2.

The species is reported particularly associated with the tuna schools (Perrin, 1969) and feeds upon mesopelagic fishes and

The carcass of the specimen was thrown back into the sea, at Sassoon Dock, as there was no demand from the local people, owing to the sentimental reasons, while the one at New Ferry Wharf was transported by a truck to Alibag about 100 kms south of Bombay. The enquiries with the local fishermen revealed that the flesh of dolphin was consumed by the tribal people in and around Alibag.

Table 2. *Stomach contents*

| Name of fish                             | Percentage                     |        |
|--|--------------------------------|--------|
| Fish remains — <i>Megalaspis cordyla</i> | Length 290 mm<br>Weight 190 gm | } 74.2 |
| Other fish remains (unidentifiable)      | 170 gm                         |        |
| <i>Loligo duvaucelii</i>                 | 115 gm                         | 23.7   |
| Crab remains                             | 10 gm                          | 2.1    |

epipelagic and mesopelagic squids (Perrin *et al.*, 1973). In the present case the fish was observed to be dominant food item followed by squids. Tunas are also landed by gill nets (Waghra) during the winter months.

With a view to create an awareness among the fishermen about the endangered status of the marine mammals such as the spinner dolphin in the present case, the authors have advised the local fishermen to immediately

release back into the sea whenever they come across such animals as an incidental catch in their fishing operations.

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