

Stranding of Indian Ocean humpback dolphin along Uttara Kannada coast, Karnataka.

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Strandings of two Indian Ocean humpback dolphins along Uttara Kannada coast of Karnataka, during November, 2019 and April 2020 is reported. One dead dolphin was washed ashore at Murdeshwar beach of Bhatkal taluk on 11.4.2020 in decayed condition (Fig 1). Based on the external characters, with the help of the available photograph it was identified as a female Indian Ocean humpback dolphin *Sousa plumbea* (G. Cuvier, 1829). It had beached about one kilometre away from the northern side of the Murdeshwar Temple, surrounded on three sides by Arabian sea. Murdeshwar Bay is a safe place for berthing indigenous crafts and gill nets are the major

gear used by local fishers as the bottom is rocky and unsuitable for trawling. The coral reef Island, Nethrani is 20 km away from this beach. The stranding happened during the national lockdown period from 23rd March to 14th April 2020 in connection with COVID- 19 pandemic and when no fishing activities were permitted along entire Indian coast. The dolphin might have entered the shallow water in pursuit of fish schools. As there was no fishing, the mortality is attributed to physical strain in trying to get away from the shallow coastal waters. While collecting the detailed information on this stranding event, another anecdote of a dolphin stranded on 8.11.2019 at Holangadde beach of Kumta Taluk in decomposed condition with photographic evidence was accessed. This was also identified as *Sousa plumbea* (Fig 2). Both dolphins were buried by concerned forest officials and Gram Panchayath authorities at their respective stranded localities. The author thanks Department of Forest, Department of Fisheries, local newspaper 'Karavali Munjavu' and Gram Panchayat officials for providing the dolphin stranding information and photographs during lockdown period.



Fig. 1. The dolphin stranded on Murdeshwar beach.



Fig. 2. The dolphin stranded at Holangadde beach, Kumta.