

Report on cetaceans stranded in the Gulf of Mannar

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A dead female dolphin identified as Spinner dolphin, *Stenella longirostris* (Gray, 1828) was found washed ashore at Dhanushkodi near Rameshwaram, Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu along the coast of Gulf of Mannar (09.1836111 N; 79.4061111 E) on 24th August 2020. Morphometrics recorded are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Morphometric measurements of the Spinner dolphin

Morphometric	Measurement (cm)
Length, snout to melon	: 16
Length, snout to angle of mouth	: 24
Length, snout to blowhole	: 29
Length, snout to center of eye	: 28
Length, snout anterior insertion of dorsal fin	: 74
Length, snout to tip of dorsal fin	: 85
Length, snout to fluke notch (total length)	: 152
Length, snout to anterior insertion of flipper	: 36
Length, snout to center of umbilicus	: 80
Length, snout to center of genital aperture	: 108
Length, snout to center of anus	: 114
Length, notch of flukes to center of anus	: 40
Length of flipper: anterior insertion to tip	: 26
Length of flipper: axilla to tip	: 17
Width of flipper: Maximum	: 8
Fluke span	: 27
Width of flukes	: 12
Depth of fluke notch	: 2
Height of dorsal fin	: 24
Width of dorsal fin	: 15
Base of dorsal fin	: 26
Girth: axillary	: 64
Girth: maximum (at anterior insertion of dorsal fin)	: 74
Girth: at the level of anus	: 33
Blubber thickness: ventral	: 2
Total number of teeth on one side of upper jaw	: 47
Total number of teeth on one side of lower jaw	: 42

The specimen was relatively lean with slender head at the apex of the melon. The melon was slightly convex and the flippers were slender and recurved. The dorsal fin was relatively wide-based and falcate in shape. The tail stock was relatively deeper with enlarged keel (post-anal hump). The total numbers of teeth in each half of the upper jaw were 47 and lower jaw were 42. The necropsy was performed on the same day. There were no significant external injuries or lesions except few abrasions which might be due to physical damage after death. The actual cause of death could not be determined as most of the internal organs were in advanced stage of decomposition.

Two adult sea cows (*Dugong dugon*), were found stranded along the Gulf of Mannar coast at Pudumadam (09.273446 N; 78.996251 E) and at Singivalai Kuchi near Vedhalai (09.274886 N; 79.062368 E). This included a female sea cow on 24th August 2020 and a male on 04th September 2020, respectively (Fig.2 a & b). The morphometric parameters recorded are given in Table 2.



Fig.1. Stranded Spinner dolphin, *Stenella longirostris* in the Gulf of Mannar



Fig.2. Dugongs found ashore in Gulf of Mannar. (a) Female and (b) Male sea cows

Table 2. Morphometric measurements (cm) of *Dugong dugon*

Morphometric parameters	Female	Male
Tip of snout to fluke notch	: 295	270
Tip of snout to center of anus	: 220	211
Tip of snout to center of genital aperture	: 205	198
Tip of snout to center of umbilicus	: 182	171
Tip of snout to anterior insertion of flipper	: 75	72
Tip of snout to center of eye	: 39	35
Tip of snout to external ear	: 51	49
Center of eye to ear	: 12	10
Distance between centers of eyes	: 33	33
Center of eye to center of nostril (same side)	: 22	20
Flipper length, anterior insertion to tip	: 55	48
Flipper length, axilla to tip	: 42	37
Maximum width of flipper	: 29	24
Girth at umbilicus	: 202	180
Girth at axilla	: 152	146
Length, Muzzle (anterio-posterior)	: 25	24
Breadth, Muzzle (lateral)	: 24	22
Length, Chin	: 16	15
Breadth, Chin	: 17	17
Sex	: Female	Male
Weight (approximate)	: 300 kg	300 kg

The necropsies were performed on the same days of

stranding. No significant external injuries or lesions on the female cetacean except few abrasions and sloughed off patches of skin which might be due to physical damage after the death of animal was noted. The body of male cetacean was relatively robust with loss of one fourth of the ventral skin along with blubber from the abdominal region of the body. The male animal was comparatively more damaged than the female. The internal organs of both the specimens did not reveal any significant abnormalities and cause of death could not be ascertained as they were in advanced stages of decomposition. Sea cows are sluggish animals and prefer shallow protected bays. They are herbivorous marine mammals mostly relying sea-grasses.