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**INSTANCES OF FINLESS BLACK PORPOISE, *NEOPHOCAENA PHOCAENOIDES*
CAUGHT IN MANDAPAM REGION ALONG THE PALK BAY COAST
IN TAMIL NADU***

The finless black porpoise, *Neophocaena phocaenoides* G. Cuvier is widely distributed in the Indo-Pacific ranging from Cape of Good Hope to Japan and China and often known to ascend the estuaries of larger rivers. In India, this species is fairly common along the coasts of Bombay, Madras and Trivandrum. Since, porpoises are considered as endangered marine mammals, strict regulations have been imposed by the Government authorities for their conservation and management. Incidental catch of porpoises reported in the west coast is more than in the east coast of India as may be seen from the published information. It appears that porpoise, *Neophocaena phocaenoides* frequents the coastal waters and gets captured on many occasions. More recently, incidental catch of porpoises are on the increase in Mandapam region.

In the present report, details on the incidental landings of porpoises, *Neophocaena phocaenoides* from fish landing centres in

Mandapam region along the Palk Bay coast are given. As there was no bidder for the porpoises due to lack of demand, they were buried in the beach.

A female porpoise of 77 cm in total length was caught in a gillnet ('Choodai Valai') on 08.07.1988 off Mandapam at a depth of 8 m (Fig. 1) The second porpoise measuring 132 cm in total length was a female caught in a gillnet at a depth of 6 m on 11.08.1990 off Pillaimadam. The third porpoise measuring 126 cm in total length was a female caught in gillnet at a depth of 12 m off Verkodu near Rameswaram on 16.11.1990. The fourth porpoise was a male measuring 132 cm in total length was stranded and washed ashore in decomposed condition at Agnitheertham near Rameswaram on 25.10.1992.

Morphometric measurements (in cm) of all the four porpoises are presented in Table 1.

Dawson (1959) reported four embryos in

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TABLE 1. Morphometric measurements (in cm) of Finless black porpoise *Neophocaena phocaenoides*

Date of catch	08.07.'88	11.08.'90	16.11.'90	25.10.'92
Place of catch/stranding	Mandapam	Pillaimadam	Verkodu (Rameswaram)	Agnitheertham (Rameswaram)
Sex/ Body characters	Female	Female	Female	Male
Total length (tip of upper jaw to deepest part of caudal fluke notch)	77.0	132.0	126.0	132.0
Tip of upper jaw to anterior insertion of flipper (right)	20.1	29.0	-	27.5
Tip of upper jaw to centre of eye	9.6	16.0	12.0	11.0
Width of eye	-	-	-	2.5
Tip of upper jaw to centre of blow-hole	-	16.0	-	18.0
Length of flipper (anterior insertion - right)	17.0	30.0	-	23.0
Length of flipper (anterior insertion - left)	16.6	30.0	-	-
Length of eye	1.1	1.4	1.2	4.0
Girth at eye	18.4	44.0	-	-
Length of blow-hole	1.7	2.5	2.1	2.5
Width of blow-hole	0.8	1.1	1.0	2.0
Tip of upper jaw to the centre of anus	52.9	96.0	-	88.0
Length of anal slit	0.8	1.4	-	2.5
Girth at anus	14.5	50.0	-	58.0
Tip of upper jaw to the centre of genital slit	44.1	79.0	-	72.0
Length of genital slit	8.7	9.0	-	-
Length of penis	-	-	-	9.5
Tip of upper jaw to the centre of umbilicus	36.4	62.4	-	-
Length of throat-grooves	-	23.0	-	-
Caudal fluke span	22.4	40.0	34.0	23.0
Notch of caudal flukes to centre of anus	22.5	41.0	-	-
Notch of caudal flukes to centre of genital aperture	31.0	60.0	-	-
Teeth counts (in numbers)				
Upper (right)	-	16	-	17
Upper (left)	-	14	-	-
Lower (right)	-	17	-	17
Lower (left)	-	16	-	-
Weight (in kg)	-	30.0	22.0	45.0

the size range 9.3-15.5 cms among seventeen porpoises of the species *Neophocaena phocaenoides* landed at Malpe, South Kanara coast. Balan (1978) reported a juvenile specimen measuring 66.9 cm in total length and weighing 4.52 kg caught in gillnet off Calicut, Kerala coast.

Recently, Ganapathy (1992) reported one adult of *N. phocaenoides* measuring 120cm stranded at Mullimunai (Thondi) along the Palk Bay coast in Tamil Nadu. According to the present reports, porpoises are caught more recently from east coast of India.