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Dolphin excluder net - an indigenous method to ward off the damage by dolphins in ring net

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After the introduction of ring net in Kozhikode district in 1989, there was a gradual reduction of other traditional pelagic gears in this area. At present, ring net is the main gear for the exploitation of pelagic resources like oil sardine and mackerel. One of the problems faced by the fishermen operating the ring net is the damage of the gear caused by dolphin when it tries to prey up on the fish. Now the fishermen have found out an indigenous way to save the net from this menace by encircling the ring net by another net. This method has been in use by some boats for the last four to five years, and of late it has become very popular.

Dolphin excluder net

This net is made of 15 mm nylon twine having a mesh size of 400 mm (Fig. 1). The size of the net varies depending on the ring net and will generally be 100 m more than the ring net. The head rope is provided with plastic cans as floats (Fig. 2) and the foot rope with iron rings of 15 cm diameter as weight (Fig. 3). Such a large ring used as weight is to avoid twisting of the net while shooting it. There are around 55 to 60 such rings which are tied at an interval of 8 m. The cost of making a net varies from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 18,000/-

Operation of the Dolphin excluder net

Immediately after the shooting of ring net, the dolphin excluder net loaded in the carrier boat is swiftly shot around the ring net at a distance of around 10 to 50 m away from it. The distance of the net from

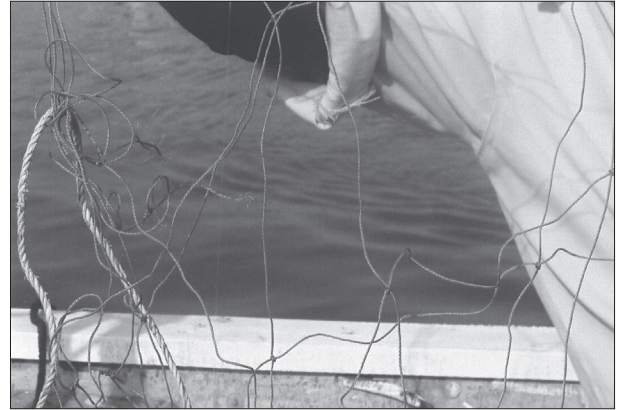


Fig. 1. Part of the dolphin excluder net



Fig. 2. Floats of the dolphin excluder net

the ring net depends on the water current, species of fish *etc.* If the targeted fish shoal is of oil sardine, then the distance between the ring net and dolphin



Fig. 3. Iron rings of dolphin excluder net

excluder net will be more, in order to avoid the entanglement of the two nets as the oil sardine shoals have the habit of dragging out the net once it is encircled. For the operation of the dolphin excluder net, three fishermen are required, one to operate the carrier boat and two to shoot the net. This net acts as a protective wall for the ring net. The fishermen are of the view that the dolphins move away from it once the net is seen and thus the ring nets are now almost totally free from damage by dolphins. At present this net is used only up to 20-25 m depth where, according to the fishermen, the dolphin problem commonly occurs. In deeper areas, dolphin attacks are rarely felt.