

Title of the book: Marine Mammal Species of India

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The charismatic marine mammals of Indian waters which include the majestic whales, intelligent dolphins and endearing sea cows are among the least known of the marine living resources. Lack of appropriate literature on identification, nature of their habitat and restrictions on their capture under Wild Life protection Act are some of the constraints faced by researchers studying these spectacular endangered animals. The recent publication of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, "Marine Mammal species of India" is packed with vital information on all the 26 species recorded in the Indian Seas. The Institute has been studying marine mammals since 1947 and particularly from 2003 to 2012 as a programme funded by Ministry of Earth Sciences.

The descriptions on the taxonomic status and identification characters along with supportive illustrations of each of these species will definitely aid in field identification of these resources. The authors have included separate maps indicating their distribution in Indian waters and also added information on their habitat, food, exploitation and threats and the conservation status of each of these species which makes the publication an indispensable reference book for all who are interested in understanding marine living resources of our planet. The narration is in simple language, intermingling science with interesting facts and observations on their social behaviour which will mesmerise the reader. The authors have also added a glossary for scientific terminologies which will help the reader in understanding the text clearly. Apart from the descriptive text, it would have been helpful for the readers if a consolidated table comparing the main morphological characters had been included.

Stranding of marine mammals on the beaches has always attracted human attention. People throng the beaches to have a glimpse of the giants of the sea when their carcasses are washed ashore. The history of stranding of whales for the last 150 years in different parts of the Indian coast has been traced by the authors with relevant anecdotes wherever possible. One interesting report is that of the skeleton of a dwarf female sperm whale which was stranded at Vishakhapatnam on 28th Feb 1853 and which was gifted to the British Museum by Sir Walter Elliot.

The publication is packed lavishly with clear and vivid illustrations capturing various activities like spouting, breaching, hopping, and lob tailing of these enchanting animals in their natural habitats. These photographs are extremely fascinating and need special appreciation. The section on 'Future Directions' provide clear cut directions needed to strengthen programmes which would help to conserve and

understand these highly vulnerable groups which are considered as icons of conservation movement and at the same time support more advanced research in the country.

The publication will definitely be a useful guide for researchers, planners and students. The book is suggested as a "must read" and "must possess" for all those interested in marine animals especially, naturalists, mariners and those who plan to be prospective mammalogists studying these marvels of ocean life.

Reviewed by Dr. V. Kripa, Head, Fishery Environment Management Division, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Cochin, India.

