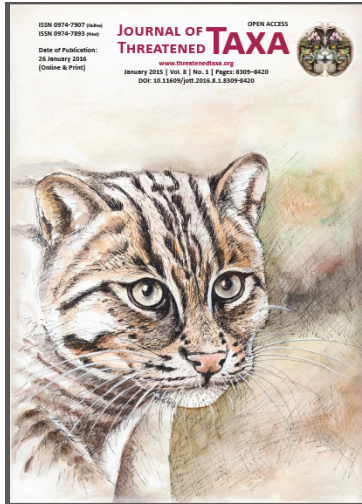


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RESPONSE

COMMENTS ON THE LIST OF MARINE MAMMALS FROM KERALA

R.P. Kumarran

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COMMENTS ON THE LIST OF MARINE MAMMALS FROM KERALA

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Nameer et al. (2015) in their recent paper on vertebrate diversity of Kerala present an erroneous analysis on marine mammals based on incorrect checklist produced by Nameer (2015). It is necessary that the following errors be corrected and corrigenda be published. This helps to prevent misleading information being repeatedly published in future.

Nameer et al. (2015)

In Fig. 3, 19% are marine mammals. The authors have to ascertain those records from the originals. The bottom topography of Kerala is not suitable to support high diversity of marine mammal species as reported. Many oceanic species listed are questionable. Kerala being one among the well-studied regions for marine mammals (Afsal et al. 2009) the compilation by authors shows gross negligence with no peer-reviewed publications.

Nameer (2015)

I. It is evident from the references that the author has failed to consult peer-reviewed publications for marine mammals in India. Most of the citations are grey literature. If they are listing 23 species of marine mammals, where is the pertaining literature?

II. The number of species recorded from Kerala is on the higher side. It is 50% more than the inventory proposed by Kumarran (2012). What is the reason for this sudden increase in the number of species?

III. In Table 1, the following entries need corrections.

2. Dugong: In my 28 years of experience working on marine mammals, I have never come across a record/publication of dugong from Kerala in the last 200 years. They are discontinuously distributed in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Andaman Islands (Kumaran 2002).

Under the column English name, why have they given another name within parentheses? The English names in serial numbers 97, 100, 101, 102, 105, 107, 110, 113, 114, 115 and 117 are not in currency. In the case of 98 what is inside the parentheses is the accepted English name.

When writing the English names of the cetacean species, it is customary to follow common names approved by International Whaling Commission. The author has failed to follow that style leading to more confusion.

Likewise, it is preferable to record vernacular names that are in currency than attempting to translate English names to vernacular. The purpose of recording the indigenous technical knowledge is to learn the age-old practices and reach out to the natives more easily. It is understandable that several species will often have overlapping vernacular names. In the last three decades, both the fishing distance from the shore and the fishing time has increased, consequently increasing the interaction of fishermen with new cetaceans species. However, a thorough survey should be able to produce more vernacular names in currency than coining new ones.

97. What is recorded from India is Long-beaked Common Dolphin *Delphinus capensis* and *delphis* as quoted (which is not found in Indian waters). For details



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the author should consult Jayasankar et al. (2008).

Similarly serial numbers 104, 106, 107, 113, 114 are questionable. The author needs to support those records with peer-reviewed publications on them.

100. The only publication Jeyabaskaran et al. (2011), to the best of my knowledge is based on a photographic record with no detailed measurements. So as of now, it is a questionable record. For instance in the case of striped dolphin kindly refer to the first record in India that describes several aspects of the species (Kumaran 2003).

101. Fraser's dolphin record is also questionable.

102. There is nothing called Melon-headed Dolphin. It is a dolphin, known as Melon-headed Whale like other dolphin species such as Killer Whale or False Killer Whale.

105. It should be Indo-Pacific Humpbacked Dolphin.

109. The Bottlenose Dolphin reported from India is *Tursiops aduncus* and not *truncatus*. And the English name should be Indo-Pacific Bottlenose Dolphin.

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