

Observations on marine mammals in southern Iran, January 2000

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Abstract: Observations on the Finless Porpoise, *Neophocaena phocaenoides*, Humpback Dolphin, *Sousa plumbea*, and Dugong, *Dugong dugon*, in the Hara Protected Area, Khouran Straits, are presented. All are on the Red List of IUCN. Details on the identification are given, and their status is discussed.

Kurzfassung: Aus dem Schutzgebiet von Hara in der Straße von Hormus werden Beobachtungen vom Indischen Schweinswal, *Neophocaena phocaenoides*, Weissen Delphin, *Sousa plumbea*, und vom Dugong, *Dugong dugon*, mitgeteilt. Alle Arten stehen auf der Roten Liste der bedrohten Tier- und Pflanzenarten der IUCN. Einzelheiten zur Artbestimmung werden aufgeführt und der Status diskutiert.

Key words: Finless Porpoise, *Neophocaena phocaenoides*, Humpback Dolphin, *Sousa plumbea*, Dugong, *Dugong dugon*, Middle East.

Only a few decades ago little was known about the status of marine mammals inhabiting the Persian Gulf (cf. BASSON et al. 1977), and even though more information has become available more recently (e.g. NISHIWAKI & MARSH 1985, ROSS et al. 1994, ROBINEAU & FIQUET 1996, BALDWIN & COCKROFT 1997, BALDWIN et al. 1999, KASUYA 1999) knowledge is still anecdotal. It thus seems useful to publish some further observations.

During a survey of waders and other waterbirds along the coast of Iran in January and February 2000 (VAN DER HAVE et al. 2001), several marine mammals were observed on 24 and 29 January 2000 from a boat near and inside the Hara Protected Area (Important Bird Area No. 96 in EVANS 1994), Khouran Straits, province of Hormuzgan, southern Iran. They are listed below. Geographic positions were measured in the field with GPS.

Finless Porpoise *Neophocaena phocaenoides*

Two individuals were seen surfacing about 20 times at an observation distance of 15–50 m in a rather narrow and muddy creek, probably 10 m wide and not deeper than 5 m, among large stands of mangrove *Avicennia marina* in the Hara Protected Area (26°50'13"N 55°43'35"E) on 24 January, 2000. The colour of the animals was rather dark grey and the length of both estimated to be 1.2 m. They lacked a dorsal fin, and the dorsal ridge was seen only (but very clearly!) when the animals swam away from us. The description of the way of swimming by KASUYA (1999) (“slow rolling on the surface”) is very appropriate and reminded us of the