

Irrawaddy dolphin carcass at East Coast beach

Subject: Irrawaddy dolphin, *Orcaella brevirostris* (Mammalia: Cetacea: Delphinidae).

Subject identified by: Contributors.

Location, date and time: Singapore Island, East Coast Park Beach in front of Burger King fast-food restaurant; 16 July 2014; morning.

Habitat: Beach with fine sand, at intertidal zone.

Observers: Marcus Chua, Tan Wen and Jan Tan.

Observation: The skeletal remains of an Irrawaddy dolphin were found partially buried in the sand on the intertidal area along East Coast beach (Fig. 1). Having been alerted by staff of the National Parks Board on the evening of 15 July 2014, M. A. H. Chua set out the following morning to collect the remains. The skull, vertebrae and forelimbs seem quite intact, but the teeth, ribs and pelvis are missing. The specimen has been deposited at the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum in the National University of Singapore. The animal is estimated to be about 2.2 m in total length, and is believed to have been dead for at least one week.

Remarks: The specimen was compared with skeletons of small cetaceans in the Zoological Reference Collection of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, which include the Irrawaddy dolphin and the finless porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*). The morphology of the upper jaw and palate, and mandible (Fig. 2) is that of an Irrawaddy dolphin. The mandible is distinctive in being slender with a concave ventral margin.

The Irrawaddy dolphin grows to a maximum total length of 2.75 m, and occurs in the shallow coastal waters, estuaries and rivers of India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, western Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam and the Philippines (Shirihai & Jarrett, 2006: 244). Although two museum specimens from Singapore have been reported (Sigurdsson & Yang, 1990: 32), there appears to be no published recent record from there. Because of this, the species is not listed in the Singapore Red Data Book (see Lim et al., 2008). The present specimen confirms the presence of this small cetacean in the area, but its national population status is still indeterminate.

References:

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- Sigurdsson, J. B. & C. M. Yang, 1990. Marine mammals of Singapore. In: Chou L. M. & P. K. L. Ng (eds.). *Essays in Zoology*. Papers commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Department of Zoology, National University of Singapore. pp. 25-37.

Note: For the procurement of this specimen, the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum is grateful to the National Parks Board, in particular Cheo Pei Rong (National Biodiversity Centre), Liew Qi, Jan Tan and Tan Wen (Coastal Parks). Kate Pocklington, Maxine Mowe, Ng Ting Hui and Liew Jia Huan assisted in the preparation and transportation of the carcass.

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Fig. 1. Skeletal remains of Irrawaddy dolphin at the intertidal zone of East Coast Park Beach, with head on the right. Photograph by Marcus A. H. Chua



Fig. 2. Upper jaw and palate (left) and right mandible (right) of dolphin carcass, positioned with head pointing upwards. Photographs by Kelvin K. P. Lim