

The Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin of the Arabian Region: A Status Review

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Abstract

Records of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin sightings, strandings, and museum specimens in the Arabian region were compiled and used to review the distribution and status of this species. Nominal usage of *Sousa chinensis* (Osbeck, 1765) has been retained as a pragmatic measure, although the species present in the region resembles *Sousa plumbea* (Cuvier, 1828). Little is known about the ecology of this species in the region. Most available information on *S. chinensis* in the region originates from the Sultanate of Oman, where this species is among the most commonly recorded cetaceans; however, there is no absolute measure of abundance for anywhere in the region and the status of the species is unknown. Distribution is described for the region to include much of the Arabian (Persian) Gulf, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea, but notably excludes the Gulf of Oman. This discontinuous distribution suggests the possible presence of discrete populations within the region. Beach-cast/dead individuals represent nearly two-thirds of all records (n=303) of this species in Oman. Live sightings indicate unusually large group sizes (up to 100 individuals) in the Arabian Sea and Arabian Gulf. Occasional associations with *Tursiops* sp. and *Delphinus capensis tropicalis* were documented. Mating behavior and the presence of calves were recorded in the months of April and May, and calves were also reported in June, October, November, and December. Threats to humpback dolphins in the Arabian region include incidental capture in fishing nets, coastal and offshore development (e.g., land reclamation, dredging, port and harbor construction), pollution, boat traffic, oil and gas exploration (including seismic surveying), military exercises, and biotoxins associated with red tide events. Evidence for historic and current directed catches of *S. chinensis* is limited, but opportunistic hunting may occur. Intraspecific variation in cranial measurements of individuals from the Arabian Sea coast of Oman fall within

relative values found in individuals from the Saudi Arabian Gulf coast. Cranial abnormalities were few. Recommendations are made for conservation management-oriented research focusing on stock identity and status assessments, as well as for monitoring of fisheries by-catch, clearer definition of other threats, continued specimen and sample collection, and training of local scientists.

Key Words: Humpback dolphin, *Sousa*, Arabia, Persian Gulf, Middle East, Oman, distribution, abundance, conservation

Introduction

Available information on general and specific aspects of small cetaceans of the Arabian region, including *S. chinensis*, can be found in reviews by Leatherwood (1986), de Silva (1987), and Baldwin et al. (1999) and in results of surveys (Baldwin, 1995; Beadon, 1991; Frazier et al., 1987; Gallagher, 1991; Papastavrou & Salm, 1991; Preen, 1987; Small & Small, 1991). Research and observations of cetaceans in the region have focused on defined areas, with most available information on humpback dolphins coming from waters off the Sultanate of Oman and the southern shores of the Arabian Gulf, particularly the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia. In the Arabian region, *S. chinensis* was first identified from a skull collected in March 1948 from Karaman Island, Red Sea, by D. Thompson. The specimen is curated at the Natural History Museum in London (BM 1948.3.13.1) (Leatherwood, 1986). Subsequent records came from both the western (Al Robbae, 1970, 1974) and the eastern (Pilleri & Gühr, 1974) Arabian Gulf. Evidence that additional early work was in progress in the region is provided by Gallagher (1991), who documented collections of humpback dolphins from Bahrain, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman that date back to the 1970s.

Surveys conducted specifically to observe and record cetaceans in the region began in 1973

(Pilleri, 1973). Several surveys were conducted in the region during the early 1980s (Alling, 1986; Harwood, 1981; Keller et al., 1982; Robineau & Rose, 1984). These included a survey of humpback dolphins in the UAE in 1984 (UAECD) and surveys conducted for dugongs (*Dugong dugon*) in the Arabian Gulf (1986 and 1999) and Red Sea (1986), which included documentation of sightings of humpback dolphins (Preen, 1989, in press a). Results of the latter survey prompted an investigation of extensive marine mammal mortality in the Arabian Gulf (Preen, in press b; ROPME, 1986). Other survey work in the Arabian Gulf focused specifically on small cetaceans, including *S. chinensis* (Baldwin, 1995, 1996; Robineau & Fiquet, 1994, 1996).

Recent data on humpback dolphins of the region come from incidental observations recorded during more general surveys of marine and coastal habitats, particularly along the coast of Oman (Papastavrou & Salm, 1991; Salm, Jensen, & Papastavrou, 1993; Weidleplan, 1992), as well as in Somalia (e.g., Schleyer & Baldwin, 1999; Small & Small, 1991). Cetacean research in Oman undertaken by the authors included systematic small boat surveys in nearshore and offshore waters, as well as surveys for beach-cast cetaceans.

The taxonomy of the genus *Sousa* remains unresolved. A wide variety of species' definitions have been suggested in the past few decades, from a single highly variable species, *S. chinensis*, to recognition of all five nominal species (see discussion by Rice, 1998). As a pragmatic measure, and until morphological and molecular genetic studies more firmly establish taxonomic relationships and nomenclature, we temporarily retain nominal usage of *S. chinensis* (Osbeck, 1765). Populations in the Arabian region show morphological affiliation to *S. plumbea* (Cuvier, 1829), however—a species recognized by Hershkovitz (1966) and followed by Rice (1998) for animals that inhabit waters from the western Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea, and south to South Africa. Fairly translated in English as “plumbeous dolphin,” *S. plumbea* aptly describes the widely recognized colouration distinction from the lightly coloured Pacific humpback dolphin or Chinese white dolphin *S. chinensis*. The plumbeous dolphin also exhibits a highly conspicuous dorsal hump that is absent in *S. chinensis* (see Jefferson & Karczmarski, 2001), while its cranial characteristics indicate taxonomic differentiation at least at the subspecific level (Jefferson & Van Waerebeek, 2004).

Materials and Methods

Review of Available Literature and Databases

Data reviewed here come from published literature, and from databases of cetacean records for both the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman, held by the Emirates Natural History Group, Abu Dhabi, and the Oman Natural History Museum (ONHM), respectively. These are referred to in this paper as the UAE Cetacean Database (UAECD) and the Oman Cetacean Database (OMCD). The latter is current and comprehensive, whereas the former was discontinued in 1995. These databases were established and maintained by one or more of the authors and incorporate records from a variety of sources, including published literature, data collected by the authors during systematic surveys at sea and along shorelines, data collected during other dedicated cetacean surveys, data from additional specimens curated at the ONHM and in private collections in the UAE, and some incidental data submitted by other recorders. All unpublished records referred to in the present account were either made by the authors or verified to have sufficient and reliable supporting data to enable discussion. Unconfirmed records or those lacking supporting information have been discounted and are not included. Because records from published sources also are stored in the databases, analysis of information included the sorting of data to ensure that no duplication of records occurred.

Study Area

We define the Arabian region as coastal and offshore waters of the Arabian Peninsula, including waters of the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, western Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea. Data from elsewhere, such as along the African coast of the Red Sea, are included in cases where these are considered relevant or appropriate.

Museum Specimens

To describe intraspecific cranial variation, 38 cranial measurements and tooth counts (Table 1), slightly modified from Perrin (1975), were taken for 28 skulls collected from the coasts of Oman (Table 2). The sample was not gender-stratified, as skulls were derived exclusively from beach-cast specimens, many of which were too decomposed to allow for sex determination. Cranial maturity was determined from the degree of fusion in seven indicative cranial suture lines (Van Waerebeek, 1993), while taking into account possible secondary suture de-fusing in highly weathered specimens.

Table 1. Cranial measurements and tooth counts used for descriptive craniometrics of *Sousa* from Oman; slightly modified from Perrin (1975).

1. Condylbasal length (CBL)
2. Rostrum length (RL)
3. Rostrum width at base (RWB)
4. Rostrum width at 60mm (RW60)
5. Rostrum width at ¼ length (RW14L)
6. Rostrum width at ½ length (RW12L)
7. Rostrum width at ¾ length (RW34L)
8. Premaxillary width at ½ length (PRMX12L)
9. Tip of rostrum to right external nare (TREXTN)
10. Tip of rostrum to internal nares (TRINTNS)
11. Preorbital width (PRORBWI)
12. Postorbital width (POSTORW)
13. Zygomatic width (ZYGW)
14. Parietal width (PARWI)
15. Greatest width of premaxillaries (GWPRMX)
16. External nares width (EXTNSW)
17. Internal nares width (INTNSW)
18. Temporal fossa length (TEMFOSL)
19. Temporal fossa width (TEMFOW)
20. Orbital length (ORL)
21. Antorbital length (ANTPRL)
22. Length upper tooth row (LUTR)
23. Length lower tooth row (LLTR)
24. Ramus length (RAL)
25. Ramus height (RAH)
26. Number alveoli upper left (UL)
27. Number alveoli upper right (UR)
28. Number alveoli lower left (LL)
29. Number alveoli lower right (LR)
30. Tooth width transverse (TW)
31. Bulla length (BUL)
32. Bulla width (BUW)
33. Periotic length (PERL)
34. Height braincase (HBR)
35. Length braincase (LBR)
36. Maximum width palatine (MXWPAL)
37. Maximum span occipital condyles (MXSOCC)
38. Maximum width nasals (MAXWNAS)

Results and Discussion

Distribution

The range of *S. chinensis* in the Arabian region includes much of the Arabian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea (Figure 1). In the Arabian Gulf, records confirm its presence in Iraqi waters (Al Robbae, 1970, 1974), coastal and offshore waters of Bahrain (e.g., Gallagher, 1991), Saudi Arabia (e.g., Robineau & Fiquet, 1996), Kuwait (de Silva, 1987), Qatar (Leatherwood, 1986), UAE (e.g., Baldwin, 1995; Preen, 1989),

in the Musandam region of Oman (Baldwin & Salm, 1994; Pilleri & Gahr, 1974), and off Iran (Pilleri & Gahr, 1974).

This species' distribution (Figures 2 & 3) extends into the coastal waters of the northern extreme of the Gulf of Oman as far south as 26°07'N, 56°23'E in Musandam. No sightings or strandings of *S. chinensis* have been reported between Musandam and Ra's Al Hadd (22°30'N, 59°49'E), which marks the boundary between the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea (Baldwin & Salm, 1994; Salm et al., 1993). The range of *S. chinensis* appears to be continuous along the Arabian Sea coast of Oman (Baldwin & Salm, 1994), including some offshore islands such as Masirah. In some areas, the distribution of humpback dolphins in Oman spans coastal and island continental shelves that are separated by deep water, such as in the Musandam region, and, based on a single record only, at the island of Al Hallaniyah, Dhofar.

Evidence that the distribution of humpback dolphins extends south into Yemen is provided by records from Gulf of Aden shores (e.g., Leatherwood, 1986). *S. chinensis* also occurs along the African coast of the Gulf of Aden near Djibouti (Alling et al., 1982; Mörzer Bruyns, 1960; Robineau & Rose, 1984; Small & Small, 1991) and along the coast of Somalia (Schleyer & Baldwin, 1999; Small & Small, 1991). In the Red Sea, the humpback dolphin has been documented along the Arabian coast by de Silva (1987) and Leatherwood (1986), and other evidence indicates its occurrence in the Gulf of Suez (Beadon, 1991; Smeenk et al., 2002).

Stock Identity

It is unclear if the apparent discontinuous distribution of *S. chinensis* between the population(s) in the Arabian Gulf and extreme north of the Gulf of Oman and populations in the Arabian Sea results from the influence of recent human population expansion and associated development or has an ecological basis. The possibility remains that humpback dolphins in different areas, for example in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, and Red Sea, represent discrete populations (see also Jefferson & Van Waerebeek, 2004). Salm et al. (1993) suggested two discrete populations in Arabian waters: one in the Arabian Gulf and extreme north of the Gulf of Oman and one in the western Arabian Sea. Samples from humpback dolphins in Oman collected for genetic analyses currently all originate from beach-cast specimens collected along the Arabian Sea coast. Rosenbaum et al. (2002) provided some preliminary estimates of mtDNA diversity and population structure based on a 500 bp region

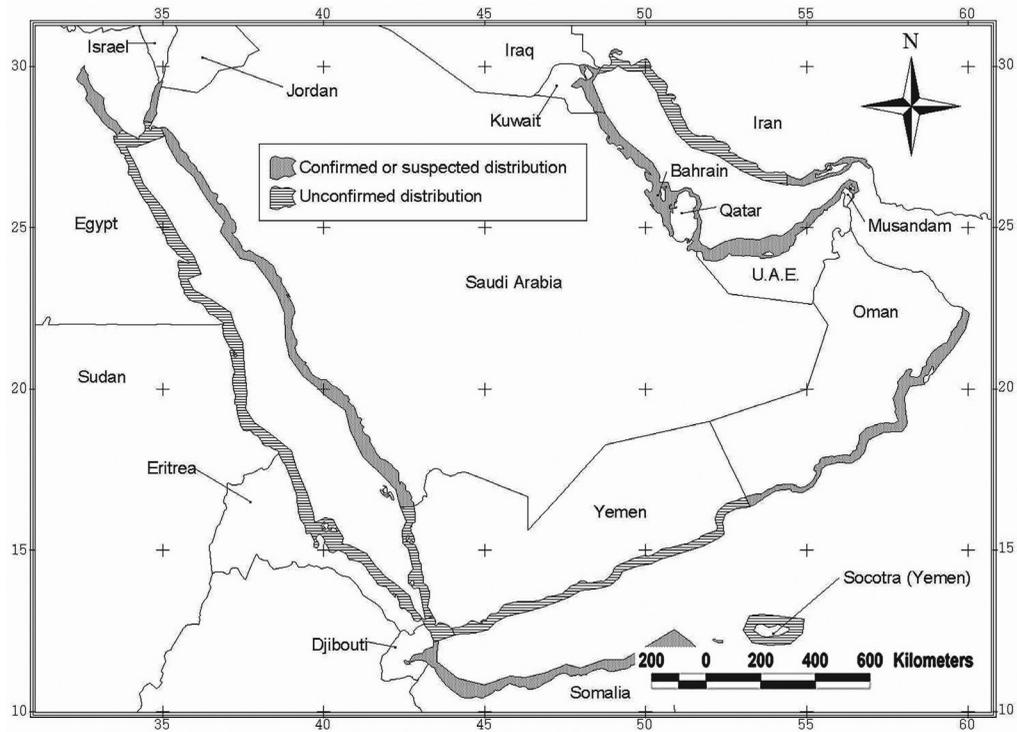


Figure 1. Distribution of humpback dolphins in Arabia

Table 2. Humpback dolphin skulls from Oman used for descriptive craniometrics

Adults	Subadults
Khaluf (ONHM 2864, 2865, 2866, 2889, 2958, 2975, 2983, 2959, 2986, 2987, 2988, 2990, 3040, 3041)	Khaluf (ONHM 2867, 2868, 2869, 2985, 2989, 2980)
Ra's Ru'ways (ONHM 2631, 2633)	Ra's Ru'ways (ONHM 2632, 3051)
An Nuqdah (ONHM 2635)	Dhofar, W. of Mughsayl (ONHM 3054, 3058)
Halaniyah Islands (ONHM 2916)	

OMCD Oman Cetacean Database (administrated by the Oman Whale and Dolphin Research Group)

UAECD United Arab Emirates Cetacean Database (administrated by the Emirates Natural History Group)

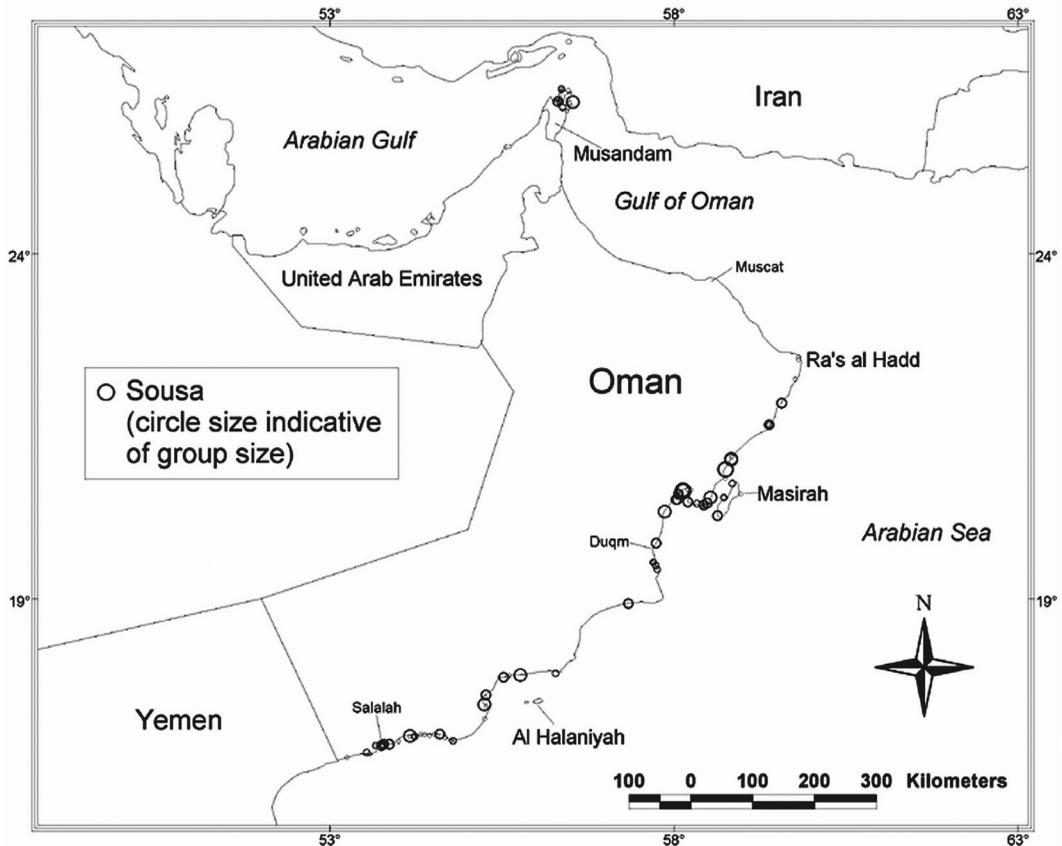


Figure 2. Records of live sightings of humpback dolphins in Oman

of the mtDNA control region. The relationships of humpback dolphins from southern Oman with those from northeast Oman are being examined with additional samples. Their relationship to other populations in the Arabian Sea and those distributed throughout the Indian Ocean is also being examined (Rosenbaum et al., in prep.).

Morphology and Cranial Morphometrics

In the Arabian region, and the northern Indian Ocean generally, humpback dolphins are typically uniformly plumbeous or brownish-grey and most closely resemble *S. plumbea* (Cuvier, 1829). Some individuals from the Musandam region of Oman present dark bluish-black longitudinal flecks on the body and may be associated with the *lentiginosa* (Gray, 1866) form, the holotype of which is from Vishakhapatam, India. This form is most probably synonymous with *S. plumbea* (Pilleri & Gahr, 1974; Ross, 1981; Ross et al., 1994). Osteologically, the *lentiginosa* form does not differ from the *plumbea* form (Pilleri & Gahr,

1972, 1974). Robineau & Fiquet (1996) described humpback dolphins from the Arabian Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia, and descriptions and photographs of humpback dolphins from the Musandam region and the Arabian Gulf appear in Baldwin & Salm (1994) and Baldwin (1995), respectively.

There is some published information on external morphometrics ($n=4$), craniometrics ($n=3$) and colouration for *S. chinensis* from the eastern Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden (Robineau & Rose, 1984) and limited study on the genus in Oman (Baldwin & Salm, 1994; OMCD). As in populations described from South Africa (Ross et al., 1994), the dorsal fin in northern Indian Ocean animals is elongated and thickened basally (the "hump") at all ages, becoming shorter and thinner mid-dorsally, thus forming a small finlike falcate structure. This feature is evident in all recent sightings and in photographic documentation of animals in the Arabian Gulf and Arabian Sea off Oman.

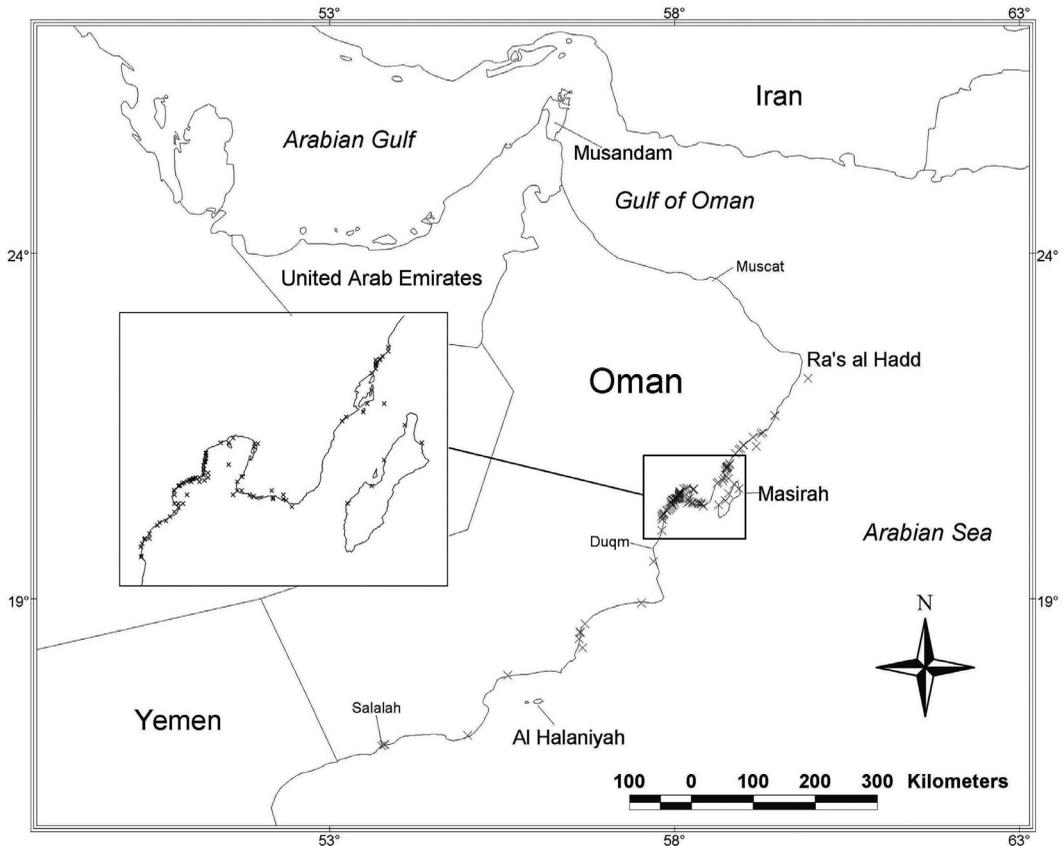


Figure 3. Records of dead humpback dolphins in Oman

Pilleri & Gahr (1972) provided photographic information for cranial and postcranial material of *S. chinensis* from Rehri Creek, Pakistan. They claimed the main difference between the vertebral formula of the nominal species *S. chinensis* and that of *S. plumbea* to be the number and relative length of the thoracic (Th) vertebrae (12 Th, 26% of the vertebral length in *S. chinensis*; 11 Th, 22–24% of the vertebral length in *S. plumbea*) (Pilleri & Gahr, 1974); however, the sample size (Pilleri & Gahr, 1972) was very small ($n=3$ and $n=1$ for *S. plumbea* and *S. chinensis* forms, respectively). Therefore, the thoracic region may be relatively longer in *S. chinensis* than in *S. plumbea*. There may also be some differences in configuration of the scapula; however, material to support these claims is very limited, and efforts should be directed to acquire adequate sample sizes of osteological specimens from different regions to allow for appropriate statistical analysis. The few organ and soft-tissue descriptions available for *Sousa* spp. are from specimens collected outside

the Arabian Peninsula region (see Jefferson & Karzmarzki, 2001).

Intraspecific variation in cranial measurements, both in absolute measurement (mm) and as a percentage of condylobasal length, are presented for cranially adult ($n=18$) and subadult ($n=10$) humpback dolphin skulls originating from the Arabian Sea coast of Oman between Ra's Al Hadd and Dhofar (Tables 4 and 5). The five cranial measurements for 13 specimens of humpback dolphins from the Arabian Gulf given by Robineau & Fiquet (1996) fall within the relative values (% CBL) found in our Arabian Sea specimens. Minimum absolute measurements were lower for the Arabian Gulf, but 9 of the 13 specimens in the Robineau and Fiquet sample “had not reached physical maturity” (p. 444), and, therefore, the samples are not directly comparable. Mean tooth counts in lower left (34.4) and upper left (35.8) tooth rows in the Arabian Gulf specimens seemed slightly higher than those from the Omani coasts (32.7 and 34.7, respectively; see Table 3);

Table 3. Curated specimens (skulls, partial and complete skeletons) from the Arabian Region

Museum	Accession number	Country of origin
BM	1970.1505, 1970.1506, 1970.1507, 1970.1508, 1970.1509, 1970.1510, 1973.1748, 1984.1758, 1984.1759, 1984.1761, 1984.1762, 1984.1763, 1984.1768	Bahrain
BM	1955.2.23.1	Gulf of Aden
BM	1924.9.11.1	Suez Canal
BM	1948.3.13.1, 1948.3.13.2, 1954.9.9.5, 1962.2.19.1, 1962.7.19.1	Red Sea
MC	47000	Qatar
ONHM	439, 523, 524, 525, 526, 683, 684, 1015, 1016, 1017, 1020, 1022, 1045, 1047, 1049, 1050, 1222, 1483, 1516, 1557, 1558, 1559, 1560, 1564, 1571, 1572, 1662, 1679, 1911, 1918, 1972, 1973, 2482, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2635, 2677, 2864, 2866, 2867, 2868, 2869, 2889, 2958, 2959, 2975, 2980, 2983, 2985, 2986, 2987, 2988, 2989, 2990, 2916, 3040, 3041, 3051, 3054, 3058, 3062, 3064, 3077, 3080, 3083, 3099, 3100, 3101 Oman	
ZMA	19.781, 19.782	Red Sea
ZMA	20.721, 20.725, 20.726, 20.727, 20.728, 20.736, 20.737, 20.738, 20.899, 21.431, 21.437, 21.450, 21.451, 25.221	Oman
CEPEC	KVW3035	Oman
MNHN	1993-88	Saudi Arabia

BM British Museum (Natural History), now known as the Natural History Museum, London

MC Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Massachusetts USA

ONHM Oman Natural History Museum, Muscat

CEPEC Museo de los Delfines, CEPEC, Pucusana, Peru

ZMA Zoological Museum Amsterdam

MNHN Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris

however, no statistical analysis has been applied to the raw data.

Cranial Abnormalities

None of the 28 skulls from Oman that were examined showed characteristic (basket-like) bone lesions of the ventral cranium commonly associated with *Crassicauda* spp. nematode infestations (e.g., Raga et al., 1982), and in general, cranial aberrations were few. The proximal ends of both upper tooth rows of adult skull ONHM 2864 exhibited, symmetrically, an unusual vacuolar depression with smooth contours from unknown origin. The right exoccipitale of ONHM 2631 showed evidence of a healing fracture, and significant exostosis was present on the right condylus occipitalis of adult ONHM 2987.

Group Size and Status

The status of humpback dolphins in the Arabian region is unknown, and there have been no absolute measures of abundance of *S. chinensis* or any other species to our knowledge. Humpback dolphins are one of the most commonly observed cetaceans in Oman. A high percentage of records of live sightings are incidental observations made

from shore, while boat-based surveys, which have not focused on nearshore areas, have produced relatively low encounter rates. Of all confirmed records of *S. chinensis* in Oman, 63% are of dead individuals (mostly as beach-cast specimens), a higher percentage than that recorded for any other species in the OMCD. This may be partially attributed to the relative lack of nearshore boat survey effort. In the UAE, records of *S. chinensis* also are relatively high, but include only a small percentage (5%) of dead individuals (UAECD). Although this difference in the relative proportion of dead and live individuals in Oman and the UAE requires further investigation, it may reflect the higher coastal fisheries pressures in Oman (see below).

The majority of live sightings of humpback dolphins in Oman (96 of 110) are of groups ranging in size from 1 to 20 individuals, although some large groups of up to 100 individuals have been documented (see below). Average group size is 11.7 (SD=14.6, n=110). Similar average group sizes are revealed for the much smaller datasets available for the UAE (UAECD) and Somalia (Schleyer & Baldwin, 1999).

Table 4. Cranial morphometrics (in mm) and tooth counts of cranially adult Indian Ocean humpback dolphins (n=18) from Oman

Cranial measurements	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
CBL	13	502.0	562.0	521.61	16.55
RL	14	301.0	347.0	317.82	13.13
RWB	16	107.0	121.0	113.34	3.75
RW60	15	72.0	83.0	78.13	3.10
RW14L	14	66.5	76.5	72.29	2.60
RW12L	14	41.5	49.0	45.96	2.10
RW34L	13	29.0	34.5	31.58	1.85
PRMX12L	14	24.5	34.0	28.39	2.32
TREXTNS	13	337.0	384.0	357.77	13.49
TRINTNS	11	351.5	392.0	363.68	13.12
PRORBWI	15	175.0	201.0	182.37	7.17
POSTORW	16	202.0	229.0	208.94	7.16
ZYGW	16	198.0	226.0	206.56	7.83
PARWI	16	150.5	170.0	159.28	5.18
GWPRMX	16	79.5	87.5	82.97	2.40
EXTNSW	17	52.5	62.0	56.21	2.69
INTNSW	14	58.0	64.0	61.18	1.75
TEMFOSL	16	100.0	122.0	107.06	5.75
TEMFOW	16	78.5	93.0	84.88	3.86
ORL	16	53.5	60.5	57.31	1.91
ANTPRL	15	37.5	47.5	43.73	2.87
LUTR	14	263.0	310.0	279.50	12.47
LLTR	5	235.0	272.0	260.80	15.02
RAL	5	436.0	446.0	440.20	4.50
RAH	5	81.5	88.0	85.20	2.66
UL	10	33.0	37.0	34.70	1.42
UR	11	33.0	36.0	34.18	1.17
LL	3	31.0	34.0	32.67	1.53
LR	5	31.0	34.0	32.80	1.10
TW	6	5.6	6.1	5.80	0.21
BUL	1	36.0	36.0	36.00	–
BUW	1	19.9	19.9	19.90	–
PERL	1	32.5	32.5	32.50	–
HBR	16	129.0	148.0	133.50	4.87
LBR	16	140.5	167.0	150.94	5.65
MXWPAL	16	44.5	52.5	48.22	2.31
MXSOCC	16	91.0	115.0	103.78	6.57
MAXWNAS	14	48.5	58.0	52.96	2.74

Records of humpback dolphins in the western Arabian Gulf include 12 skulls collected from Bahrain between February 1969 and April 1974 by Gallagher (1991) and 50 sightings of groups of 1-15 individuals near Jubail between December 1991 and April 1993 (Robineau & Fiquet, 1996). Preen (1989) reported 25 positive sightings of humpback dolphins in groups of 1-17 individuals during aerial surveys for dugongs in the Arabian Gulf in 1986. The majority of these sightings were in nearshore waters of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain,

and Qatar, despite the surveys also covering most of the coast of the UAE. In 1999, a repeat aerial survey was conducted in UAE waters only (Preen, in press a). Although the nature of these surveys prevented estimation of population size, an index of abundance was obtained, and the results provide the only trend data for the region. The data indicate a statistically significant decline in abundance of 70% of all cetaceans observed, which included the humpback dolphin, bottlenose dolphin, and finless porpoise (*Neophocaena*

Table 5. Cranial morphometrics expressed as percentage of condylobasal length for Indian Ocean humpback dolphins from Oman; sample includes cranially adult and subadult specimens.

Cranial measurements	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SE	SD
RL%	20	59.4	62.2	60.87	0.20	0.91
RWB%	20	20.7	22.8	21.89	0.13	0.59
RW60%	19	14.4	16.0	15.18	0.10	0.45
RW14L%	19	13.2	15.1	14.10	0.13	0.56
RW12L%	19	8.3	9.7	9.05	0.11	0.47
RW34L%	16	5.5	6.9	6.14	0.10	0.39
PRMX12L%	19	4.6	6.3	5.54	0.09	0.39
TREXTNS%	20	66.5	69.4	68.31	0.20	0.91
TRINTNS%	16	67.4	70.8	69.32	0.27	1.08
PRORBWI%	19	34.0	36.6	35.27	0.17	0.74
POSTORW%	19	39.3	42.1	40.47	0.18	0.76
ZYGW%	20	38.8	41.7	40.04	0.20	0.88
PARWI%	20	28.4	34.6	31.22	0.33	1.50
GWPRMX	19	15.2	17.0	16.03	0.11	0.46
EXTNSW%	19	10.0	11.8	10.94	0.10	0.45
INTNSW%	18	11.0	13.0	11.82	0.11	0.48
TEMFOSL%	20	19.2	21.7	20.51	0.17	0.77
TEMFOW%	20	15.6	17.6	16.40	0.14	0.62
ORL%	20	10.1	12.1	11.09	0.11	0.48
ANTPRL%	20	7.4	9.1	8.42	0.10	0.45
LUTR%	18	50.6	55.2	53.27	0.28	1.20
LLTR%	5	44.3	53.3	50.69	1.62	3.63
RAL%	4	85.5	86.4	85.82	0.19	0.38
RAH%	4	16.0	17.4	16.58	0.30	0.57
HBR%	20	24.4	28.0	26.00	0.22	0.99
LBR%	20	27.7	31.1	29.26	0.20	0.89
MXWPAL%	19	8.4	10.2	9.35	0.12	0.52
MXSOCC%	20	17.5	23.0	20.01	0.32	1.42
MAXWNAS%	14	8.9	11.4	10.21	0.17	0.65

phocaenoides). This long-term decline is partly attributed to three die-offs of marine mammals and other wildlife coincident with the Norwuz oil spill, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Gulf War Oil Spill (Preen, submitted).

Additional records of this species in the region are documented by Pilleri & Gühr (1974) who recorded 18 animals, mostly singly or in pairs, off the southern Iranian coast in the Gulf of Oman. There appear to be no published data on the abundance of the humpback dolphin in the Red Sea, although Frazier et al. (1987) suggested that it is "present in small numbers throughout the Red Sea and Gulf of Suez" (p. 306); however, Smeenk et al. (2002) reported only one record from the Red Sea (Suez Canal).

Although the above data indicate that humpback dolphins generally occur in small groups, much larger groups also occur in the Arabian region (see Figures 2 & 3). Along the Arabian Sea coast of Oman, humpback dolphins have been

recorded in groups of 30 individuals or more on ten occasions, including records of three groups of over 50 individuals, one of which was a group of approximately 100 individuals. The latter may have been an aggregation of several groups, possibly involved in breeding (R. Salm, *in litt.* to R. Baldwin, 19 March 1998). A large group (35 individuals) also is documented for the Musandam region of northern Oman. Relatively large groups of humpback dolphins, comprising 30 or more individuals, have also been encountered in offshore waters of Abu Dhabi, UAE (Baldwin, 1995). Such large groups are atypical of *Sousa* spp., which generally occur in small groups of up to 25 individuals (Ross et al., 1994).

Incidental Takes

Gallagher (1991) suggested that humpback dolphins and other cetacean species suffer incidental capture and drowning in fishing nets in Oman. Five butchered individuals discovered on beaches

in Oman (Papastavrou & Salm, 1991; OMCD) may have been incidentally captured in fishing nets or may have been intentionally caught. In addition, five dead individuals have been found entangled in fishing nets or ropes, and a further eight individuals with typical scarring/rostrum damage from net entanglement (Read & Murray, 2000) are listed in the OMCD. There are several other records of dead animals on beaches in the vicinity of fishing boat landing sites and/or villages. Given the abundance of set and lost or discarded fishing nets in the shallow coastal waters of Oman (Salm, 1992) and the coastal distribution of *S. chinensis*, drowning in inshore gill nets represents a major potential threat to this species in the region.

Directed Catches

Humpback dolphins reportedly were hunted in former years in the Arabian Gulf and Red Sea (Ross et al., 1994). Leatherwood & Reeves (1983) suggested that hunting also took place in the Arabian Sea; however, neither publication pointed to evidence upon which these statements are based. Alling (1983) mentioned a limited dolphin fishery off Masirah Island in the Arabian Sea, without mentioning species. Gallagher (1991), Papastavrou & Salm (1991), and Baldwin & Salm (1994) all suggested a limited directed catch of cetaceans in Oman, based on observations of butchered animals, including humpback dolphins, and interviews with fishers from the islands of Masirah and al Halaniyat. There is some anecdotal as well as photographic evidence viewed by the authors for the continued hunting of dolphins in Oman using small, motorised boats and handheld harpoons. The effect of such practices on this species' status is unknown. Evidence for the deliberate capture of humpback dolphins is scant, however, and we believe that this practice is probably restricted in the region to occasional opportunistic hunting.

A single humpback dolphin was intentionally caught in a purse seine net in the Gulf of Suez, Red Sea, in January 1981 as part of a programme to supply animals to a dolphinarium/aquarium in the region. The individual was not retained, however, and was released immediately after capture (Beaton, 1991). A humpback dolphin caught by fishers in Kuwait was reported by de Silva (1987). Whether this animal was deliberately or incidentally caught is not stated.

Other Threats

Coastal and offshore development in the Arabian region leads to loss and degradation of *S. chinensis* habitat. This may be particularly severe in the Arabian Gulf, but also threatens parts of the

Arabian Sea coast of Oman, where there are several new port and harbor developments. Pollution and boat traffic, particularly in the Arabian Gulf (Baldwin, 1995), also threaten this species. Disturbance to small cetaceans from offshore oil and gas exploration—for example, seismic surveys—also is documented (Baldwin, 1997). War and military exercises are another source of disturbance (OWDRG, 2002a) and habitat degradation (Preen, in press b).

Gallagher (1991) suggested that poisoning caused by toxins originating from phytoplankton associated with “red tides” may have caused the death of eight humpback dolphins found near Duqm (approximately 19°40'N, 57°42'E) on the Arabian Sea coast of Oman in April 1990. Toxic phytoplankton associated with seasonal deep-water upwellings may have been a causal factor of mass mortality of sea turtles, fishes, and other taxa along the coast of southern Oman during 2001 and 2002 (OWDRG, 2002b). At least 13 humpback dolphins, among other cetaceans, were recorded as having died during this period (OMCD).

Habitat and Ecology

In the Arabian region, *S. chinensis* can mainly be found in coastal waters with soft sediments and a low-energy sandy shoreline; however, in the Dhofar and Musandam regions of Oman, parts of its range include rocky substrate with a higher-energy, rocky shoreline. In some of these areas, there are several sightings of humpback dolphins over coastal waters exceeding 40 m in depth. There are only two permanent rivers in the region (the Tigris and the Euphrates) and, thus, little available estuarine habitat with which this species is commonly associated elsewhere in the world (Ross et al., 1994).

Humpback dolphins have been observed feeding in shallow waters in the Arabian Gulf, with individuals herding fishes of unknown identity onto exposed sand banks and apparently deliberately beaching to seize their prey (Baldwin, 1995). The only other reference to such behavior by this genus is reported from Bazaruto, Mozambique (Peddemors & Thompson, 1994). Fish otoliths collected from the stomach of an adult individual found on Merawah Island (24°28'N, 53°23'E), Abu Dhabi, and now at the Centre for Dolphin Studies, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, have yet to be identified (Baldwin & Cockcroft, unpublished information). Salm (pers. comm., 1991) suggested that humpback dolphins in Oman may feed on sciaenid fishes. Stomach samples collected from eight dead individuals in southern Oman indicate a high incidence of cephalopods and crustaceans in the diet, although detailed analysis has yet to be undertaken (OMCD).

Association with Other Species

Humpback dolphins have been observed in association with both *Tursiops* sp. and *D. capensis tropicalis* in Arabia, but only very rarely. The latter involved a single individual swimming with a group of common dolphins close to shore in Musandam, Oman. Interaction with bottlenose dolphins includes a record of aggressive behavior shown by a group of 15 individuals towards a lone humpback dolphin (OMCD), as well as two non-aggressive associations. Schleyer & Baldwin (1999) observed humpback dolphins off the Gulf of Aden shoreline of northern Somaliland on three occasions, two of which were in mixed schools with bottlenose dolphins. On one occasion, a single humpback dolphin among a group of bottlenose dolphins exhibited surfacing behavior more closely resembling that of the latter species than its own (Baldwin, pers. obs.). Karczmarski (1999) recorded groups of humpback dolphins mixed with bottlenose dolphins infrequently in Algoa Bay, South Africa, whereas Stensland et al. (2001) reported such mixed groups as common in the Menai Straits, Zanzibar, citing predator protection or resource/habitat competition as a possible explanation.

Life History

Observations of socialising and adults with small calves in the months of April and May are listed in the UAEDC. The OMCD lists infrequent sightings of calves during the same two months, as well as in June, October, November, and December, and a single sighting of up to ten calves in a group of over 50 individuals in October. Robineau and Rose (1984) recorded a newborn calf in Djibouti, Gulf of Aden in the same month. There are also two reports of dead calves found in Oman: one was found on 25 March 1991 at 20°44'N, 58°47'E, measuring 1.1 m in length, while the second was found on 16 December 2001 at 20°30'N, 58°01'E, measuring just under 1 m in length. The teeth had not yet erupted on either specimen (OMCD). Perrin & Reilly (1984), who reviewed reproductive parameters in delphinids, cited 97 cm (n=9) as the smallest known individual of *Sousa chinensis* (all regions), lacking an estimate for neonate length. These data largely correlate with the observations of Karczmarski (1996) for South African populations in which 70% of births occur between October and May. The largest specimen on record in Oman was a beach-cast adult male, which measured 3.14 m in length (OMCD reference number 18-12-01-02). This is considerably larger than the maximum of 2.8 m recorded elsewhere in the world (Jefferson & Karczmarski, 2001; Ross et al., 1994).

Recommendations for Conservation Management and Future Research

Development of appropriate conservation management of humpback dolphins in the Arabian region is urgently required. Such management should be based upon results of scientific research. Priority should be given to studies of stock identity and status assessments as well as systematic monitoring of by-catch in fisheries. Research into other threats is also required, which would be aided by the establishment of networks to detect, record, examine, and collect biological samples from stranded cetaceans on a systematic basis. Continued collection and curation of specimens is encouraged and should include biopsies and other tissue samples for genetic analyses of population structure and for pollutant assays. Continuation and expansion of studies of the systematics of humpback dolphins is also required. For these and other studies, there is an urgent need for training and increased involvement of local scientists.

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