

Project Update: August 2016



Vessel based visual surveys were conducted on passenger ferries to assess distribution and diversity of cetaceans in Lakshadweep waters from 25th October 2015 to 1st May 2016. Surveys were conducted on high speed passenger ferries on routes plying between nine of the inhabited islands namely, Kavaratti, Agatti, Kalpeni, Amini, Kadmat,

Androth, Kilthan, Chetlat and Bitra. One hundred and thirty two sightings (on and off effort) of cetaceans were recorded. Seventy-nine sightings of cetaceans were recorded while on effort covering 3725.06 km. Eight species of toothed whales were documented. The most commonly sighted species was *Stenella longirostris*, spinner dolphins. Other species such as *Grampus griseus*, *Pseudorca crassidens*, *Globicephala macrorhynchus*, *Feresa attenuata*, *Tursiops spp. (aduncus/truncatus)*, *Stenella attenuata*, *Stenella coeruleoalba* was also recorded. One sighting of a baleen whale was recorded however species level identification could not be made.

Between March and May 2016, strip transect visual surveys were conducted from a tuna fishing vessel around Kavaratti Island to assess near island distribution and diversity. Three sightings of spinner dolphins and one sighting of bottlenose dolphin were observed during the surveys covering 133.8 km. Forty-six questionnaire based interviews of key informants from fishing, administrative and scientific communities were



conducted to understand distribution, diversity and threats towards cetaceans in the region. The interviews were conducted in Minicoy and Kavaratti Island.

