

## **Project Update: January 2017**

The second phase of boat-based surveys for humpback dolphins was carried out in the Gulf of Mannar (South) in January 2017. 565 km<sup>2</sup> was surveyed and only two groups of dolphins were encountered 'off-effort' near to the shore. Most of these sightings were on the eastern part of the survey block with group sizes ranging between four and 20 animals. Both the encountered groups composed of adults, sub-adults and calves. Photographic mark-recapture confirmed that the same animals were also encountered during fishing vessel based surveys and shore-based sightings in the survey area. Boat-based surveys coupled with interviews with fishing communities indicate that humpback dolphins use near-shore habitats during the months between October - March and off-shore habitats between April - September in the Gulf of Mannar. These surveys indicate that dolphin densities might be quite low in the Gulf of Mannar as they are found in small pockets along the coast and regularly engage in depredation behaviour.



An adult humpback dolphin depredating from a shore-seine net in the Gulf of Mannar