

CORRESPONDENCE

the document lies with MoEF with inputs from Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai and Zoo Outreach Organization, Coimbatore. None of the above institutions which provided inputs have carried out any long term survey on the marine mammals of India. It is evident from the WII's website⁸ that out of 522 research papers published in 21 years (from 1984 to 2005 excluding 1985) and an addition of 22 research publications with unknown dates, only four publications dealt with the Ganges River dolphin. Apart from this, there is no study on the other species reported in the CMS document. Whereas during the same period between 1984 and 2005 (excluding 1985 for uniformity), CMFRI has published 100 papers on 19 species (inclusive of the Ganges River dolphin and dugongs) of marine mammals from all maritime states (including Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep) of

India except Goa. Despite this, CMFRI's input was not included. Had they consulted the CMFRI's publications as quoted in the document, they would not have missed the ongoing research on marine mammals. The section on marine mammals has many inconsistencies and raises serious questions about the way CMS document was prepared.

The CMS report on marine mammals clearly illustrates the inherent weakness in our national policy to address the issues concerning the marine biodiversity. The report submitted to CMS by India erodes the credibility of Indian scientists in international forums and questions India's commitment to the convention. It is high time institutions that have no firsthand experience disengage themselves from taking up the cause of marine biodiversity and leave the job to a large body of professional marine scientists in India. After all, having good scientific ethics is as important

as having quality data for successful conservation of any species.

1. <http://www.cms.int/about/intro.htm>
2. Anon., India CMS Report, 2008, p. 62.
3. Yousuf, K. S. S. M. *et al.*, *JMBA2 – Biodiversity Records* (published on-line), 2008, 1–6.
4. Anoop, K. *et al.*, *Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Sci.*, 2008, **76**, 909–913.
5. Jayasankar, P. *et al.*, *Zootaxa*, 2008, **1853**, 57–67.
6. Anon., Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 7 April 2008.
7. Kumaran, P. L., *Curr. Sci.*, 2002, **82**, 1210–1220.
8. <http://www.wii.gov.in/>

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Species specific association of sea anemones

Mutualism between sea anemone and hermit crab is one of the classic examples of symbiosis. However, symbiotic relationship between sea anemone and marine snail is also known to occur from the bathyal depths¹, but is less reported from the intertidal area. We observed similar association between a species of tiny sea anemone (species not confirmed) and

a gastropod species *Nassarius olivaceus* (Bruguère 1789) on Narara reef (lat. 22°25.8'N to 22°28.3'N and long. 69°42.1'E to 69°40.7'E) in the Gulf of Kachchh (Figure 1). Here the stationary anemone lives an epibiont life on the shell of the gastropod and gets the benefit of better foraging by movement of gastropod. On subsequent visits to the

reef area, it was observed that this association is specific to a single species of gastropod and sea anemone and it can be found during all seasons. The *N. olivaceus* is a fast moving scavenger in habit with a large shell (20–25 mm) and generally found abundantly on sandy upper intertidal area of Narara; these may be the reasons for the sea anemone's preference for *N. olivaceus*.

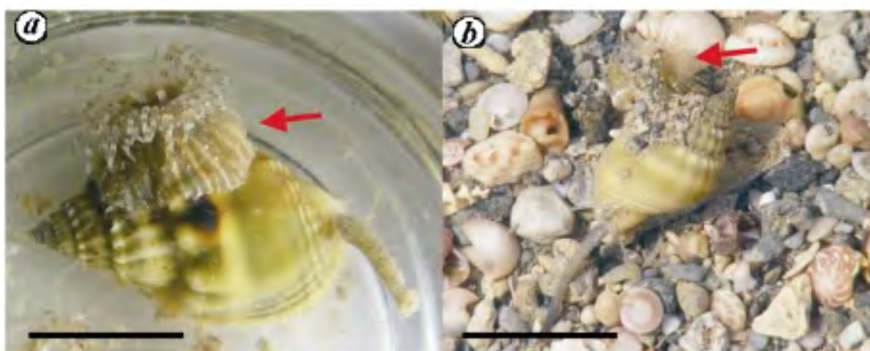


Figure 1. Symbiotic sea anemone (indicated by arrow) with *N. olivaceus*. Scale 10 mm.

1. Mercier, A. and Hamel, J.-F., *J. Exp. Mar. Biol. Ecol.*, 2008, **358**, 57–69.

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