

**NEOPHOCAENA PHOCAENOIDES ASIATIC BLACK FINLESS
PORPOISE: A NEW RECORD FOR THE ARAB GULF**

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One dead male porpoise (fig. 1A) was collected from the Iraqi territorial waters in the Arab Gulf (c. 37 km south of Fao) on 2 May 1974 by a ship belonging to the Iraqi Ports Administration. Another porpoise, a live female, (fig. 1B) was caught by a fishing trawler owned by the Iraqi National Fishing Company from Fao area on 15 April 1975. Both the specimens were presented to the Basrah Natural History Museum and are at present in the Mammal collection. These porpoises are identified as belonging to *Neophocaena phocaenoides* G. Cuvier, the Asiatic Black Finless Porpoise. The measurements are as follows:

	Male	Female
Total length	155	132 cm
Pectoral fin	28	27
Width of Flukes	51	41
Height of body	30	25
Teeth on each side of each jaw	20	18
Weight	30.5	25.0 kg

The overall colour was black in both the specimens.

Hershkovitz (1966) gives the distribution of this species as " Indian Ocean; from South Africa to Bay of Bengal; South Pacific: from South China Sea (Sarawak), Chinese coast (Yangtzekiang River from mouth to 1000 miles

inland, and in Tungting Lake) to coast of southern Japan. Tomilin (1962, Cetacea of the U. S. S. R. Fauna U. S. S. R., 79: 194) adds Korea and the peripheral Malacca and Persian Gulf to the range of the genus.'

Although Tomilin includes the Arab Gulf (Persian Gulf) also in the range of this genus I have no knowledge of any species belonging to this genus as recorded from the Arab Gulf (Al-Robaae 1974.) Therefore, the present collection forms the first record for this species from the Arab Gulf.

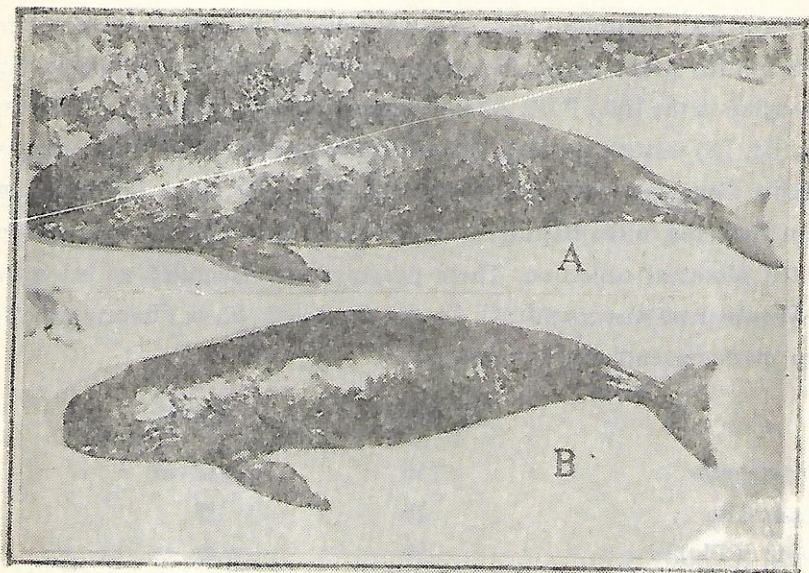


Figure 1. The Asiatic Finless Black Porpoise (*Neophocaena phocaenoides*) collected from the Arab Gulf; a new record for the region; A, Male; B, Female.

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TWO ADDITIONS TO THE IRAQI AVIFAUNA

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At 06 : 15 on 9 September 1974 one lame male Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* (Boddaert) was caught in nylon mist net from *Phragmites communis* reed bed growing by side of the Shatt-al-Arab river at Shafi about 60 km north of Basrah on way to Baghdad. The bird has a right tarsus of only 9 mm with no toes, and the left one of normal length (19.5 mm) but the toes without any claws instead each has a slight thickening at the terminal part.

Although crippled the bird did not appear to be weak in health for it weighed 15.0 g. Williamson (1963) gives average weight of 13 autumn birds (*L. n. naevia*) as 14.6 (13.0–16.9) g. It was active as any other similar-sized passerine handled during the season.

The measurements of the specimen in mm are: wing : 63 ; tail : 55 ; bill (from feathers):11; and tarsus: 19.5.

It has very worn remiges, the rectrices less so, and without any moult.

It had a good amount of subcutaneous fat accumulation particularly at the abdomen, breast, lower back, and moderate amount on the back. The stomach contained fragments of dark exoskeletons of? beetles.

This species is a west and central Palearctic breeder, between 61° N and 40° N, and winters in Africa (precise range uncertain—probably in the northern tropical region), also Iran and India (Snow 1971); Vaurie (1959) gives southern Caspian districts, Khorasan, Zagros and Kirman as the wintering areas of *L. n. straminea* Seeböhm in Iran. South of Iraq in the Arabian peninsula there is a single record of a specimen collected by Chee-

smen on 29 March in rushes by the sea at Uqair, Arab Gulf coast (Meinertzhagen 1954).

In the morning of 7 October 1974 one female Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (Savi) weighing 15.0 g was netted from a reed bed of *P. communis* about 400 m north of the reed bed from where *L. naevia* was collected.

The measurements of the specimen in mm are: wing : 71; tail: 58; bill (from feathers): 13; and tarsus: 22.

The plumage looks fresh; the remiges and rectrices have rather intact borders with little wear. No moulting was noticed. A single black spot was present at the right side on the posterior broader part of the tongue. A good amount of subcutaneous fat was noted on the abdomen and dorsal side.

L. luscinioides is a west and central Palearctic breeder, between 55°N and 33°N; in Asia the breeding range extends southwest to Russian Turkistan; winters probably in tropical and northeast Africa (Snow 1971). Although Dementiev *et al.* (1954) report *L. luscinioides fusca* (Severtzov) "Winters and migrates in northeast Iran and basins of Tigris and Euphrates" and illustrate so in the distribution map of the species (p. 313), we have no information of this species as sighted or collected from Iraq.

Vaurie (1959), Allouse (1962), and Williamson (1963) do not mention of its occurrence in Iraq; however, *L. l. fusca* has been reported from Transjordan (September 13), Palestine (March, April) and southwestern Iran March 17-31 & July 21) by Vaurie.

Even though Ticehurst (1922) has said that *L. n. straminea* and *L. luscinioides* might be expected to occur in Iraq, no specimen belonging to these species has been sighted or collected so far from the area and hence the present collection make two additions to the avifauna of Iraq. Both the specimens are deposited in the bird collection of the Museum.

It is pertinent to note that both *L. naevia* and *L. luscinioides* were collected during the autumn migration season and these two were the only *Locustella* collected during the occasional netting done at our shafi field station in 1974. On *L. fluviatilis*, the only other species of *Locustella* reported from Iraq, we have no information from the area subsequent to the collection of a single specimen by Venning from Basrah on May 11, 1918.

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