Trichechus inunguis Natterer, 1883

TRIC Tric 3 **SEW**

FAO Names: En - Amazonian manatee: **Fr -** Lamantin de l'Amazonie; **Sp -** Vaca marina del Amazon.

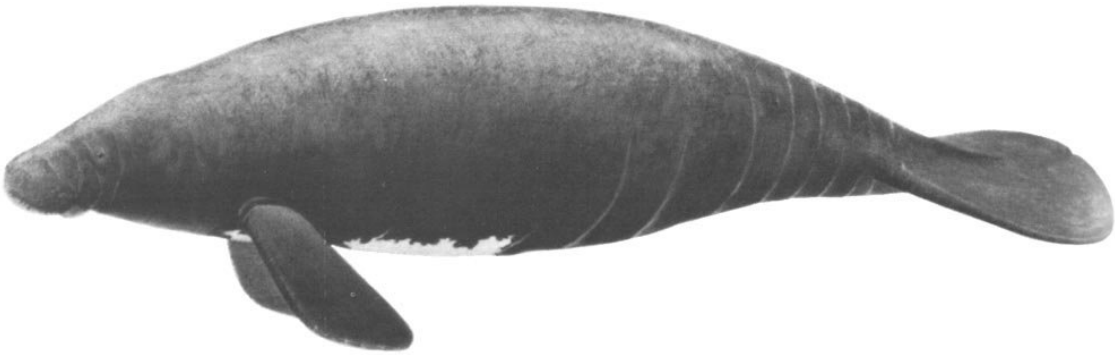


Fig. 409 *Trichechus inunguis*

Distinctive Characteristics: Amazonian manatees are the smallest, most slender of the 3 species of manatees. They have the rounded tails characteristic of manatees, but the skin of adults and juveniles is smooth, rather than wrinkled as in their relatives. The large flippers lack nails. There are thick bristles on the lip pads of both jaws, and the body has a sparse covering of fine hairs.

Amazonian manatees are grey to black; most have white or pink belly and chest patches (these only rarely occur in Florida manatees).

Five to 7 functional cheek teeth, and 2 vestigial incisors (resorbed after birth) are found in each tooth row. Typical of manatees, teeth are replaced from the rear. They are smaller than in other manatee species.

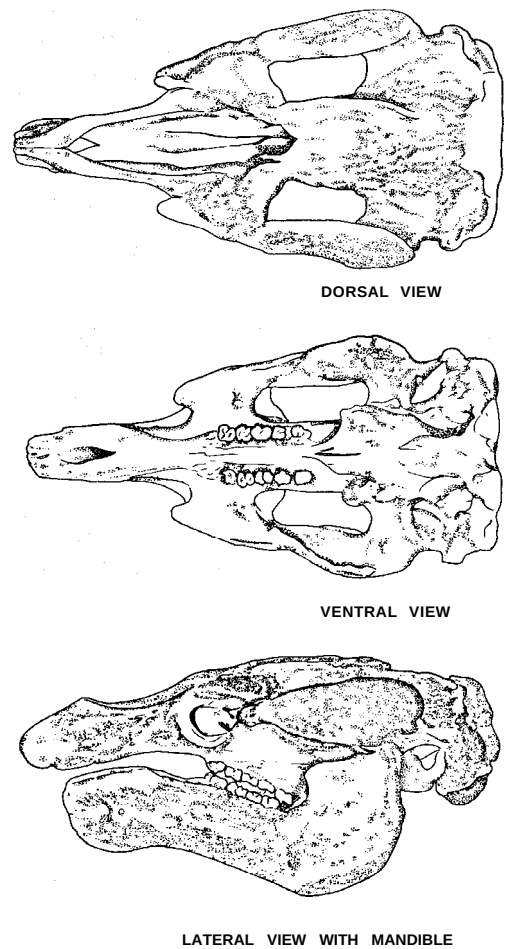
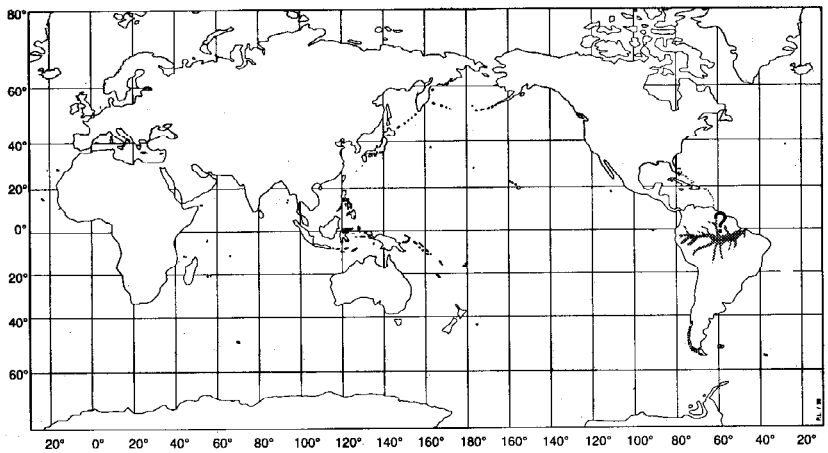


Fig. 410 Skull

Can be confused with: Amazonian and West Indian manatees (p. 206) may co-occur in or near the mouth of the Amazon River. The size, shape, and coloration differences listed above will help in allowing them to be distinguished. Also, the presence (West Indian) or absence (Amazonian) of nails on the flippers is diagnostic, when seen.

Size: Amazonian manatees reach lengths of only about 3.0 m, and weights of at least 450 kg. Length at birth is about 90 cm; weight is 10 to 15 kg.

Geographical Distribution: This is a freshwater species. Amazonian manatees are found in waters of the Amazon River and its tributaries in Brazil, Guyana, Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador. They may possibly occur in the Orinoco drainage as well.



Biology and Behaviour: The poorly known Amazonian manatee occurs singly or in feeding groups of up to 8 individuals. The large herds often seen in the past are a rarity today. Their activities are strongly influenced by the seasonal floods. Their behaviour is very cryptic.

Breeding occurs throughout much of the year, but there is a peak in February to May, when the water level in the river rises. A single calf is born after a gestation of about a year.

Amazonian manatees feed on vascular aquatic and semi-aquatic plants, but they have also been observed to eat floating palm fruits. Some may fast or eat dead plant material during the dry season.

Exploitation: Heavy hunting for meat, hides, and oil in the 17th to mid-20th century has left the species depleted in many areas. Subsistence hunting continues to pose a threat, and damming of tributaries and other forms of habitat destruction create other problems.

IUCN Status: Vulnerable.

Trichechus senegalensis Link, 1795

TRIC Tric 2 **WAM**

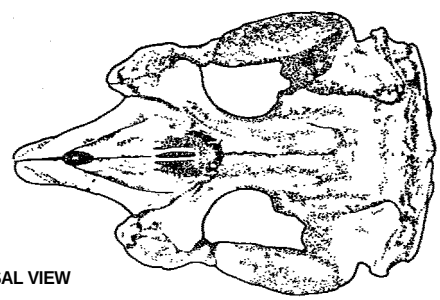
FAO Names: En - West African manatee; **Fr -** Lamantin d'Afrique; **Sp** - Vaca marina del Africa.

Fig. 412 *Trichechus senegalensis*

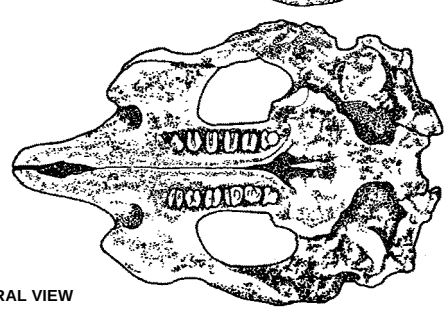
Distinctive Characteristics: West African manatees are very similar in appearance to West Indian manatees (p. 206), although they are more slender. They have rounded, paddle-like tails. The head shape is similar to that of the West Indian manatee, but the snout is blunter, and the small eyes stick out more. There are stiff bristles on the lips. As in other manatees, the flippers are paddle-like; and there are nails on the upper surface. The skin is wrinkled, with a sparse covering of short hairs.

The body of West African manatees is greyish brown; and the hairs are white.

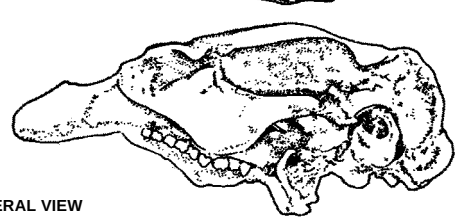
There are 5 to 7 functional teeth in each tooth row. These are replaced from the rear by newly erupting teeth. Newborn animals have 2 vestigial incisors, which are later lost.



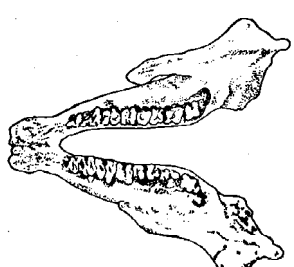
DORSAL VIEW



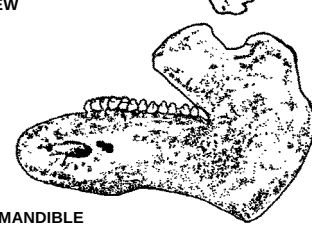
VENTRAL VIEW



LATERAL VIEW



DORSAL VIEW OF MANDIBLE



LATERAL VIEW OF MANDIBLE

Fig. 413 Skull

Can be confused with: West African manatees will be easy to identify, as they are the only sirenians in their range.

Size: Adult West African manatees reach 3 to 4 m in length and up to 750 kg in Weight. Newborns are about 1 m long.

Geographical Distribution: West African manatees are found in coastal marine waters, rivers, and estuaries from southern Mauritania to northern Angola. There are also some unverified reports of manatees in Lake Chad, and nearby rivers.

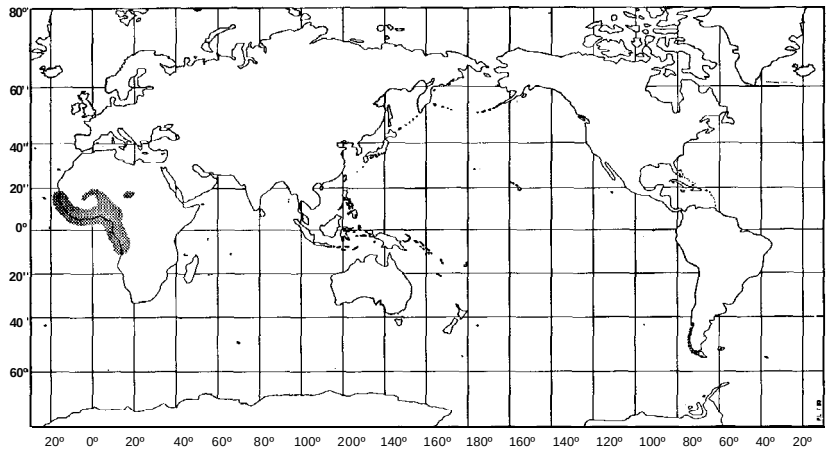


Fig. 414

Biology and Behaviour: Manatees are mostly solitary, but mothers and calves are found together and aggregations of up to 15 form for feeding and other purposes. There is little else known of their behaviour.

There is some breeding year-round, but there appears to be some seasonality related to the rains. A single calf is born, generally in shallow lagoons.

Aquatic vascular plants comprise much of the diet of West African manatees. They may also feed on mangrove leaves or plants on the banks of rivers or channels. Clams have been found in the stomachs of some animals. In Senegal, they reportedly eat small fish from fishermen's nets.

Exploitation: West African manatees are hunted for meat, skin, bones, and oil by local people. Other problems are damming of rivers, navigation channel development, and accidental capture in fishing gear.

IUCN Status: Vulnerable.

Dugong dugon (Müller, 1776)

DUGO Dugo 1 **DUG**

FAO Names: En - Dugong; **Fr -** Dugong; **Sp -** Dugón.

Fig. 415 ***Dugong dugon***

Distinctive Characteristics: The dugong is unique among living sirenians in having whale-like flukes with a median notch, instead of the rounded tails of manatees. In general, dugongs are more streamlined and cetacean-like than manatees. The area in front of the flukes is laterally compressed into a peduncle. The paddle-shaped flippers have no nails. There is a downward deflection to the muzzle, which ends in a "rostral disk" with short, dense bristles. The nostrils are valve-like and are situated on the top of the animal's snout. The skin is generally smooth (not wrinkled, although there arefolds) and is sprinkled with short hairs.

Adults are slate grey on the back, slightly lighter on the belly. Calves are a pale cream colour.

The dental formula is I 2/3, C 0/1, PM 3/3, M 3/3 (the 6 molars and premolars are reduced to 2 or 3 in older animals). The lower incisors and canines, and the inner pair of upper incisors, are vestigial.

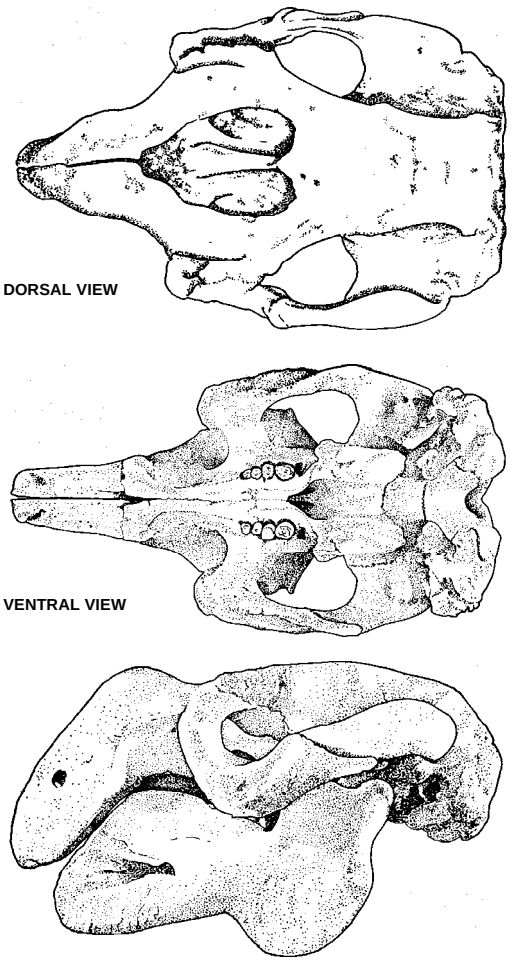


Fig. 416 Skull

Can be confused with: This is the only sirenian in the Indo-Pacific. There is some possibility of confusion with the finless porpoise (p. 192), but the single blowhole of the porpoise and the double nostrils of the dugong will allow them to be easily distinguished.

Size: Maximum known size for dugongs is about 3.3 m and at least 400 kg (a specimen reported to be 4.06 m and 1 016 kg is considered to be an error). At birth, dugongs are between 1 and 1.5 m long and weigh about 20 kg.

Geographical Distribution: Dugongs are widely distributed in the Indo-Pacific region in coastal tropical and subtropical waters. They also occur in inshore waters, in bays and channels. The range is discontinuous: from southeast Africa north to the Red Sea; in the Persian Gulf; along western India to Sri Lanka; and throughout Indonesia and the Pacific islands, to the Ryukyu Islands in the north and the central coasts of Australia in the south.

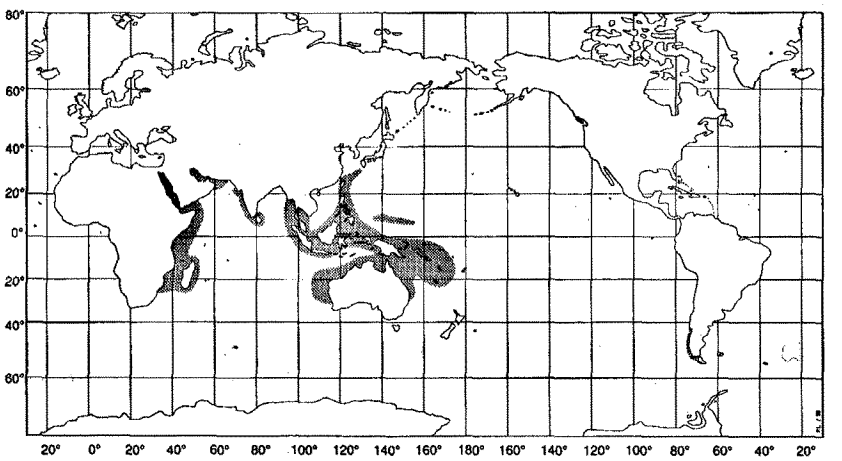


Fig. 417

Biology and Behaviour: Dugongs occur mostly in small groups of up to 6 individuals. Herds as large as several hundred animals periodically form, although not as often as in the past. Dives up to 8 minutes have been recorded.

There is some reproductive activity throughout most of the year, with calving peaks in June to September in at least some parts of the range. Not much is known about reproductive behaviour in the dugong, but groups of males seem to compete to mate with a single estrus female. The gestation period is about 13 to 14 months, and a single calf is born.

The food of dugongs consists of various types of bottom vegetation, primarily seagrasses.Feeding trails in seagrass beds can be seen in dugong feeding areas exposed by the tides.

Exploitation: There is subsistance and commercial hunting of dugongs in many areas. Destruction of seagrass beds and pollution also pose a threat to this species. They have been extirpated in some parts of their range; in others, they are still abundant.

IUCN Status: Vulnerable.