

The Hinchinbrook region is a particularly important habitat for endangered Dugong, and some rare inshore dolphins. James Cook University, in association with the Hinchinbrook Region Marine Resources Advisory Committee and the Department of Environment is assembling records of sightings of these species in the region. This information will assist with the development of management plans that will help ensure the protection of these inshore marine mammals.

If you see a marine mammal in the Hinchinbrook region could you please:

- 1. Indicate the location of the sighting on the map** on the reverse side of this sheet
- 2. Indicate the path taken by your boat on the day of the sighting** (if you were in a boat)
- 3. Fill in the information** on the reverse side of this sheet
- 4. Fold** and seal this sighting sheet so the **Reply Paid** address is on the outside and **post it**

Key features to note that will help with your identifications are:

back fin (shape and size, or absence); **body colour**; and **snout shape**. See attached sheet for illustrations and details

██████████
██████████
No stamp required
if posted in Australia

Reply Paid 18
Hinchinbrook Region Marine Mammal Survey
Dr Tony Preen
Department of Tropical Environment Studies and Geography
James Cook University
Townsville 4811

Fold

Sender:.....
.....
.....

PLEASE do not disturb the animals by approaching too closely
PLEASE be cautious in shallow waters – to avoid boat strike.

Please circle appropriate options:

SPECIES: Dugong / Bottlenose dolphin / Humpback dolphin / Irrawaddy dolphin / other

CONFIDENCE OF IDENTIFICATION: Certain / Pretty sure / Not certain **DATE:**

SEEN FROM: Shore / Sailing Boat / Tinny or powerboat at anchor / Tinny or powerboat travelling

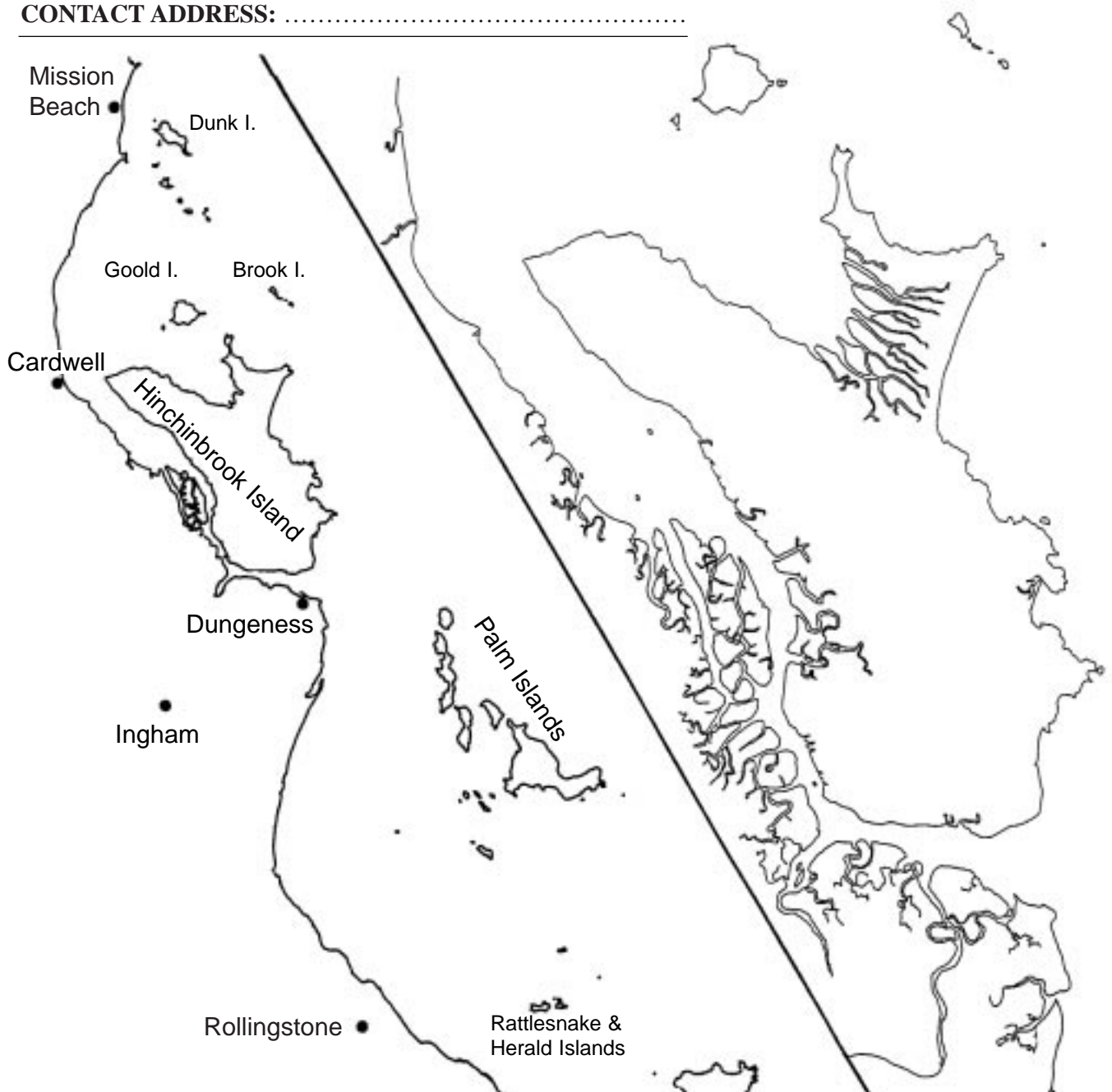
NUMBER IN GROUP: **NUMBER OF CALVES:** **PHOTOS:** Yes / No
(include a copy if possible)

WEATHER (wind, waves, cloud etc.):

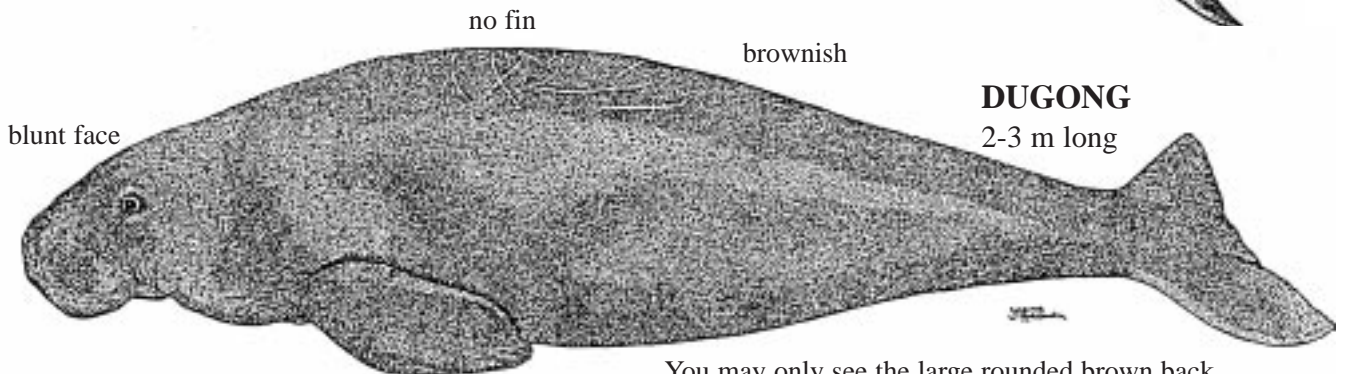
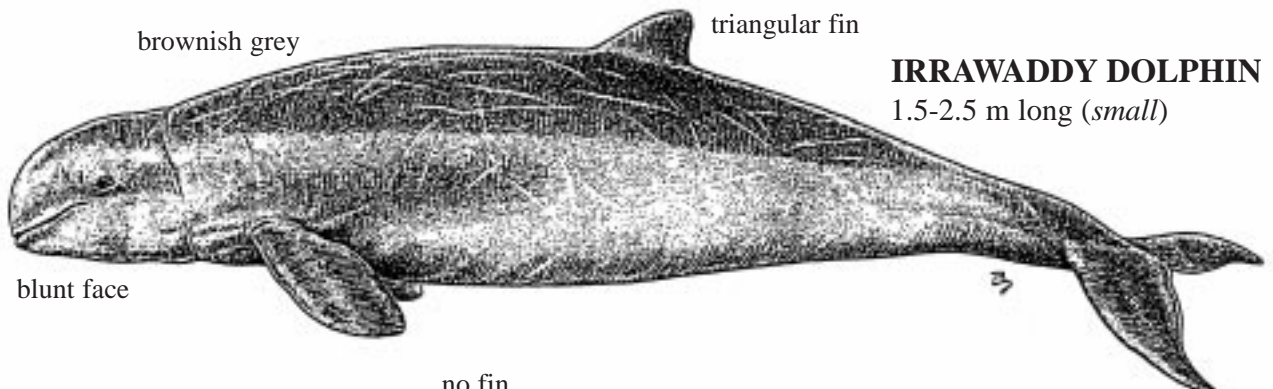
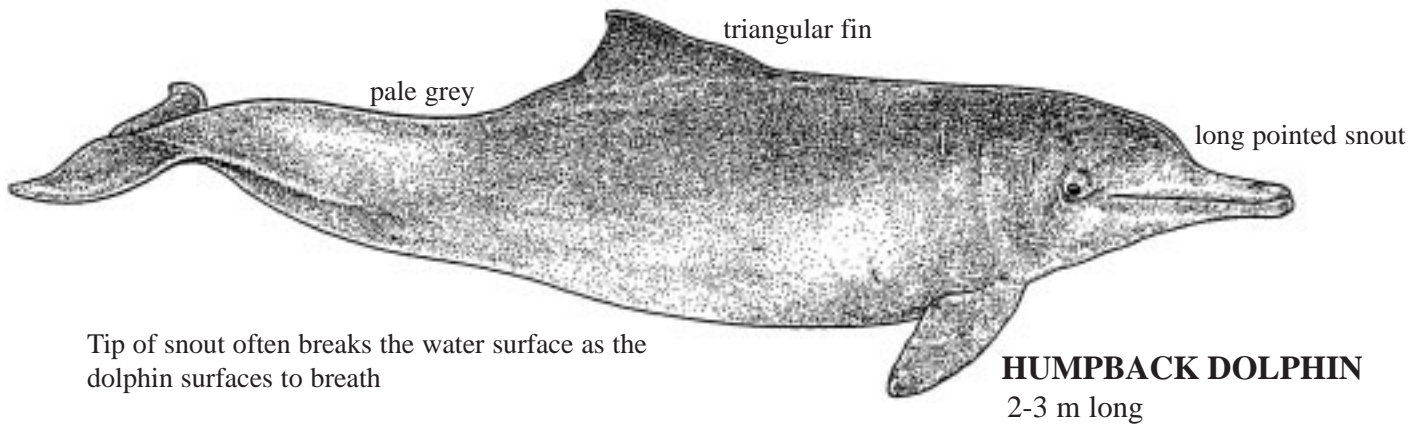
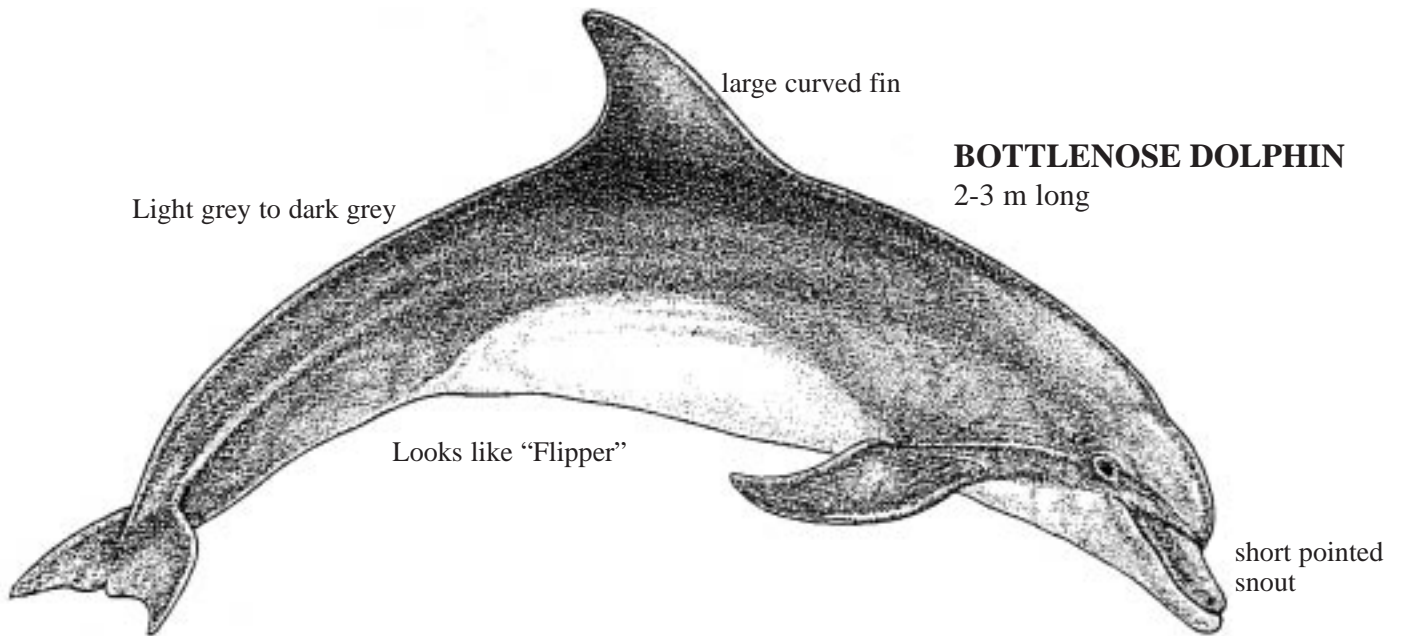
COMMENTS (activity etc.):

NAME OF OBSERVER: **PHONE:**

CONTACT ADDRESS:



SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR DIRECTIONS



You may only see the large rounded brown back
Usually only visible when it surfaces to breathe for 2-3 seconds every 1-3 minutes

Please send sightings to Dr Tony Preen, Dept. Tropical Environment Studies, James Cook University 4811

Dugongs and Dolphins

Although they often share the same habitat, dugongs and dolphins are very different. Dolphins are carnivores and feed on fish, squid and some other marine animals. Dugongs are herbivores and feed almost exclusively on seagrasses. In fact the dugong is the only strictly marine mammal that feeds on plants. Because dolphins have to be able to catch their food, they tend to be faster and more active than dugongs. Being more active, dolphins have to breathe frequently, and hence they tend to spend a lot of time near the water surface. Dugongs, by contrast, spend much of their time near the bottom feeding on seagrass and they only come to the surface for a quick breath every minute or two. For these reasons it is often easier to see dolphins than dugongs. Dolphins are also more conspicuous because they have a fin on their back. The shape of this fin is very important in identifying the type of dolphin. Dugongs do not have a back fin.

There are many other differences. For example, female dolphins have their mammary glands concealed behind slits on their belly. This keeps their body shape very streamlined. Dugongs, with less need for speed, have more conspicuous mammary glands that are located near the 'armpits' of their front flippers. When a female dugong is lactating, her nipples are 6-7 cm long. The location of prominent nipples in this position is probably one of the main reasons why dugongs are the origin of the mermaid legend.

Dugongs are long-lived, slow breeding animals. Although they live for up to 70 years, they do not become sexually mature until they are 10-15 years old and they only have one calf every 3-7 years. This is a very low rate of reproduction compared with most other animals, like kangaroos, cattle or fish. It is this very low rate of reproduction that makes dugongs especially vulnerable to over-harvesting, be that by incidental take in fishing nets, hunting or boat strike.

Much of what we know about dugongs has been learned by analysing the carcasses of dead dugongs. There is still much to be learned, and it is important that any dead dugong is examined.

IF YOU FIND AN INJURED OR DEAD DUGONG OR DOLPHIN:

1. If it is dead and in the water, tie it to a tree so that it does not float away.
2. Notify the Department of Environment as soon as possible.

Call one of these numbers:

Townsville:	(077) 225 313
Lucinda:	(077) 778 356
Cardwell:	(070) 668 115
Ingham:	(077) 761 700

