

Ginkgo-Toothed Beaked Whales

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Species

Why in news?

A team of scientists has spotted the rare ginkgo-toothed beaked whales for the first time in the wild along the coast of Baja California in Mexico.

- **Scientific name** - *Mesoplodon ginkgodens*
- **Common Name** - Japanese Beaked Whale.
- **Family** - Ziphiidae (Beaked Whales).
- **Discovery** - 1st described in 1958.
- **Distribution** - ***Tropical and temperate waters*** of the Indo-Pacific from Sri Lanka and India through Japan to California.
- **Indian Records** - May inhabit the waters around India - near Colombo, Sri Lanka (1957 specimen), other suspected capture off Trincomalee.

Key Features

- **Diversity** - It is one of 24 species of beaked whales, which are second most diverse group of cetaceans after dolphins.
- **Size** - The maximum length is believed to be about 5 m long.
- **Weight** - About estimated as 1.5 and 3.6 tons.
- **Appearance** -
 - They have a robust body, a distinct beak, and a small dorsal fin located far back on the body.
 - Long, pointed beak with no teeth in the upper jaw.
 - Adult males have one pair of large teeth shaped like ginkgo leaves (or onions).
 - Teeth are broad at the base (up to 10 cm) and pointed at the tip.
 - Two V-shaped throat grooves, typical of beaked whales.
- It is the ***deepest-diving mammals*** on Earth which spend most of their lives in deep oceans.



- **Coloration** - Dark grey/blue-grey/black dorsally, pale grey ventrally. Skin turns black rapidly after death.
- **Diet** - Primarily fish and squid.
- **Behavior** - It is rarely observed at sea; little is known about its social or diving habits.
- **Conservation Status** -
 - **IUCN** - Data Deficient.
 - **CITES** - Appendix II.

References

1. [Indian Express | Ginkgo-Toothed Beaked Whale](#)
2. [Marine Mammal | Ginkgo-Toothed Beaked Whale](#)