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A note on the leatherback turtle *Dermochelys coriacea* (Vandelli, 1761) rescued at Vizhinjam, Kerala

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A large leather back turtle was rescued on 17th June 2008 from fishermen at Vizhinjam landing centre. It was entangled in a gill net and was brought to the landing centre for handing over the same to illegal traders. However, the forest officials along with police personnel intervened and the turtle was released back. The turtle was identified as *Dermochelys coriacea* (Vandelli) of the family Dermochelyidae which measured 195 cm in total length and weighed about 350 kg. Morphometric measurements of the turtle is given in Table 1.

Leatherback turtles are not commonly caught at Vizhinjam. Leatherback is the largest living turtle which reaches a size of 270 cm in adult stage. The largest leatherback on record is a male stranded on the west coast of Wales in 1988 weighing 16 kg. The leatherback is composed of a leather like smooth

Table 1. Morphometric measurements of *D. coriacea* rescued at Vizhinjam

Total length	195 cm
Carapace length	170 cm
Carapace width	80 cm
Flipper length	89 cm
Head length	25 cm

covering and hence the common name. The head of the adult leatherback is small, round and scaleless. Dorsal side is essentially black with scattered white blotches that are usually arranged along the keels and with pinkish blotches on neck and shoulder. All marine turtles of our waters especially leatherbacks are included in the schedule I of the Indian Wild Life Protection Act, 1972.