5. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY ANIMAL

Scientific position

Kingdom : Animalia
Phylum : Mollusca
Class : Bivalvia
Order : Veneroida
Family : Donacidae
Genus : Donax
Species : Donax cuneatus (Linnaeus, 1758) 

Vernacular name: Wedge clam, Beach clam.

Habitat

D. cuneatus occurs in the surf beaches.

Identification

The shell is medium sized, triangular and compressed. The colour of the shell is extremely variable, ranging from dull white to yellowish brown or grayish brown, commonly with dark brown or mauve rays radiating from umbo to ventral margin. The anterior margin is more rounded and ventral margin is slightly convex (almost straight). The posterior margin is truncated. The lunule is present on both the valves. The anterior adductor muscle scar is oval in shape whereas the posterior adductor muscle is scar rounded. The pallial sinus joins the pallial line parallelly. They have distinct cardinal teeth. The strong external ligament keeps
the two valves intact when the animal dies and strewn onto the beaches the two shells appear
like “butterfly wings”.

This is the primary species of donacids of the east coast of India. Clean, sandy beaches
are characterized by *D. cuneatus* and these beaches can be referred to as ‘Donax beaches’.
The beaches that are clean and generally of white quartz sand are highly populated with
Donax are firm and compact underfoot.

**Size**

The maximum length 17-46 mm, height 11-31 mm, width 7-14 mm (Fernando and
Fernando, 2002).