

A NOTE ON A WHALE SHARK *RHINCODON TYPUS* SMITH
CAUGHT OFF CALICUT

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A juvenile male specimen of *Rhincodon typus* Smith measuring 5600 mm was caught off Calicut during the month of January 1970. The body measurements and a brief description of the specimen are given.

A juvenile male specimen of *Rhincodon typus* Smith was caught in a gill net off Calicut, about 15 km away from the shore, on 5 January, 1970. It was estimated to weigh about 3500 kg, the liver alone weighing 68 kg.

The colour of the specimen was dark grey with numerous yellow spots over the body. There is a median ridge on the back and three lateral ridges on each side.

The measurements of the specimen (in mm) are given below:

1. Total length	5600
2. Width of body at the head region	1500
3. Width of mouth (from angle to angle)	760
4. Vertical height of first dorsal fin	400
5. Length of pectoral fin along outer margin from anterior insertion	960
6. Length of pectoral fin from angle of inner base to tip	800
7. Length of pelvic fin from anterior insertion	330
8. Length of first dorsal from anterior insertion	500
9. Length of second dorsal from anterior insertion	230
10. Length of caudal fin from caudal pit along upper margin	1370
11. Length of caudal fin from caudal pit along lower margin	750
12. Length of anal fin along outer margin	200
13. Length of clasper from inner base of pelvic fin	170
14. Length of pelvic fin along its inner edge	200
15. Thickness of skin along dorsum	53
16. Thickness of skin along abdominal wall	28

The stomach was full of some green matter in a completely digested state and hence the items of food could not be identified.

Prater (1941) has given the records of whale shark in the Indian coastal waters. In the subsequent years, it has been reported from Bombay (Kulkarni, 1948), Madapally (Chacko and Mathew, 1954) Mangalore (Kaikini *et al.*, 1959), Cannanore (Thomas and Kartha, 1964) and Tuticorin (Silas and Rajagopalan, 1963).

The whale sharks are said to occur along the west coast of India mostly during the months of January to April, which may be due to the abundance of zooplankton during these months and also due to the particular direction and movements of surface currents in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea at this period (Prater, 1941). It is of interest that the occurrence of the present specimen was also in January.

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