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ON THE STRANDING OF SEI WHALE *BALAENOPTERA BOREALIS* ALONG GULF OF MANNAR COAST*

An incidence of stranding of Sei whale *Balaenoptera borealis* has been observed on 18-5-1988 at Kayalpatnam in Gulf of Mannar. This region appears to be known for such occurrences as seen from the earlier records. Gulf of Mannar is being frequented by different whales such as Blue whale, Sperm whale, Rorqual whale, Sei whale *etc.*, on their migration towards the Indian and Sri Lankan coasts for the purpose of breeding.

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The medium sized female Sei whale measured 10.02 m in total length, 2.25 m in height and weighed about 5.5 t. The local fishermen noticed the whale floating in the shallow waters on the previous day during their regular fishing operations. On hearing this news, some of the residents engaged five Tuticorin type of motorized boats and brought the whale ashore and exhibited it for the public on 18th May, 1988.

The morphometric measurements obtained are given in Table 1. Figs. 1 and 2 show the dorsal and

frontal view of the stranded whale. Figs. 3 and 4 show the throat grooves and one of the baleen plates respectively.



Fig. 1. Dorsal view of the Baleen whale (*B. borealis*) stranded off Kayalpatnam.



Fig. 2. Frontal view of the Baleen whale.



Fig. 3. Throat grooves of the Baleen whale.



Fig. 4. A baleen plate of the Baleen whale.

Table 1. Details of morphometric measurements of *Balaenoptera borealis* stranded off Kayalpatnam on 18th May, 1988

Details	Measurements in cm
Tip of upper jaw to deepest part of fluke notch	1002
Tip of upper jaw to centre of anus	649
Tip of upper jaw to end of genital slit	624
Tip of upper jaw to centre of umblicus	504
Tip of upper jaw to top of dorsal fin	695
Tip of upper jaw to anterior insertion of flipper (left)	300
Tip of upper jaw to centre of blow hole	139
Tip of upper jaw to centre of eye (left)	216
Tip of upper jaw to angle of gape	170
Projection of lower jaw beyond upper	72
Length of eye (left)	15
Centre of eye to angle of gape	46
Blow hole length	33
Blow hole width	16
Flipper length : tip to anterior insertion (left)	120
Dorsal fin height	58
Dorsal fin base	52
Fluke span	220
Notch of flukes to centre of anus	320
Girth at flippers	252
Baleen plate length	178
Baleen plate breadth	30
Other details:	
Baleen counts	312 nos.
Stomach length	95
Liver length	117
Intestine length	4408
Ventral grooves	56 nos.

Prior to this incidence a specimen of the same species was washed ashore in Tuticorin port area on 26th February, 1988. This was identified as male and the morphometric measurements of this specimen is given in Table 2 (Venkataramanujam *et al.*, pers. communication). On earlier two occasions also the same

Table 2. *Morphometric measurements (in cm) of Sei whale Balaenoptera borealis stranded at Tuticorin on 26th February, 1988, (Venkataramanujam et al., Pers. communication)*

Details	Measurements in cm.
Total length	1200
Weight	1000
Tip of lower jaw to flipper origin	136
Breadth at the base of flipper	32
Tongue length (4 rows of frills in the tongue noted)	134
Tip of lower jaw to origin of dorsal fin	778
Length of dorsal fin base	56
Height of dorsal fin base	24
Baleen plate length	20
Length of lower jaw	232
Number of grooves	48 nos.
Blow hole breadth	19
Blow hole length	33
Eye length	07
Single caudal length	137
Single caudal breadth	77
Maximum girth	45
Total number of baleen plates in each row	365 nos.



species was reported by others from Naduvattom in Kerala coast and from Dhanushkodi Island.

The males of *B. borealis* attain maturity when they measure on an average 13.7 m. From the total length of the presently reported two whales it is seen that they were young ones and stranding might not have occurred due to breeding run. Further, it was observed by Venkataramanujam *et al.*, (per. communication) that the stomach of the male was full with *Sardinella* spp., which indicates that this specimen was in good health and it might have stranded when it strayed into shallow water in search of the shoals of sardines. The stomach of the female was empty and this suggests that this specimen might have had a poor health for there was no dearth for food as the sardine fishery was in its peak at the time of stranding.