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929 On a sei whale *Balaenoptera borealis* stranded at Vellapatti along the Gulf of Mannar coast

The news about the stranding of a whale at Vellapatti, a nearby fishing village in Tuticorin appeared in the local dailies on 12.2.'99. Five fishermen belonging to this village left for regular fishing on 11.2.'99 along with 20 crew members in five *vallams* fitted with inboard engine. While

surveying the fishing ground at a distance of 10 km from the shore they sighted a huge whale floating on the surface water in dead condition. Immediately all the five boats encircled and decided to bring the animal to the shore. They towed the whale to the shore.

Enquiries with the fishermen revealed that the whale was not struggling for survival at the time of sighting. The whale might have died a few days ago, most probably due to a deep wound caused by collision with a navigating cargo ship as the Tuticorin Port is hardly 8 km away.

The whale was identified as *Balaenoptera borealis*. It had 52 throat grooves which terminated half way between tip of flipper and umbilicus. All the other features could not be studied as the specimen was partly submerged in the water and reached an advanced state of decomposition. However, the total length was measured and the same was 13.58 m and the weight was estimated to be around 12 t.

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