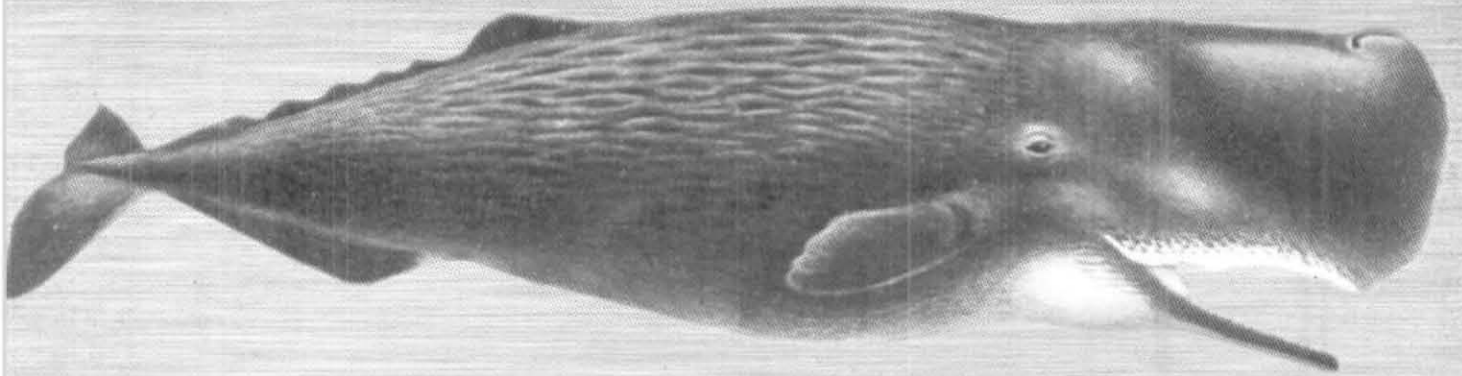




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On a false killer whale *Pseudorca crassidens* (Owen) caught at Ennore along the Chennai coast

False killer whale *Pseudorca crassidens* (Owen) is widely distributed in Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. They are oceanic in habit and move in schools and often approaches land masses with deep waters nearby. The stranding, landing and sighting of false killer whales have been reported by several authors along the Indian coast (Table 1)

In the present report, details on the incidental catch of a false killer whale, *Pseudorca crassidens* (Owen) in the gill net operated from a fibre glass boat fitted with outboard engine at a depth of 20 to 30 m on 17th July 2001 at Ennore coastal wa-

ters near Chennai are given. The specimen was a female measuring 515 cm in total length (Fig. 1) The morphometric measurements are presented in Table 2.

The diagnostic characters of the species are: body elongate and slender; head small, narrow with bulbous forehead gently tapering from blow-hole forward; snout projected a little beyond the tip of lower jaw; dorsal fin small; tip directed backwards with posterior border concave. Upper jaw slightly overhangs the lower jaw. Flippers are narrow with inner side slightly concave. Body tapering, characterized by a broad hump in the front

Table 1. Report on the instances of false killer whale *Pseudorca crassidens* (Owen) caught/stranded/sighted along the Indian coast

Sl. No.	Date	Place	Length (cm)	Sex	Reference	Remarks
1.	14-2-1902	Trivandrum	505	—	Ferguson and Lydekker (1903)	—
2.	—	Trivandrum	355	Male	Dawson (1911)	—
3.	—	Trivandrum	323	Female	Pillay, 1926	Skeleton in Trivandrum museum
4.	1907	Rajakamangalam	—	—	Pillay, 1926	Skeleton in Trivandrum museum
5.	—	Thengapatnam	—	—	Pillay, 1926	—
6.	27-11-1960	Pozikkara	279	Male	Silas and Kumara Pillay (1961)	Caught alive and died after three days
7.	27-11-1960	Uvari	375	Female	Silas and Kumara Pillay (1961)	Stranded
8.	—	Alleppy	—	—	Silas and Kumara Pillay (1961)	Stranded
9.	28-07-1975	Puthippa, Calicut	432	Female	Lal Mohan, et. al. (1984)	Stranded
10.	18-10-1975	Rameswaram	384	Male	Thiagarajan, et. al. (1984)	Stranded alive
11.	27-7-1976	Port Blair, Andaman	396	—	James (1984)	Two numbers got entangled by gill nets
12.	07-03-1983	Camp bell Bay, Shastri Nagar, Andaman	487	Female	James (1985)	Stranded
13.	05-07-1988	Off Mandapam	450	—	Vedavyasa Rao (1989)	—
14.	05-07-1988	Palk Bay	250-300	—	Vedavyasa Rao (1989)	Two smaller whales were sighted
15.	06-08-1992	Off Veerapandi-anpatinam.	208	Female	Kasim et. al. (1993)	Accidental landing by drift gill net



Fig. 1. Female false killer whale, *Pseudorca crassidens* (Owen), 515 cm in length caught at Ennore near Chennai

margin near the middle which is about 1/10 of the body length. Body elongated and black in colour. The dorsal fin was distinct and placed just behind the mid point, falcate and pointed at the tip. The mouth was curved, teeth large, round in cross section, slightly curved, pointed with 8 to 11 pairs in upper and lower jaws. The false killer whale attains a length of 550 cm and feeds mainly on fishes and cephalopods. They attain maturity at 4.25 - 4.50 m, and the breeding season is fairly extensive.

This species is gregarious in habit. They form a herd of more than hundred animals. Strong social interactions are reported. Occasional large

Table 2: Morphometric measurements (in cm) of the false killer whale *Pseudorca crassidens* caught at Ennore

Snout to tail notch (TL)	515
Snout to caudal peduncle (SL)	438
Snout to origin of flippers	77
Tip of snout to origin of dorsal	188
Tip of snout to eye (anterior margin)	47
Tip of snout to blow-hole	54
Tip of snout to genital pore	265
Tip of snout to anus	290
Length of flippers	
anterior margin	64
posterior margin	44
Width at base	20
Vertical height	62
Dorsal fin	
Anterior margin	66
Posterior margin	26
Width at base	52
Vertical height	29
Caudal fluke	
Caudal fin length	87
Girth of body	
At the base of flippers	166
At the base of dorsal fin	232
At anus	196
At caudal	74
Eye diameter	305
Diameter of blow-hole	7.0
Distance between eye to blow-hole	30
Length of lower jaw	34
Length of upper jaw	37
Number of teeth on lower jaw	9+9
Number of teeth in upper jaw	9+9
Approximate weight	1.0 ton

scale landings of this species were reported from various parts of the world. The present whale might have been isolated from its school while following prey fish shoal in the shallow fishing ground and in that process got entangled in the drift gill net.

Reported by : P. Nammalwar, S. Rajapackiam and S. Rajan, Madras Research Centre of CMFRI, Chennai.