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INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

**957 Live stranding of sei whale
Balaenoptera borealis Lesson
at Tuticorin**

On receipt of a message about the stranding of a whale in live condition, on 1-6-2000 a team from CMFRI visited the place to collect information on the stranding of whale.

On enquiry it is understood that the said whale was noticed by the fishermen around 9.00 P.M. near the Hare island where it was struggling for existence. On noticing this few fishermen hauled up the huge structure by using strong nylon ropes and pulled to the shore near Thirespuram with the help of 3 Tuticorin type of mechanized vallams after having failed in their attempt to save the animal from the stranded shallow water around 1.00 P.M. After the animal was brought to the shore it was impounded in the tidal zone. As it was suffering from strain and starvation coupled with the human torture, the poor animal died around 5.00 P.M.

The whale was pulled to the shore by the fishermen during night hours. Arrangements were made by few unscrupulous elements without obtaining prior permissions from the concerned authorities to display the animal for the public view by charging Rs.5/- per head. But by the timely intervention of forest official the above act was stopped and the public were allowed to view the animal free of cost.

The whale was identified as a female *Balaenoptera borealis* (Sei whale) measuring 9.5 m. Necessary morphometric measurements were taken and presented in Table 1. On close examination, the whale had only 4 very minor bruises on the head region. Neither deep cuts nor wounds were seen on the entire body. Arrangements were made by the forest department to bury the animal at the beach itself and decided to recover the entire skeleton after 6 to 8 months period as the decaying would be

completed by that time. Before conducting burial of whale, portions of the kidney, stomach and intestine were collected and preserved for further studies.

Some fishermen revealed that one more whale was sighted along with the stranded whale on the previous day in the fishing ground. Perhaps it may be its male partner and might have chased for breeding which ultimately resulted stranding in shallow water. After entering into the shallow water its direction finding (echo location mechanism) system might have been confused and got stranded.

TABLE 1. Morphometric measurements (in cm) of *Balaenoptera borealis* stranded Live at Tuticorin on 1.6.2000.

Tip of upper jaw to deepest part of fluke notch..	950
Tip of upper jaw to centre of anus.....	712
Tip of upper jaw to end of genital slit.....	680
Tip of upper jaw to origin of dorsal fin.....	672
Tip of upper jaw to anterior insertion of flipper	300
Tip of upper jaw to centre of blow hole.....	150
Tip of upper jaw to centre of eye.....	201
Projection of lower jaw beyond upper jaw.....	64
Length of upper jaw.....	198
Number of blowhole.....	2
Inter orbital distance.....	143
DORSAL FIN	
Base of dorsal fin	46
Outer margin	44
Inner margin	30
FLIPPER	
Flipper length	120
Base of flipper	37
Inner margin	87

Breadth of flipper in the middle27

CAUDAL FIN

Fluke Span234

Mammary slits15+15

Inter space of slits12

Notch of fluke to anus340

Notch of fluke to Dorsal fin282

Baleen counts more than298

Baleen plate length184

Baleen plate breadth311

Throat grooves42

Largest groove length515

Length of rostrum144

Sex Female

Weight8 ton

Reported by T.S. Balasubramanian, TRC of CMFRI,
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