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Instances of whale shark being caught in shallow waters along the Indian coast and subsequently brought ashore are not uncommon. They were considered to be commercially unimportant until 1980's. Whale shark landings in India were mainly due to incidental catches and mostly discarded. Along the Saurashtra coast in Gujarat, there is a regular fishery of whale sharks between February-May with the peak in March-April. Although there are many records of whale shark landings from different parts of Indian waters, records of catches of embryo are scanty.

In the present observation a male whale shark embryo with yolk sac was accidentally caught in a gillnet, 5 km away from the shore at a depth of 20 meters and brought to the shore at Vellayil in Calicut on 15.11.2001. The specimen measured 94 cm in length and weighed 3.8 kg. The embryo was bluish grey in colour dorsally and whitish ventrally with characteristic white spots. A narrow furrow connecting the nostril to the mouth was present, the nasal flaps were well developed and extended in a crescentic fold from the nostril to under the rim of the tip. Three distinct longitudinal lateral ridges of body keels were present on either side of the body. A dorsolateral keel commencing above the second dorsal and a median keel commencing anterior to the first dorsal extended to the region of the tail. The lowest keel was the strongest and most pronounced.

The embryo bore the yolk sac which was pale reddish in colour and weighed 300 g. The specimen is preserved in the museum of the Calicut Research Centre of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Calicut for future reference. The morphometric measurement of the embryo is given in Table-1.

Whale sharks have internal fertilization and deliver young ones. They are known to mature at 8-9 m length when they are 30 years of age. Whale sharks are kept well in captivity in oceanariums and aquariums in Japan. At present it is not known where exactly whale sharks breed in Indian seas. Only pregnant whale sharks have been recorded. This is an indication of their possible breeding grounds in the Indian coastal waters and breeding season is likely to be towards the last quarter of the year. This claim is supported by the landing of two more juveniles of 2.5 and 2.8m respectively on 2-2-2002 and 11-2-2002 at Calicut in the ring seine. Earlier landing of juveniles of whale shark were also during December-March period. Further studies are needed for determining the breeding season and breeding grounds of whale sharks in Indian waters.

Table-1 Morphometric measurements (cm) of whale shark landed at Calicut

Total length	-	94
Fork length	-	84

Pre caudal length	-	72	Pectoral length	-	19
Pre first dorsal length	-	39	Pectoral base	-	7
Pre second dorsal length	-	57	First dorsal length	-	10
Head length	-	26	First dorsal base	-	8
Pre branchial length	-	14	Second dorsal length	-	4
Pre spiracular length	-	12	Second dorsal base	-	3
Pre orbital length	-	8	Dorsal caudal margin	-	22
Pre pectoral length	-	21	Ventral length	-	6
Pre pelvic length	-	44	Ventral width	-	4
Snout vent length	-	51	Ventral caudal margin	-	8
Pre anal length	-	57	Anal Length	-	4
Inter dorsal space	-	23	Anal width	-	2.5
Dorsal caudal space	-	12	Width of mouth	-	10
Pectoral pelvic space	-	16	Total weight	-	3.8 Kg
Pelvic anal space	-	9			
Anal caudal length	-	12			
Vent caudal length	-	38			

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