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Report on juveniles of whale shark landed along the southern part of the west coast of India*

The capture of whale shark *Rhiniodon typus* (Smith) in the Indian coastal waters has been reported on several occasions and Silas (1986) has reviewed the records of occurrence in the Indian waters. The present report adds information on three more juvenile whale sharks caught subsequently one at Mela Midalam, Kanyakumari district and the other two along the Trivandrum coast.

A male whale shark measuring 5.37 m was caught on 29-1-'95 at night in a gillnet operated off Vizhinjam. It was auctioned for Rs. 2,000/-. The morphometric measurements (in cm) of the shark are as follows.

Total length	537
Standard length	400
Head length	134
Girth of body	254
Width of mouth from angle to angle	90

Length of caudal fin along upper margin	137
Snout to first dorsal	233
Snout to second dorsal	339
Snout to pectoral	123
Length of pectoral along outer margin	95
Length of first dorsal	42
Length of second dorsal	14
Height of first dorsal	43
Height of second dorsal	17
Length of lower caudal lobe	68
Weight (approximate)	4.75 t

The second landing of the whale shark occurred on 3-3-1995 at Mela Midalam in Kanyakumari district. This was a male specimen measuring 4.57 m and weighing 3.75 t and was caught in a shore-seine (Fig. 1).

TABLE 1. Reports of capture of *Rhiniodon typus* (Smith) along southwest coast of India

Date of capture	Locality of capture & No.				Gear	Length (m)	Weight (t)	Sex	Reported by
	Kanyakumari Dist.	No.	Trivandrum Dist.	No.					
1900	-		Near Trivandrum	1	-	8.83	-	-	Pillai (1929) <i>J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.</i> , 33 (2)
Feb. 1909	-		Near Trivandrum	1	-	4.14	-	-	Ibid.
Mar 1934	-		Near Trivandrum	1	-	3.96	-	-	Prater (1941) <i>Ibid.</i> , 42
Feb. 1960	-		Vizhinjam	1	-	9.75	-	-	Silas (1986) <i>Mar. Fish. Infor. Ser., T & E Ser.</i> , No. 66
20-12-1971	Kesavanputhanthurai near Colachal	1	-		-	5.17	-	-	Kuthalingam <i>et al</i> (1973) <i>Indian J. Fish.</i> , 20 (2)
23-12-1971	-		Vizhinjam	1	-	3.93	-	-	Ibid.
16-3-1972	-		Vizhinjam	1	-	5.65	-	-	Ibid.
April 1988	-		Panathura (near Vizhinjam)	1	Shore-seine	6.06	2.0	F	Lazarus <i>et al.</i> (1988) <i>Mar. Fish. Infor. Ser., T & E Ser.</i> , No. 88
April 1988	-		Thumba (near Trivandrum)	1	Shore-seine	-	-	M	Ibid.
18-4-1988	Colachal	3	-		-	7.32	1.5	-	Ibid.
13-3-1994	Kovalam (near Kanyakumari)	1	-		Gillnet	-	1.5	M	Joel <i>et al.</i> (1994) <i>Ibid.</i> , No. 131
12-12-1994	-		Vettukadu (near Trivandrum)	1	Gillnet	5.50	4.75	-	Present report
29.1.1995	-		Vizhinjam	1	Gillnet	5.37	4.75	M	Present report
3.3.1995	Mela Midalam	1	-		Shore-seine	4.57	3.75	M	Present report



Fig. 1. The juvenile male whale shark caught in the shore seine at Mela Midalam in Kanyakumari district.

Way back in December 1994, a juvenile whale shark caught in a gillnet was landed at Vettukadu in Trivandrum district and its approximate length and weight were 5.5 m and 4.75 t respectively. The updated records of capture of the whale shark *Rhiniodon typus* along the southwest coast of India are given in Table 1. It is seen that six whale sharks were caught in Kanyakumari and Colachal areas in Tamil Nadu and ten in Vizhinjam and nearby areas.

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