



MARINE FISHERIES INFORMATION SERVICE



No.71

January, February, March
1987

Technical and Extension Series

CENTRAL MARINE FISHERIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE
COCHIN, INDIA

INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

REPORT ON A SPERM WHALE *PHYSETER MACROCEPHALUS* LINNAEUS STRANDED ALONG THE GULF OF MANNAR COAST*

The sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus* although is widely distributed in the world oceans, reports on its stranding along the Indian coasts are few. The following is a report on a sperm whale stranded at Hare Island, Gulf of Mannar.

The whale was stranded around 5-11-'86. However, an immediate visit to the place could not be made. Later, from an on-the-spot enquiry it was understood that the whale was cut open by some local fishermen for ambergris. The discarded carcass was later washed ashore at Seeniappa Dharga, about 3 km away from Hare Island. As it was in a highly decomposed and partly damaged condition the measurements of the skull (Fig. 1) and lower jaw (Fig. 2) alone could be taken which is given below.

1. Condylbasal length	...	252
2. Length of rostrum	...	172
3. Width of rostrum:		
a. at its base	...	91
b. at its middle length	...	74
4. Height of occipital condyle	...	32
5. Condylar width	...	20
6. Width of foramen magnum	...	18
7. Distance from upper edge of foramen magnum to occipital condyle	...	46
8. Length of lower jaw	...	200
9. Number of teeth sockets in the lower jaw	...	18
(All measurements in cm)		

James and Soundararajan (*J. mar. biol. Ass. India*, 21: 17-40, 1980) have given the skull length of a 810 cm long sperm whale as 213 cm. They have also estimated the length of another sperm whale to be 1,740 cm whose

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skull had a length of 445 cm. Following them, based on the skull length, the total length of the whale reported now has been estimated to measure between 950 and 1,000 cm.

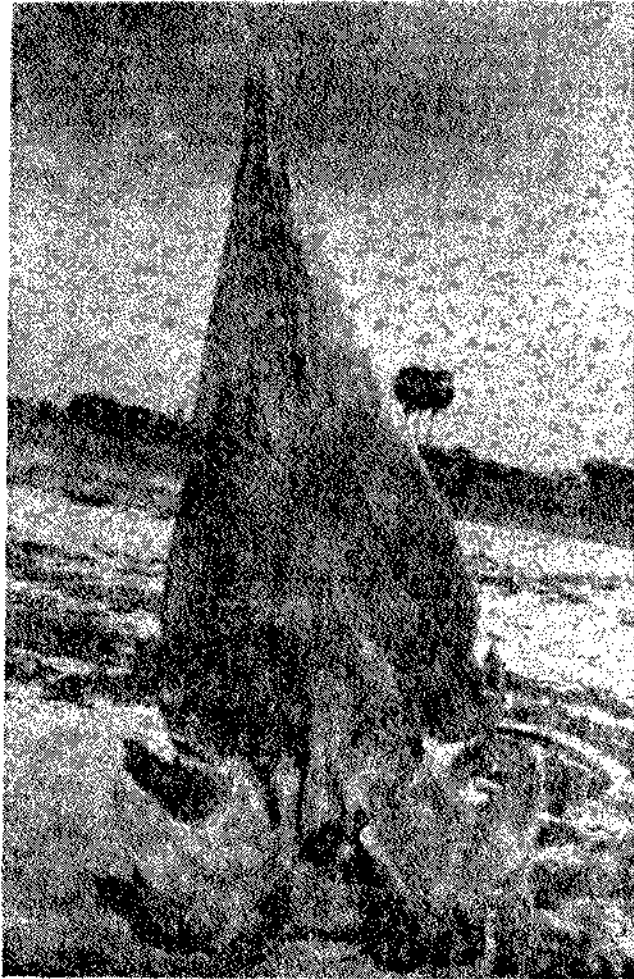


Fig. 1. Ventral view of the skull.



Fig. 2. Lower jaw showing teeth sockets.

