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केन्द्रीय समुद्री मात्स्यकी CENTRAL MARINE FISHERIES  
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## ON THE STRANDING OF SEI WHALE, *BALAENOPTERA BOREALIS* LESSON AT MANDAPAM ALONG THE PALK BAY COAST \*

The frequency of stranding of whales in the east coast is more as may be seen from the published information. It appears that the Sei whale, *Balaenoptera borealis* frequents the coastal waters more often and gets stranded on many occasions. This is the eighth record of the stranding of Sei whale from the Indian waters. (Table 2).

On 20th January, 1992, the fishermen at Theedai near the marine fish farm of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Mandapam Camp noticed a live whale struggling hard to move towards the coastal waters in the Palk Bay region. In that process, the whale was washed ashore and remained close to the shore in live condition and died in the early morning hours on 23rd January, 1992. The stranded whale was identified as Sei whale, *Balaenoptera borealis* Lesson (Fig. 1). The whale was an adult female, measuring 14.0 m in total length and weighing about 10 tonnes.

The Sei whale, *Balaenoptera borealis* Les-

son is widely distributed in all the oceans of the world. It is most abundantly found in Norwegian and South African regions. Though, the whales are equipped with sonar, at times, they get stranded due to some error in navigation while pursuing their prey in shallow areas. In few instances, the whales have been found struggling in shallow waters to get back into the sea. Though they are stranded in all the months of year, most of the strandings take place during December and January which shows the effect of northeast monsoon, when the sea is rough. On the east coast, it was stranded on seven occasions while on the west coast only once at Sikka (Gulf of Kutch). The morphometric measurements are given in Table. 1.

The staff of the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department made arrangements to extract oil from the carcass before burial near the shore. The authorities of the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park made arrangements to bury the whale and exhume the skeleton for their reference Museum.

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TABLE 1. Morphometric characters of the stranded whale

Morphometric characters	Measurements (cm)
Total length (tip of upper jaw to the tip of caudal fin)	1400
Tip of upper jaw to the notch of caudal fluke	1240
Tip of upper jaw to caudal peduncle	1200
Tip of upper jaw to origin of dorsal fin	950
Tip of upper jaw to anterior insertion of flippers	360
Flipper length	180
Breadth of flipper at base	45
Number of throat grooves	50
Tip of upper jaw to the origin of eye	240
Diameter of eye	20
Length of lower jaw	280
Length of upper jaw	300
Tip of upper jaw to origin of blow-hole	200
Breadth of blow-hole	25
Tip of upper jaw to origin of genital slit	910
Sex	♀
Approximate weight (in tonnes)	10

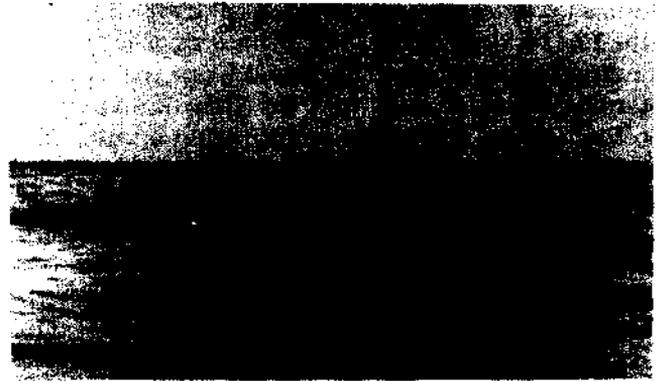


Fig. 1. The Sei Whale *Balaenoptera borealis* Lesson stranded at Mandapam along the Palk Bay Coast.

TABLE 2. Stranding of Sei whale, *Balaenoptera borealis* along the Indian coasts

S. No.	Date of stranding	Place	Total length (m)	Sex	Reference
1.	23.12.1971	Manakad near Mandapam Camp	15.53	-	G. Venkataraman et al. (1973). <i>Indian J. Fish.</i> , <b>20</b> (2) : 634-638.
2.	31.01.1981	Mallipatnam	9.90	-	P. S. B. R. James & R. Soundararajan, (1980). <i>J. mar. biol. Ass. India</i> , <b>22</b> (1 & 2) : 175.
3.	18.03.1983	Dhanushkodi	13.80	-	P. S. B. R. James & Lal Mohan (1987). <i>Mar. Fish. Infor. Serv., T &amp; E Ser.</i> , No. 71 : 1-16.
4.	26.02.1988	Tuticorin	12.00	Male	K. Venkataramanujam et al., (1988). <i>Inu. Cetacea</i> , <b>21</b> : 247-249.
5.	18.05.1988	Kayalpatnam	10.02	Female	H. Mohamed Kasim & T. S. Balasubramanian (1989). <i>Mar. Fish. Infor. Serv., T &amp; E Ser.</i> , No. 95 : 12-14.
6.	May, 1988	Tuticorin	7.50	-	Anon. (1988). <i>CMFRI News Letter</i> , No. 40 : 5.
7.	14.08.1988	Sikka (Off Gulf of Kutch)	9.76	Female	Anon. (1988). <i>CMFRI News Letter</i> , No. 41 : 6.
8.	21.01.1992	Theedai near Mandapam Camp	14.00	Female	Present report