

False killer whales sighted off Mandapam

Four false killer whales were seen swimming in the Mandapam Bay, on the Palk Bay side at a depth of 6 to 7 m about 2.5 to 3 km away from the shore. A team of scientists from the Regional Centre of the Institute at Mandapam joined a team of the coast guard station and followed the whales for making observations.

The whales were sighted on 4 April 1988. They gradually moved to deeper waters on the following day. According to eye estimation, the whales ranged in length from 2.5 to 5 m. The frequency of surfacing, blowing behaviour, colour of the body, shape of fins and tail were observed and it was reported that the whales might belong to the species *Pseudorca crassidens* Owen. This species is sighted in this region, for the first time. In the past years stranding of this species of whale was reported from Calicut, Trivandrum, Cape Comorin, Trichendur and Madras.