

## ON A STRANDED WHALE ON THE SOUTH KANARA COAST

On the 21st of April 1964 at about 20.00 hrs., fishermen of Muloor village (Lat.  $13^{\circ}25' N.$ ; Long.  $74^{\circ}40.5' E.$ ) observed a dead whale being washed ashore. However, on the 24th inst., information reached this Unit and immediately a visit to the place was made. By the time the authors reached the spot, most of the softer parts of the whale were found to be in an advanced state of decomposition.

Various measurements of the whale were taken, and are listed below :

1. Total length (tip of lower jaw to tip of flukes)	..	15.76	metres.
2. Length from base of flipper to tip of lower jaw	..	4.4	,,
3. Length of each flipper	.. ..	1.8	,,
4. Flipper base to dorsal fin	.. ..	6.2	,,
5. Height of dorsal fin	.. ..	1.0	,,
6. Length from base of dorsal fin to tail peduncle	..	3.7	,,
7. Distance between fluke tips	.. ..	2.6	,,
8. Length of left fluke (from tail peduncle)	..	1.7	,,
9. " " right " ( " " " )	..	1.9	,,
10. " " upper jaw	.. ..	2.5	,,
11. " " lower " ..	.. ..	3.0	,,
12. Width of lower jaw, midline	.. ..	1.7	,,
13. Gape of mouth	.. ..	2.4	,,
14. Girth (around shoulders) of body, approximately	..	4.5	,,

In the present case the identification of the stranded whale was rendered difficult since putrefaction had set in, and also a part of the body was buried in the sand. But the ventral furrows facilitated its identity as belonging to the genus *Balaenoptera*, viz., the group of rorquals. The ratio of flipper length to the total body length of the specimen was 1 : 8.7 indicating that it could be either a *B. physalus* (Linn.)—1 : 9, *B. acutirostrata* Lacépède—1 : 8, or a *B. musculus* (Linn.)—1 : 7. The ratios for the different species are given by Gibson-Hill (1950).



Photograph of the whale stranded in S. Kanara

In coloration the frayed baleen-plates were black, and the ventral grooves were bright yellow, and these characteristics indicated that the specimen was *B. musculus*. The sex could not be determined because of the putrefaction of the softer parts; the specimen would, however, appear to be immature since sexual maturity for this species is known to occur when the sexes are over 24.7 metres at least (Gibson-Hill, 1950). Figure 1 gives an idea of the size of the whale.

Moses (1947) has listed the strandings of whales on the coasts of India. Records pertaining to the Mysore coast inclusive of present observations are listed below :

Year	Place	Length	Species
1891	Mangalore	20 metres	?
1924	Karwar	16 "	Rorqual
1939	Between Suratkal and Mulki	27 "	?
1964	South Kanara	15.76 "	<i>B. musculus</i> (Linn.)

Our thanks are due to Shri H. N. Siddaiah, Assistant Director of Fisheries (South Kanara) of Mysore State, Mangalore, and his staff for extending various facilities.

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