

## A pregnant female spinner shark, *Carcharhinus brevipinna* (Muller & Henle, 1839) landed at Tharuvaikulam, Tuticorin

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In Tuticorin, sharks are caught incidentally in trawl net and drift gillnet and there is no targeted fishery for sharks in this region. The magnitude of landing is also not very high. On 9<sup>th</sup> August 2012, a female *Carcharhinus brevipinna* was noticed at Tharuvaikulam landing centre (Fig. 1). It was caught in drift gillnet operated off Manappad at a depth of around 40 m. The shark was auctioned for ₹ 60,000/-. Since there is no local market for sharks, generally they are sent to neighbouring districts like Kanyakumari or to Kerala state.

The specimen was a pregnant female, with a total length of 283 cm weighing around 150 kg. The shark carried 18 pups, nine pups in each uterus (Fig. 2). Each pup was enveloped by a membrane which was filled anteriorly with a translucent yellow fluid. Each had a highly vascularised placenta attached to the posterior part of the uterus through an umbilical cord. In one



Fig. 1. Pregnant female spinner shark (*Carcharhinus brevipinna*) landed at Thiruvaikulam, Tuticorin



Fig. 2. Pups in each uterus after cutting open the enveloping membranes

uterus, there were 5 males and 4 females, whereas the other uterus contained 3 males and 6 females. The total length of the pups ranged from 31 to 53 cm and weighed 507 to 606 g. The pups almost resembled grown up shark with fully developed fins and claspers but without teeth. Details of the morphometric measurements of the pups are given in Table 1.

The maximum size of the species recorded in FAO species identification sheet is 280 cm (Fisher and Bianchi, 1984). The number of young ones reported varied from 3 to 15 per litter and the size at birth is reported as 60 - 75 cm (Raje *et al.*, 2007). The present observation on the size of the fish and the number of young ones appears to be the maximum recorded for the species.

Table 1. Morphometric measurements (cm) of eight pups collected from *Carcharhinus brevipinna* landed at Tuticorin

	Pups							
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Measurements	M	M	F	M	F	F	M	M
Total length	52	51	50	52	52	53	51	52
Fork length	41	40	39	42	41.5	41	41	42
Standard length	38	36	35	38	37	37	37	37
Snout to 1 <sup>st</sup> dorsal	17	16	16	17	17	16.5	16	17
Snout to 2 <sup>nd</sup> dorsal	32	31	31	32	32	32	31	32
Snout to pelvic	26	25	25	27	26	27	25	26
Snout to pectoral	13	12.5	12	13	13	13	12.5	13
Snout length	7	6.5	6	6.5	6.5	7	6.5	7