

Unusual landing of the whitetip reef shark *Triaenodon obesus* at Cochin Fisheries Harbour

K. S. Sobhana, P. K. Seetha, T. G. Kishore, D. D. Divya, T. M. Najmudeen, Rekha J. Nair, Shoba Joe Kizhakudan and P. U. Zacharia
Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi

On 28th January 2013, unusual landing of the white tip reef shark, *Triaenodon obesus* (Family :

Carcharhinidae) was observed at Cochin Fisheries Harbour (CFH) (Fig. 1a & b). About 500 kg of the

sharks in the length range of 90 – 110 cm and weight range of 2 - 8 kg were landed by gillnetters operated off Mangalore coast at a depth of 30 m. This species is occasionally seen in stray numbers in landings by mechanised gillnet-hooks and line units and this is the first time bulk landing of this species was observed at CFH.

T. obesus, the only member of its genus, is a small shark usually not exceeding 1.6 m in length. This species is easily recognisable by its slender body and short but broad head, tubular skin flaps beside the nostrils, and white-tipped dorsal and caudal fins. The white tip reef shark is distributed widely across

the entire Indo-Pacific region. Associated almost exclusively with coral reef habitats, this species is most common at a depth of 8–40 m and is typically found on or near the bottom in clear waters. This is a viviparous species, feeds mainly on bony fishes, as well as octopus, spiny lobsters and crabs. The IUCN has assessed the whitetip reef shark as Near Threatened, noting its numbers are dwindling due to increasing levels of unregulated fishing activity across its range. The slow reproductive rate and limited habitat preferences of this species renders its populations vulnerable to overfishing.



Fig. 1a & b. *Triaenodon obesus* landed at Cochin Fisheries Harbour