

### OBSERVATIONS ON A WHALE SHARK, *RHINCODON TYPUS* SMITH LANDED AT TUTICORIN

INFORMATION on whale sharks landed along the coasts of India has not been wanting (Prater, 1941 ; Kulkarni, 1948 ; Chacko and Mathew, 1954 ; Anon., 1958 ; Kaikini *et al.*, 1959 ; Gopalan, 1962 ; Silas and Rajagopalan, 1963 and Thomas and Kartha, 1964). Chacko (Chacko and Mathew, *op. cit.*) reported the sighting of a whale shark, over 7 metres in length, on the pearl bank, Thollayiram Paar, on 11th December 1953. Silas and Rajagopalan (*op. cit.*) recorded the landing of a female whale shark measuring 5.62 metres in total length on 29th July 1961 at Tuticorin.

A male whale shark, *Rhincodon typus* Smith, measuring 5.96 metres in total length, was landed at Tuticorin (north landing place) at 3 p.m. on 27th July 1968. It was reported by the fishermen that it got entangled in the nylon drift net (operated from Tuticorin type of boat), off Tiruchendur, at 18 metres depth at 10 p. m. on the 25th instant. The other fish caught in the net were two specimens of *Scomberomorus* spp. and one of *Rachycentron canadus*.

The net was torn to shreds and it got wound round the body of the whale shark, as though it were a rope. The next morning, the whale shark was bound with a rope, and towed by two boats to 'Van Tivu' island, about 6 km. N.N-E. off Tuticorin, reaching there at 3 p.m. The whale shark was alive, till it was brought ashore on the island. The same day, it could not be taken to Tuticorin, owing to adverse wind conditions. Next day, the two boats in conjunction with a bigger boat towed the whale shark to Tuticorin. Owing to poor quality of its flesh and low oil content of the liver, it was sold for Rs. 75/- late in the evening.

Details of morphometric measurements on the lines suggested by Silas and Rajagopalan (1963) are given below :—

1. Total length	..	..	..	..	5960 mm.
2. Standard length	..	..	..	..	4420 mm.
3. Head length	..	..	..	..	1340 mm.
4. Girth of body at P <sub>1</sub> base	..	..	..	..	2580 mm.
5. Width of mouth from angle to angle	..	..	..	..	730 mm.

*Vertical height of:*

6. First dorsal fin	..	..	..	..	410 mm.
7. Second dorsal fin	..	..	..	..	250 mm.
8. Anal fin	..	..	..	..	222 mm.
9. Length of caudal fin from caudal pit along upper margin					1500 mm.

*Snout to:*

10. First dorsal fin	..	..	..	..	2490 mm.
11. Second dorsal fin	..	..	..	..	3610 mm.
12. Pectoral fin	..	..	..	..	1270 mm.
13. Pelvic fin	..	..	..	..	2900 mm.
14. Anal fin	..	..	..	..	3910 mm.

*Interspace between:*

15. First and second dorsals	..	..	..	..	1080 mm.
16. Anal and caudal	..	..	..	..	680 mm.
17. Pectoral and pelvic origins	..	..	..	..	1590 mm.
18. Pelvic and anal origins	..	..	..	..	1030 mm.

*Length of:*

19. Pectoral fin along outer margin from anterior insertion	..	..	..	..	1090 mm.
20. Pectoral fin from angle of inner base to tip	..	..	..	..	880 mm.
21. Pelvic fin along outer margin from anterior insertion	..	..	..	..	450 mm.
22. First dorsal fin along outer margin from anterior insertion	..	..	..	..	650 mm.
23. Second dorsal fin along outer margin from anterior insertion	..	..	..	..	350 mm.
24. Least height of caudal peduncle	..	..	..	..	200 mm.
25. Length of clasper from inner base of pelvic fin	..	..	..	..	400 mm.
26. Circumference of clasper at base	..	..	..	..	210 mm.
27. Diameter of orbit	..	..	..	..	45 mm.
28. Inter-orbital distance	..	..	..	..	1150 mm.

*Anterior margin (mid-point) of snout to:*

29. Eye	..	..	..	..	660 mm.
30. Spiracle	..	..	..	..	800 mm.
31. First gill opening	..	..	..	..	1340 mm.

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