

**A NOTE ON THE WHALE SHARK *RHINCODON TYPUS* SMITH,
STRANDED OFF MANGALORE**

On the 5th March 1959, the trainees from the Fishery Training Centre were engaged in experimental purse seine fishing about four miles off Suratkal, an active fishing centre about ten miles north of Mangalore. At mid-day, during the low tide, they sighted a shark stranded in 2-3 fathom waters. Since the trainees were on a routine fishing trip they were poorly equipped for the capture of such giant fishes; nevertheless, the shark was fastened with a two-foot hook in the caudal fin and in its struggle it dragged the two boats a few miles out into the sea. However, by evening it became exhausted, and next morning the dead shark was towed ashore.

The colour of shark was dark grey with numerous pale spots on the head and series of similar spots alternating with pale vertical stripes on the lateral sides. Three

strong ridges were conspicuous on each dorso-lateral side. Its two jaws were studded with numerous rows of simple incurved teeth giving the characteristic rasp-like appearance.

Detailed measurements of the whale shark are as follows :

- Length from the tip of the snout to the tip of the upper caudal lobe 12.1 metres.
- Length from the tip of the snout to the tip of the caudal peduncle 9.84 metres.
- Length of the upper caudal lobe from the caudal peduncle 2.31 metres.
- Length of the lower caudal lobe from the caudal peduncle 1.55 metres.
- Width of the mouth from one angle to the other 1.55 metres.
- Circumference of the body in the mid-region 9.17 metres.

The shark which was a female weighed about 17 metric tons. The liver weighed 306 kgs. The stomach was gorged with greenish matter, and detailed examination of the gut contents showed remnants of algae, but as the contents were in an advanced stage of digestion, identification was not possible.

The previous records of the Whale shark on this coast are from Travancore (Pillai 1929), Karachi and Bombay (Prater, 1941), Bombay (Kulkarni 1948) and Malabar (Chacko and Mathew, 1954).

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