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ON FIVE WHALE SHARKS LANDED ALONG THE TRIVANDRUM- KANYAKUMARI COAST*

Five whale sharks *Rhiniodon typus* Smith, were landed during April, 1988 at three centres on the south-west coast between St. Andrews in the Trivandrum district of Kerala and Colachel in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. Silas (*Mar. Fish. Infor. Serv., T & E Ser.*, 66, 1986) has listed an exhaustive collection of reports on the landings of whale sharks in the Indian and adjacent waters. Along the west coast of India alone there have been at least 57 instances of which seven are from the area covered in the present report.

The first of the present records (Fig. 1), a 6.06 m long female specimen weighing about two tonnes, was from Panathura fish landing centre, 10 km south of Trivandrum. The shark got enclosed in a shore seine operated within a km from shore at a maximum depth of 15 m. The net suffered considerable damage while being dragged ashore by a large contingent of fishermen.

About 40 numbers of sucker fish (*Echeneis* sp.) were found attached on its body surface by their suckers. Their physical attachment was firm until the shark was brought to shore and the fishermen removed them. The body measurements (in cm) of the shark are given below:

1. Total length	: 606
2. Standard length	: 458
3. Head length	: 131
4. Width of mouth from angle to angle	: 106
5. Vertical height of 1st dorsal fin	: 56
6. Vertical height of 2nd dorsal fin	: 25
7. Vertical height of anal fin	: 22
8. Length of caudal fin:	
(i) along upper margin	: 148
(ii) along lower margin (lower lobe)	: 91
9. Snout to 1st dorsal	: 257
10. Snout to 2nd dorsal	: 390
11. Snout to pectoral	: 131
12. Interspace between first and second dorsals	: 133
13. Length of pectoral fin along outer margin	: 103

* Reported by S. Lazarus, Jacob Jerold Joel, K. K. Philipose and S. G. Vincent, Vizhinjam Research Centre of CMFRI, Vizhinjam.

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| 14. Length of pelvic fin | : | 40 |
| 15. Length of 1st dorsal | : | 72 |
| 16. Length of 2nd dorsal | : | 29 |
| 17. Tip of snout to 1st gill slit | : | 92.5 |

a shore seine on the same day at about 10 A.M. The measurements collected were: length of upper caudal lobe - 197 cm, length of lower caudal lobe - 127 cm and height of caudal peduncle - 40 cm.



Fig. 1. Whale shark *Rhiniodon typus* Smith, caught at Panathura.

The second instance was at St. Andrews, a fishing village near Thumba, which is about 15 km north of Trivandrum. This male specimen was encountered in

The liver in both the cases was removed for extracting oil and the rest, except for the caudal fins, was towed back and discarded in the sea.

The other three specimens were landed on 18-4-1988 at 12.30 P.M. at Kottilpadu, a fishing village near Colachel. The only information about the specimens was from a Tamil daily ('Dinamalar' dated 20-4-1988) which reported that each specimen was 24 feet long and weighed 1,500 kg each.

Satyanarayana Rao (*Mar. Fish. Infor. Serv., T & E Serv.*, 66, 1986) has recorded five cases of whale shark landing within a span of 24 days in a 40 km stretch caught from 16 to 27 m depth in Dakshina Kannada coast. In the present case the five specimens were landed within 14 days within a coastal stretch of about 70 km caught from less than 15 m depth.

