

ON A WHALE SHARK *RHINEODON TYPUS* SMITH
LANDED AT KARWAR, KARNATAKA

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A female whale shark, *Rhineodon typus* Smith, measuring 8.81 m in total length was landed at Karwar in the third week of January 1981 [reported as measuring 3.81 m in length (Anon 1981)]. This is the first record of such an occurrence in North Kanara District. The earliest record of a whale shark along the Karnataka coast was made by Kaikini et al (1959) at Suratkal in South Kanara District in which case also it was a female, measuring 12.1 m in length. Subsequently, three whale sharks, ranging in length 4.88-6.71 m were caught off Kaup on 20th and two more of lengths 2.50 m and 7.90 m were landed at Malpe on 31st January 1981 in South Kanara (Anon 1981). Other instances of

landings of whale sharks along Indian coasts have also been reported (Prater 1941; Kulkarni 1948; Chacko and Mathew 1954; Anon 1958; Gopalan 1962; Silas and Rajagopalan 1963; Thomas and Kartha 1964 and Pai and Pillai 1970). On 18th January 1978, an immature female whale shark of length 6.88 m was caught in a gill net (locally called 'Jall') off Cuffe Parade in Bombay waters. The approximate weights of liver and body were 168 kg 1580 kg respectively (personal communication²).

The whale shark landed at Karwar was caught (along with a shoal of *Sardinella fimbriata*) by a purse seiner 'Hemavathi', at a depth of 18 m near Anjadiv island off Binage (7 km south of Karwar town) at 1 p.m. on 21st January 1981. It was towed to Karwar beach in the evening of the same day and the shark remained alive until it was hauled to the shore in the early hours of the next day. During the subsequent two days, thousands of people from Karwar and neighbouring villages came to the beach to see it.

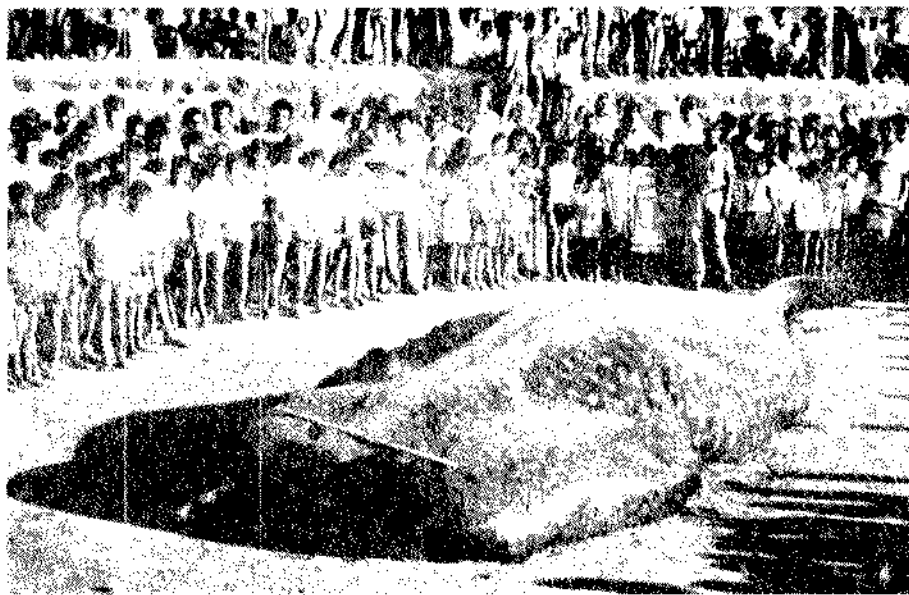


FIG. 1. A view of the whole shark.

As the flesh of the whale shark is not relished by the local people, fish merchants did not evince interest in buying it. On the third day, the shark was cut open and its liver removed for oil and sold for Rs. 150/- The liver weighed 460 kg and its right and left lobes measured 2820 mm and 2560 mm in length.

² Information kindly furnished by Shri J. P. Karbhari, Field Officer, Bombay Research Centre of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Bombay.

respectively. It is peculiar that no egg was present in the ovary. Neither external nor internal parasites were observed. The skin at the dorsum of the animal was 120 mm thick, while it was 72 mm at its abdomen. The stomach contained 35 l of light green viscid fluid. The gut contents could not be identified due to advanced putrefaction. The specimen could not be weighed.

Details of body measurements are given below:

Total length	8810 mm
Standard length	7130 mm
Head length	2100 mm
Girth of body at P1 base	4550 mm
Width of mouth from angle to angle	1260 mm
Snout to first dorsal fin	4050 mm
Snout to second dorsal fin	5920 mm
Snout to pectoral fin	2170 mm
Snout to pelvic fin	4450 mm
Snout to anal fin	5780 mm
Vertical height of first dorsal fin	750 mm
Vertical height of second dorsal fin	335 mm
Vertical height of anal fin	266 mm
Interspace between first and second dorsals	1960 mm
Interspace between second dorsal and caudal	1350 mm
Interspace between anal and caudal	1100 mm
Interspace between pectoral and pelvic origins	1800 mm
Interspace between pelvic and anal origins	1350 mm
Length of pectoral fin along outer margin from anterior insertion	1450 mm
Length of pectoral fin from angle of inner base to tip	1270 mm
Length of pelvic fin along outer margin from anterior insertion	464 mm
Length of first dorsal fin along outer margin from anterior insertion	930 mm
Length of second dorsal fin along outer margin from anterior insertion	460 mm
Length of caudal fin along upper margin from caudal pit	1740 mm
Anterior margin (mid-point) of snout to:	
Eye	800 mm
Spiracle	960 mm
First gill opening	1440 mm
Diameter of orbit	48 mm
Diameter of iris	17 mm
Interorbital distance	1590 mm
Diameter of spiracle	160 mm
Least height of caudal peduncle	320 mm

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