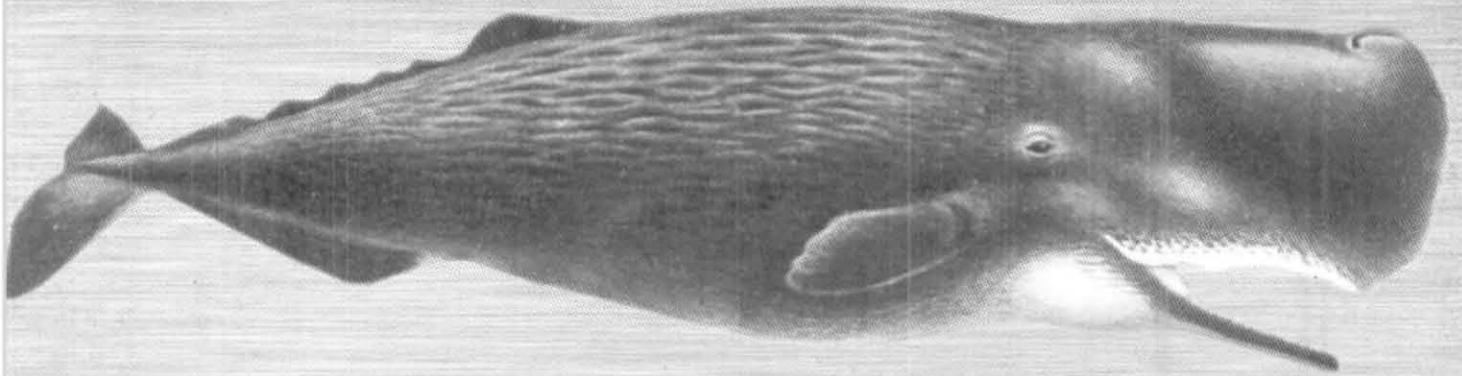




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On a sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus* washed ashore at Irumeni (Palk Bay) near Mandapam

A female sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus* Linnaeus (Fig. 1) measuring 4 m, weighing 1.5 t was washed ashore in dead condition at Irumeni (Palk Bay) near Mandapam on 10-11-2000. The length at birth of a sperm whale is about 4 meters, hence it may be in-



Fig.1. Sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus* washed ashore at Irument (Palk Bay) near Mandapam

ferred that the present whale is a new born baby. The head length is about one third of the animal's length and the body tapered to the tail flukes. There were 25 budding teeth on one side of the lower jaw with no teeth on upper jaw. Dorsal fin was

absent and replaced by a series of low ridges. The morphometric measurements of the sperm whale is given below:

Characters	Dimensions (cm)
Total length (snout to notch of caudal flukes)	400
Length from tip of snout to centre of eye	70
Length from tip of snout to anterior insertion of flipper	100
Length from tip of snout to centre of anus	255
Length from notch of fluke to posterior end of dorsal fin	160
Length from notch of fluke to centre of anus	135
Length of fluke on outer curvature	50
Length of fluke on inner curvature	55
Distance between extremities of fluke	110
Width at insertion of fluke	40

Characters	Dimensions (cm)
Length of dorsal fin base	30
Vertical height of dorsal fin	6
Length of flipper from anterior insertion to tip	105
Length of flipper along curve of lower border	45
Greatest width of flipper	20
Depth of body at origin of flipper	50
Depth of body at anal region	67
Depth of body in region of eye	30
Length of upper jaw	50
Length of lower jaw	40
Diameter of eye	5

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