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## Strandings of whales along Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay

Whale strandings occurred frequently along the southeast coasts of India along Gulf of Mannar and Palk bay during Dec 2005 and August 2006.

A female baleen whale, *Balaenoptera* spp. was found washed ashore at Narikuzhi, north of Rameswaram, along Palk bay on 27-12-2005. The carcass was in a decomposed state. The tail portion was injured and pieces of nets were found sticking to the tail. It was suspected that the whale might have entrapped in a strong net used by big trawlers and died due to severe compression and then dragged

towards the coast by strong currents. The carcass measured about 14.9m in total length and a circumference of 6.4m. Its approximate weight was calculated as between 15-20 tonnes.

On 1-5-2006, carcass of a male baleen whale, *Balaenoptera* spp. was found washed ashore at Mandapam, along Gulf of Mannar. The body was in a highly decomposed state, exposing the skeletons at various parts. Its total length was 13.70m and maximum girth was 3.80m. Estimated weight was about 12 tonnes.

A young female sperm whale, *Physeter macrocephalus*, stranded live, at Agnitheertham seashore, Rameswaram on 20-01-2006. The forest officials with the help of fishermen rescued the animal by taking it to deeper waters. But the animal again stranded live on the next day near Port Trust office, Rameswaram. Again measures were taken to rescue by pushing it to deeper waters. But on 23-01-2006 evening the animal washed ashore dead. The total length of body was 3.3m and circumference was 1.82m.

On 17-07-2006, a blue whale, *Balaenoptera musculus*, got stranded at Kundhukal, near Pamban, along Gulf of Mannar. It was a male

specimen and measured about 20m in length.

On 4th August 2006 a whale belonging to the Genus *Balaenoptera* was found washed ashore at Hare Island, along Gulf of Mannar. The animal could not be identified up to species level because of the highly decomposed condition of the body.

On 8th August 2006 another baleen whale of 12 m total length and weighing 9 tonnes was washed ashore in decayed condition at Kundhukal seashore, along Gulf of Mannar.

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