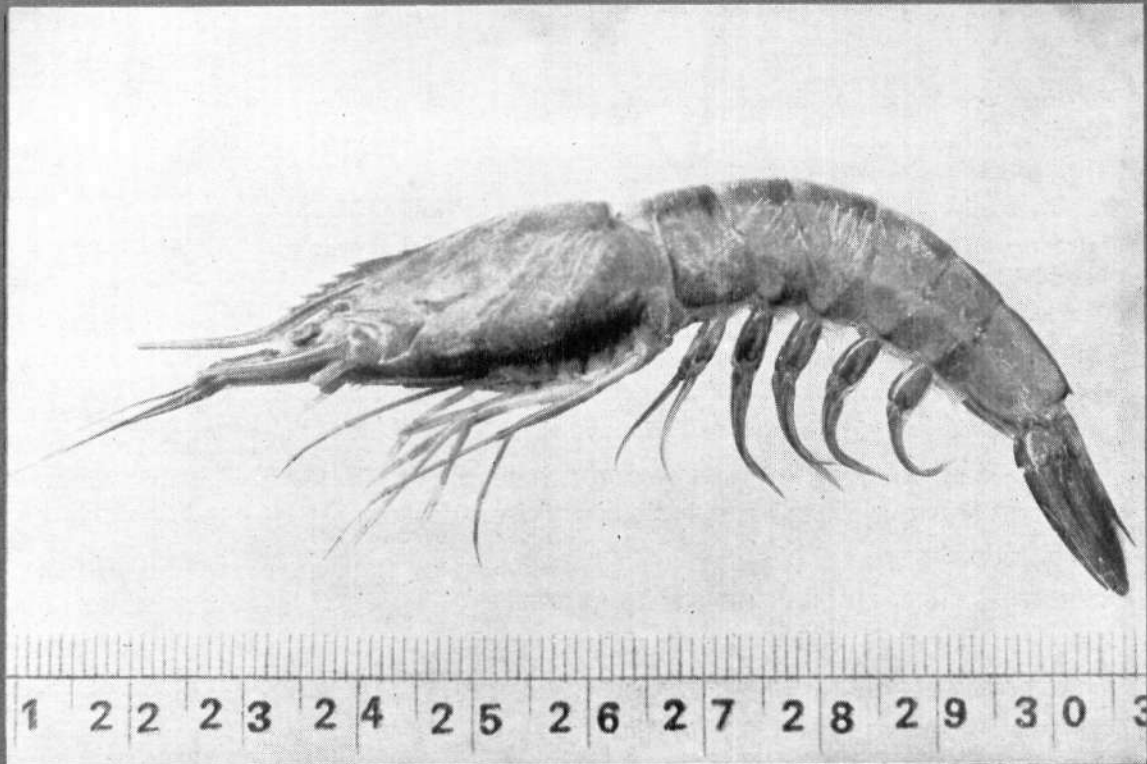




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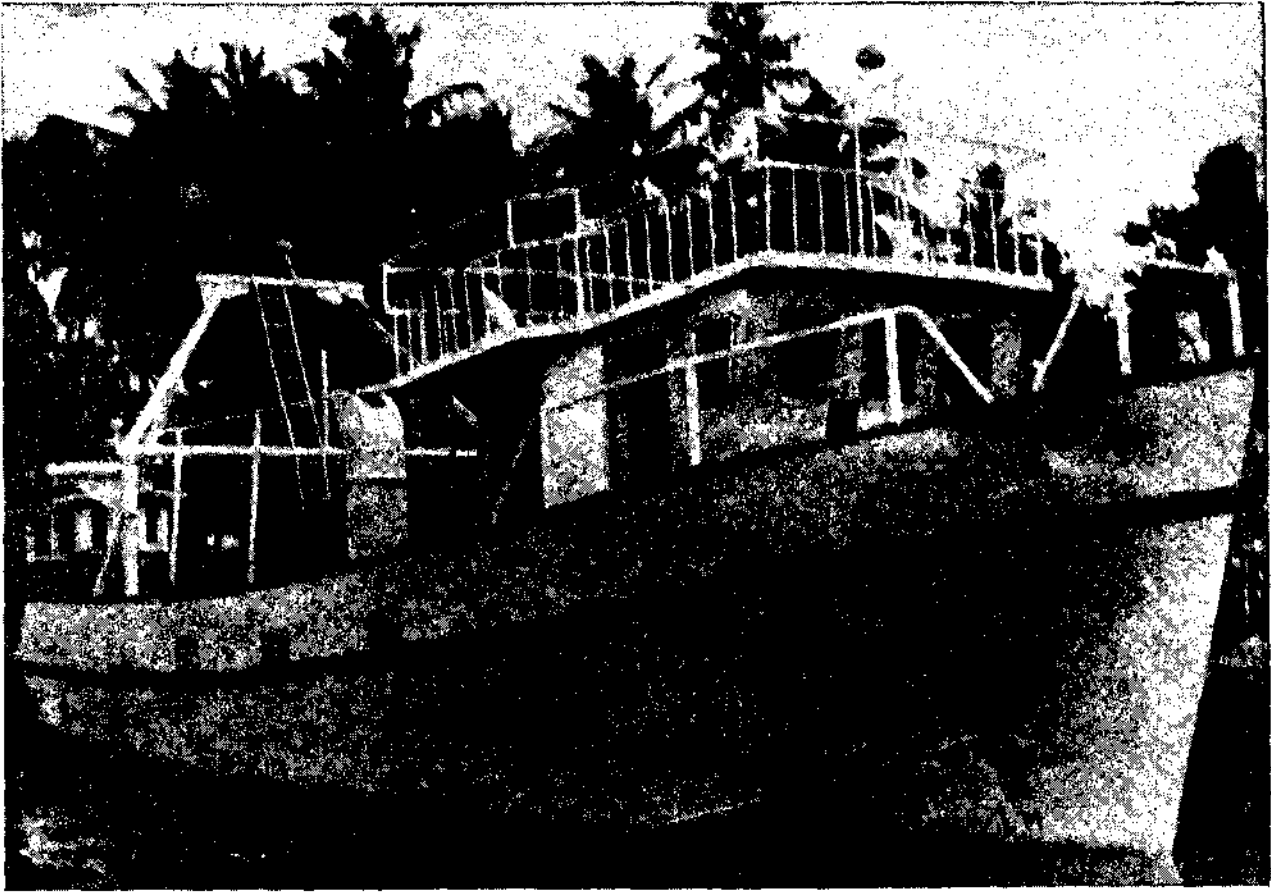


Fig. 2. A view of the steel built deep sea vessel moored at the Ashtamudi lake, Sakthikulangara.



ON THE STRANDING OF WHALES ALONG THE TAMIL NADU AND ANDHRA COASTS*

Pilot whales

Two young female pilot whales *Globicephala macrorhynaea* were caught in the gill nets by a 10 m mechanised boat on 29-7-1986 at Pudukuppam near Cuddalore along the Tamil Nadu coast. The whales were brought dead to the seashore at about 0700 hrs on 30-7-1986. The two whales measured 3.02 and 1.40 m in total length respectively. The local fishermen towed the carcasses to the shore but released them

back to the sea due to bad odour. However, the larger whale was again washed ashore (Fig. 1). The mouth of the whale was wide open exposing the rudimentary teeth in the lower jaw. The various morphometric measurements of the whales are given in Table 1.

The carcass of the pilot whale was cut open and the internal organs were examined (Fig. 5). Eventhough the whale looked almost fresh externally the internal organs had decomposed to some extent. The intestine measured 1530 cm in length. The compartments in the stomach could not be differentiated. The stomach had a few remains of brownish black horny beaks of cephalopods belonging to the genus *Sepia*.

*Reported by P. Nammalwar, P. Devadoss, Madras Research Centre of CMFRI, Madras, A. Srinivasan, Cuddalore Field Centre of CMFRI, Cuddalore, I. Chidambaram, Pondicherry Field Centre of CMFRI, Pondicherry, T. Chandrasekhara Rao and A. Hanumantha Rao, Ongole Field Centre of CMFRI, Ongole.

Table 1. *Body measurements (in cm) of the whales*

Body characters	Pilot whale	Sperm whale I	Sperm whale II	Blue whale
Total length (tip of upper jaw to the tip of caudal fin)	302	555	1,060	—
Tip of upper jaw to notch of caudal fluke	297	515	—	1,516
Tip of upper jaw to origin of dorsal fin	142	165	860	—
Breadth of dorsal fin base	40	—	50	—
Length of the dorsal fin	50	—	—	—
Tip of upper jaw to anterior insertion of flipper	57	120	—	434
Length of flipper	40	84	—	170
Length at base of flipper	—	—	—	119
Maximum breadth of flipper	13	26	—	—
Tip of upper jaw to the bifurcation point of lower jaw	26	60	—	—
Length of upper jaw	27	62	—	—
Length of lower jaw	25	60	—	—
Tip of upper jaw to centre of blow hole	46	54	—	—
Breadth of the blow hole	5	—	—	—
Tip of upper jaw to centre of eye	35	75	—	—
Eye diameter	3	5	—	—
Tip of upper jaw to centre of genital slit	192	273	—	—
Tip of upper jaw to centre of anus	205	298	—	—
Distance between origin of anus and caudal fluke	—	—	—	274
Length from centre of anus to caudal fluke	94	—	—	—
Length between anus and genital slit	13	—	—	—
Body diameter at the anterior side of flipper	—	—	—	975
Body depth at head region	140	—	—	—
Girth at the tip of snout	—	—	85	—
Girth at the origin of dorsal fin	156	—	—	—
Girth at the origin of flipper	192	255	—	—
Girth at the origin of genital slit	144	—	195	—
Girth at the origin of anus	104	—	—	—
Height of the body	69	—	—	—
Distance between extremities of caudal fluke	—	—	—	178
Estimated weight (tonnes)	0.5	3.0	7.0	10.0

Sperm whales

On the night of 3-12-1986, the fishermen at Pommaiypalayam near Pondicherry noticed a whale, struggling hard near to their fishing area along the coastal waters. Later, the whale died and was washed ashore at about 0500 hrs on 4-12-1986. The dead whale was buried by the local fishermen near the sea-

shore on the same day evening. However, on the morning of 5-12-1986, the whale was exhumed to some extent and identified as young female sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus* which measured 5.55 m (Fig. 2). The whale was estimated to be two years old. The caudal fin lobe of the sperm whale was found to be injured. The various morphometric measurements of the sperm whale are given in Table 1.

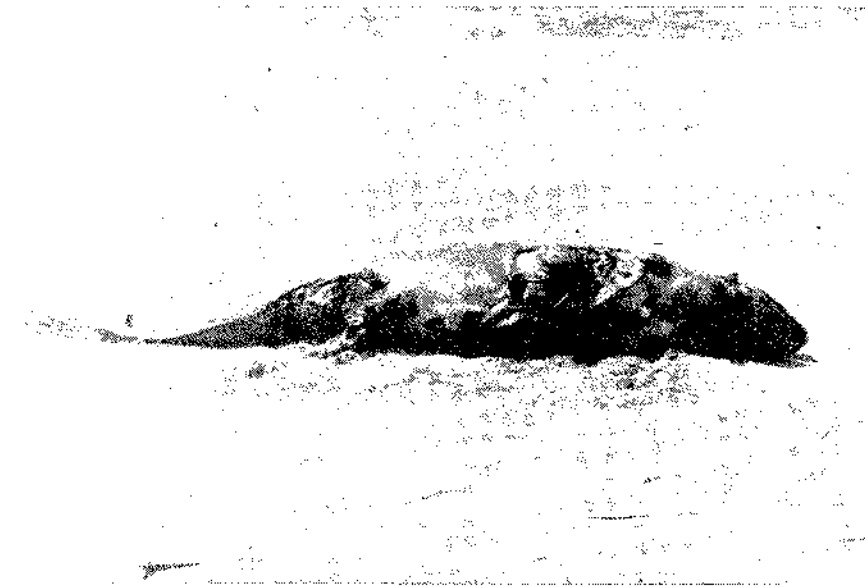


Fig. 1. The pilot whale caught at Cuddalore.



Fig. 3. Sperm whale stranded at Neelakarai, Madras.

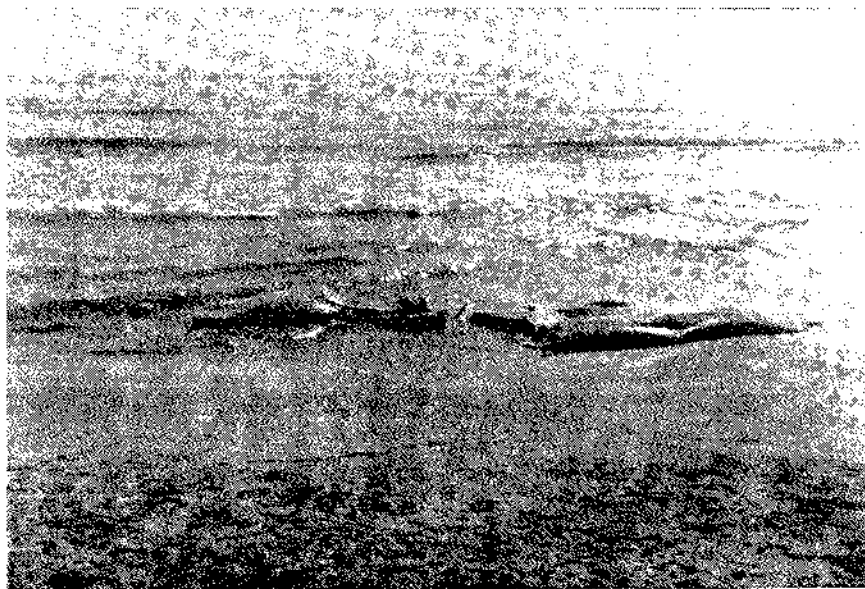


Fig. 2. The sperm whale stranded at Pondicherry.



Fig. 4. Blue whale washed ashore at Motupally.



Fig. 5. Internal organs of the pilot whale.

Another female sperm whale of the same species was found stranded along the shore of Neelakarakuppam, 15 km south of Madras in the morning of 1-2-1989, in a highly decomposed state. The whale was estimated to be five years old. A few body measurements that could be taken are given in Table 1.

Blue whale

On the 10th December, 1988 in the early morning, the local fishermen at Motupally near Ramachandrapuram in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh noticed a whale washed ashore. The carcass of the whale was in a mutilated and highly decomposed state. The morphometric measurements of the whale are given in Table 1.

The throat grooves of the whale which extend back more than half the length of the body indicated that the whale was a blue whale *Balaenoptera musculus* (Fig. 4). The body was long and slender with a short and flat head. The colour was bluish-grey with light blue mottling. The whale which was a male was estimated to be six years old.

