

STRANDINGS OF WHALES ALONG GOA COAST

ABSTRACT

The note records the strandings of two baleen whales along the Goa coast, one of which is tentatively identified here as *Balaenoptera physalus*. The salient measurements of one of the specimens are given here.

ON 26th February, 1969, Purse Seiner M. F. V. ZUARI of Goa Fisheries while trawling in 12 fathom area off Baina (Long. 73°46'N—Lat. 15°24'E) sighted a floating dead whale at 10.00 a.m. The specimen (Fig. 1) which was in an advanced state of decomposition was towed to the Fishery Jetty at Panaji, approximately 15 km away where it reached at 2.00 p.m. Since it was not possible to drag the whale ashore on account of its heavy weight, the specimen was brought close to the jetty, where the following measurements (in metres) were taken:

Total length (tip of lower jaw to tip of flukes)	..	14.85
Length from base of flipper to tip of lower jaw	..	4.12
Length of flipper	..	1.60
Maximum girth of flipper	..	0.60
Flipper base to dorsal fin (approx.)	..	5.25
Length from base of flipper to caudal peduncle	..	8.70
Length from base of dorsal fin to caudal peduncle	..	3.60
Distance between fluke tips	..	2.30
Length of left fluke (from caudal peduncle)	..	1.60
Length of right fluke (from caudal peduncle)	..	1.70
Length of upper jaw	..	1.70
Length of lower jaw	..	2.10
Width of lower jaw at median line	..	1.60
Gape of mouth	..	1.80
Girth at caudal peduncle near flukes	..	1.20
Girth of body around shoulders (approx.)	..	5.00
Thickness of skin at stomach position	..	0.10

The ventral grooves number 68, and they extend far behind the flippers, reaching as far as the anal region.

The exact colouration could not be noted because of the decomposed nature of the specimen and as the skin with blubber from the dorsal region and the tail peduncle was missing. However, on the shoulder region the skin was dark grey, whereas on the ventral side near the flippers it was white. The flippers were pale black in colour and the frayed baleen plates were dark, blackish to grey and the fluke greyish blue in colour.

The stomach which was empty and the intestine were protruding out of the body.

The ratio of flipper length to total length of the specimen was 1:9.1 which agrees with the proportions for *Balaenoptera physalus* as given by Gibson Hill (1950). The sex could not be determined because of the advanced state of putrefaction,

Similarly, on 5th December, 1968, a whale of 14.8 m length was reported stranded at Mandrem a fishing village about 20 km North of Panaji along Goa Coast. Although no details are available about the specimen, a photograph of it published



Fig. 1. Showing whale *Balaenoptera physalus*, ventral grooves and flipper facing upward.

in the daily paper "Gomantak" dated 8th December, 1968, shows very close resemblance to the present specimen. Thus the occurrence of two whales in Goa coastal waters in a short interval of 3 months is interesting.

Nagabhushanam (1964) has recorded the stranding of whales along the adjoining Mysore Coast, South of Goa. However, this note is the first definite record of strandings of baleen whales along the Goa Coast.

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