

that *R. breviceps* occurs in many parts of northern India as well, though it may not be as common as in southern India.

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34, CHITTARANJAN AVENUE,
CALCUTTA 12.

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31. A RECORD OF THE WHALE SHARK (*RHINEODON TYPUS* SMITH) FROM THE MALABAR COAST¹

On the 12th of February 1954 two whale sharks got entangled in a *vakkuvala* (a type of boat-seine net) operated by the local fishermen for capturing catfishes at 9-10 fathoms in the sea off Madapally (about 25 miles north of Calicut). As it was difficult to haul the net even with 80 fishermen in 10 canoes, one of the whale sharks (the female) was allowed to escape. The other, a male, was landed ashore at about 4 p.m. after a struggle of over four hours. It lived till the next morning.

This specimen measured 21 ft. and 3 in. in length and weighed $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons, and showed the following characters: It was dark-grey in colour with yellowish spots (about 3 in. in diameter) and small bars (1 in. wide) set irregularly on the dorsal half of the body. Its mouth was straight and nearly at the end of the head. Each jaw had a band of very small curved teeth. The mouth was 96 inches wide, with its cavity jet-black in colour. The upper part of the body had ridges, running along its length, one down the middle of the back and two on either side. The eyes were small (one inch in diameter) with smaller spiracles placed closely behind. The five external gill-slits on either side were 25 in. wide, the last of them being situated above the base of the pectoral fin, which was sickle-shaped and 43 in. in height. The girth of the body behind the pectorals was 12 ft. The first dorsal fin was 30 in. high and 24 in. broad; and the upper lobe of the caudal fin was 5 ft. in length.

The shark was cut into pieces and sold for Rs. 290 to local merchants who cured the white and soft flesh by using 16 maunds of salt. The stomach was found empty. The liver weighed 266 pounds, and was purchased by the Fisheries departmental staff for Rs. 83-2-0, and sent to the Government Oil Factory, Calicut, for extraction of oil. The saponification value of this oil was 215.7, much higher than the usual run of values of other shark-liver oils, and the Vitamin A potency was 763 international units per gramme (analysis kindly furnished by Sri U. Sundar Kini).

As this is the first record of whale shark on this coast, the monster attracted thousands of people within a radius of 20 miles from Madapally. It is probable that this pair of sharks was swimming in the fishing ground of the local fishermen and inadvertently fouled their net. The fishermen reported that shoals of pomfrets (*Stromateus cinereus* White) were swimming under and in close association with the whale sharks.

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Previous records of whale sharks from Indian waters are few. Hailey (1883, 1890), Day (1889), Thurston (1890, 1894), Regan (1908), Southwell (1912-13), Deraniyagala (1936, 1944) and Gudger (1940) have reported this from Ceylon waters; Lloyd (1908) from the Bay of Bengal; Pillay (1929) from Travancore coast; Prater (1941) from Karachi and Bombay; and Kulkarni (1948) from Bombay waters. One of us (P. I. C.) during his inspection of the pearl bank, Thollayiram paar, in the Gulf of Manaar, on 11th December 1953, observed a whale shark about 25 ft. in length, swimming motionless in the vicinity in spite of the motor fishing vessel being taken around it several times.

MARINE BIOLOGICAL STATION, WEST HILL,
MALABAR,
March 22, 1954.

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32. FOOD ORGANISMS OF *GADUSIA CHAPRA* (HAM.) FROM CERTAIN PONDS WITH THICK *EUGLENA* BLOOMS

Gadusia chapra is a common herring of the Mahanadi river system. The juvenile stages of this fish are often caught in large numbers with the carp and other fresh-water fry. The fish attains a length of about six to seven inches.

While working on the gut contents of different fishes from some ponds having thick blooms of *Euglena*, certain interesting features were observed on the feeding habits of *Gadusia chapra*.

Investigations on the food of *Gadusia chapra* have been based on the analysis of the contents of the stomach of 110 specimens from



Chacko, P. I. and Mathew, M J. 1954. "A Record of the Whale Shark (*Rhincodon Typus* Smith) from the Malabar Coast." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 52, 623–624.

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