

Although there were over 30 *Hipposideros* bats in this room when the specimen was shot and a similar number or more in the room on the left-hand side of the Trimurthi, this was the only one bearing a ring.

33, PALI HILL, BANDRA,

BOMBAY-20,

March 15, 1953.

SÁLIM ALI

[Charles E. Mohr in Audubon's Bats (*Audubon Magazine*, May-June 1952) p. 174, writes of bat-ringing in America 'And in 1950 I found a Lieb's Bat which I had banded in February 1941. It had attained a venerable age of at least nine years. This is a remarkable age for so small a mammal. Few shrews and moles, comparable in size, live more than a single year'.

This is perhaps the longest age a small bat had been known to attain prior to the case recorded above.—Eds.]

8. ON THE STRANDING OF A WHALE AT JAMBUDWIP ON THE BENGAL COAST ABOUT 19 YEARS AGO

Recently, I was interested to see in front of the post-office at Namkhana in the 24 Parganas, West Bengal, a vertebra of a whale mounted on a small pedestal, under a young banyan tree (*Ficus benghalensis*). The centrum has a width of 13.5 in. from side to side and a length of 12 in. The vertebra was white-washed with lime except the central portion and the neural arch, which were painted blood-red with vermillion, such as is used for idols in most temples. The bone was held in veneration, not worshipped, presumably on account of its enormous size.

As there was no record of a stranded whale in the western region of Bengal in the list compiled by Moses¹ (1), or in any of the subsequent notes (2 and 3), enquiries were made regarding the origin and history of the vertebra at Namkhana. The only information available was that it was installed there by a former postmaster of the place, who had brought it from Jambudwip, a large uninhabited island, otherwise known as Moor's Island or New Island, lying between Lacam's Channel and Gasper Channel, south of Sagar Island.

The postmaster concerned, Mr. S. Singh, who is now stationed at Diamond Harbour, was approached for further particulars which are as follows :—

Towards the end of January or the beginning of February 1934 Mr. Singh, who was then serving as telegraph master at Mud Point, was informed by Mr. Shenton, the then lighthouse keeper of Sagar, about the stranding of a whale in Jambudwip. He visited the island with some friends to find the carcass already in a state of putrefaction with the bones exposed and oil covering the entire area. Villagers

¹ The Indian Pilot Whale, *Globicephala macrorhyncha* Gray = *Globicephalus indica* Blyth, stranded in dozens near the Salt Lakes, Calcutta, in July 1950, is a kind of Dolphin.

from the neighbouring islands removed the smaller bones as mementos, but the vertebral column had been left practically intact. The two lower jaw bones were so large that some people were discussing the suitability of their being carved into dugout canoes. With the help of an axe Mr. Singh was able to separate three of the vertebrate to adorn three places, namely, the Sagar lighthouse, the Mud Point telegraph office and the Namkhana post-office. While the first two were subsequently removed by some visiting officials, the one at Namkhana, which appears to be one of the anterior caudal vertebrae (probably the fourth or fifth), is still preserved as stated above.

It is difficult to identify the whale, except by circumstantial evidence. The numerous black plates in the mouth of the whale seen by Mr. Singh place it as a baleen whale. Large-sized whales hitherto recorded as stranded on the Indian Coasts are usually baleen whales which include the Great Blue Whale or Great Rorqual (*Balaenoptera musculus* Linnaeus = *Balaenoptera indica* Blyth) and the Little Piked Whale or Lesser Rorqual (*B. acutorostrata* Lacepede = *B. edeni* Anderson). From the size of the bone and the general description the whale, stranded at Jambudwip appears to be the former.

Mr. Singh stated that the whale was more than 40 ft. long, but an old employee of the post-office at Namkhana who had also seen it said that it was 64 ft. From the size of a third caudal vertebra (14 in. long and 16.5 in. wide from side to side) of a Great Blue Whale, 84 ft. in length (stranded on Amherst Island on the Arakan Coast in 1851) exhibited in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, it is possible to confirm 64 ft. as a near estimate of length of the whale stranded at Jambudwip, if the presumption regarding the species is correct.

CENTRAL INLAND FISHERIES RESEARCH STATION,
BARRACKPORE,
January 7, 1953.

S. JONES

REFERENCES

1. Moses, S. T. (1948) : *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, **47** (2) : 377-379.
2. Pillai, N. G. (1949) : *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, **48** (2) : 358.
3. Gibson-Hill, C. A. (1950) : *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.*, **49** (1) : 14-19.

9. A NOTE ON THE DHOLPUR WILD LIFE SANCTUARY, RAJASTHAN

(With a sketch map and two plates)

Brief History

The beginning of the Wild Life Sanctuary in Dholpur State dates from the period of regency of General Dennehy during the minority of the Maharana Nihal Singh who succeeded in 1873.

At that time in the so-called Ban Bihar Forest there was a sacred place known as Sātkarāi 'where seven sadhus stayed for 50 years'. The place was used also as a spot for religious pilgrimage and remains



Jones, S. 1953. "On the Stranding of a Whale At Jambudwip on the Bengal Coast About 19 Years Ago." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 51, 499–500.

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