

8. STRANDINGS OF FINNER WHALE [*BALAENOPTERA PHYSALUS* (LINN.)] NEAR VIRAR (THANA DISTRICT) AND AT BOMBAY, MAHARASHTRA STATE

On a press report of a stranded whale we visited the village Arnala, c. 8 km. west of Virar (c. 40 km. north of Bombay), on 6 August 1965, and found the whale stranded on the shore about 3 km. north of the village at some distance from the mouth of the Surya River. Putrefaction had started and the paper-thin skin was peeling. The colour of the unpeeled areas was bluish black dorsally, and whitish ventrally from the chin to near the vent. We took the following measurements:

Total length (tip of snout to notch of flukes)	..	14.10 m.
Length of right flipper	1.50 m.
Snout (tip of snout to hind end of groove between the blow-holes)	2.40 m.

There were 68 ventral grooves or pleats, the middle ones extending back to near the anal region. The area of the blow-holes was elevated into a ridge.

The ratio of the flipper length to the body length, c. $\frac{1}{9}$, and the number of the ventral grooves and their extension to the umbilical region identify the animal as *Balaenoptera physalus* (Linn.). From the measurements, it appears to be a subadult.

The local people told us that the whale was first seen spouting in the creek (about 500 m. wide) between the mainland and Arnala Fort Island at high tide on 31 July and was followed in boats by the local fishermen till it stranded. After stranding, the animal showed signs of breathing for some time and the flippers and flukes moved for a longer period.

Again, on the 8th October 1965 a dead and decomposing Finner Whale was stranded among the rocks at Nepean Seaface, Bombay, and drifted ashore the same night. The body which was lying flat on its back had partly sunk into the sand. The skin had peeled off at many places and the hind part of the abdomen was badly crushed. The sides of the body, where there was skin were bluish black; ventrally whitish except on the outer side of the left lower jaw, where it was somewhat dark grey. Skin on the flippers had peeled off.

Measurements:

Total length	15.10 m.
Flippers (left and right)	1.65 m.
Number of pleats	72

The pleats at midbody extended far behind the flippers but, as the lower abdomen was damaged, their termination could not be determined.

Anderson's (1879) *Balaenoptera blythii* from the Indian coast is listed as a synonym of *B. physalus* by Ellerman & Morrison-Scott (1951).

However, Blanford (1891) states: ' . . . there is no evidence as to the locality whence came the few vertebrae to which Anderson (*An. Zool. Res.* : 564) gave the name of *B. blythii*, it is uncertain whether these bones are of Indian or even of Asiatic origin.'

Besides this, there are reports of two more strandings, one by S. H. Prater (1914), and the other by V. K. Chari (1950). Both were identified as *B. indica* (= *B. musculus*) but seem nearer to *B. physalus* (see C. A. Gibson-Hill 1950 and J. C. Daniel 1963). In the absence of information as to the number and the extent of the pleats, their identity cannot be satisfactorily established.

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9. THE GREAT CRESTED GREBE [*PODICEPS CRISTATUS* (LINNAEUS)] IN KUTCH

(With two text-figures)

Since the days of F. Stoliczka and A. O. Hume in the 19th century some of the birds listed by them from Kutch have not been seen or recorded by any one. The credit for the discovery of one such bird goes to His Highness the Maharao Saheb of Kutch, my brother, who informed me on 23 May that he had seen six birds on the Rudramata Dam (9 miles from Bhuj) which he thought he had never seen in Kutch. Keen sportsman and experienced observer that he is, his apt and exact description of the plumage of the birds, their behaviour, and so on helped me to identify them at once as Great Crested Grebes [*Podiceps cristatus* (Linnaeus)]. When I went to Rudramata Dam that evening I failed to see them. However, on May 27 I went again with my brother and had the luck to see the six birds, and so any doubt I had in



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