

STATEMENT ON THE REPORTED BEACHING OF OARFISH IN SEVERAL COASTAL AREAS IN NORTHEASTERN MINDANAO ASSOCIATED WITH THE MAGNITUDE 6.7 EARTHQUAKE

A series of beaching of oarfishes along Butuan Bay, Agusan del Norte were reported particularly in Barangay Masao, Butuan City and in the municipality of Nasipit on January 19, the municipalities of Buenavista on February 8, Tubay on February 13, and Carmen on February 15, 2017. Published news associated these events with the magnitude 6.7 earthquake that hit Surigao City on February 10, 2017.

An Oarfish has a long slim body tapering to a fine point that inhabit the open sea in temperate but mostly tropical waters from depths of 200-1,000 meters. The largest oarfish recorded is 36 feet long. It is rarely seen in the surface and its meat is not edible. It inhabits deeper waters where water current is mostly normal. In literature, when oarfishes surface they are about to die due to aging, unavailability of food, and the varying current conditions in surface shallow areas in contrast to its deeper water habitat.

A Japanese myth explains that the appearance of oarfish signal an earthquake. The beaching of undetermined number of oarfishes from December 2009 to March 2010 preceded the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in March 2011. It is known in Japanese folklore as “Messenger from the Sea God”s Palace.

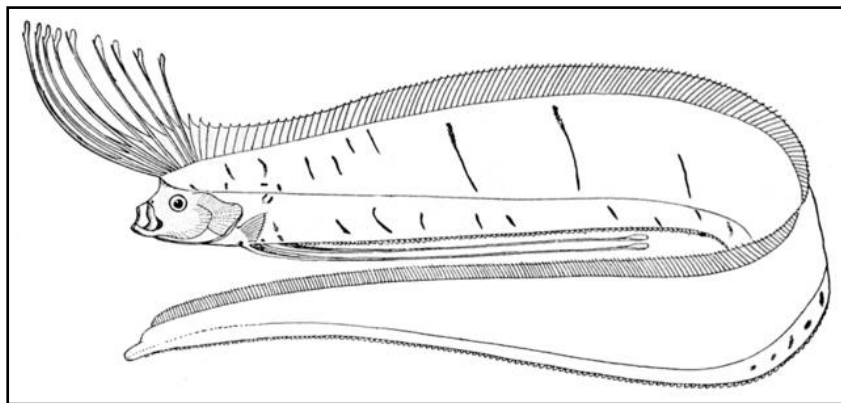


Illustration of Oarfish (from Fishbase)