
Whale's death tied to human trash

Plastic bag, rope and bottle cap appear to have killed 3-ton female

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KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia - A beached whale has died in Malaysia after swallowing a plastic bag, a rope and a bottle cap, a marine researcher said Wednesday.

The 30-foot-long Bryde's whale got stranded in eastern Pahang state Monday and died a day later despite villagers' efforts to save it, said Mohamad Lazim Mohamad Saif, a researcher with the Turtle and Marine Ecosystem Center, who was at the scene.

Mohamad Lazim said the preliminary findings of an autopsy showed the female had swallowed a black plastic bag, a rope and a bottle cap, which clogged its intestine.

"When they come to the beach, this means they want to die. Usually it's like that," Mohamad Lazim told The Associated Press. He said the sick whale may alternatively have ended up at the beach after getting separated from its pod and losing direction.

Marine boats managed to pull the 3 ton whale back into the sea during high tide late Monday, but by Tuesday it was back on the beach. Villagers sprinkled it with sea water and covered it with wet blankets and a mattress, Mohamad Lazim said.

The state's veterinarian department will continue to examine the whale, which was to later be buried nearby, he said.

Bryde's whales are members of the baleen whale suborder and are found in tropical waters.