

61 whales die in New Zealand mass stranding

November 16 2011



This handout photo taken on February 20, 2011 by New Zealand's Department of Conservation shows pilot whales stranded on a remote beach on Stewart Island. More than 60 pilot whales died in a mass stranding at a remote New Zealand beach, conservation officials said Wednesday.

More than 60 pilot whales died in a mass stranding at a remote New Zealand beach, conservation officials said Wednesday.

Tourists found the pod of 61 beached whales on Monday at Farewell Spit, on the top of the South Island, the Department of Conservation (DOC) said.

DOC local manager John Mason said a large number were already dead and hopes the [survivors](#) would refloat at high tide on Tuesday were dashed when the whales swam back to shore.

He said 18 whales remained alive early Wednesday and DOC staff decided to euthanize them, rather than prolong their suffering.

"It's the worst outcome and it's not a job our staff enjoy doing at all," Mason said.

[Pilot whales](#) up to six metres (20 feet) long are the most common species of whale in New Zealand waters, with mass strandings occurring about two or three times a year.

Scientists are unsure why pilot [whales](#) beach themselves, although they speculate it may occur when their sonar becomes scrambled in [shallow water](#) or when a sick member of the pod heads for shore and others follow.

(c) 2011 AFP

Citation: 61 whales die in New Zealand mass stranding (2011, November 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-11-whales-die-zealand-mass-stranding.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
