

Onlookers hamper whale rescue in Indonesia

July 27 2012



Tourist boats surround rescuers trying to free a sperm whale (C) stuck in shallow waters at Pakis Jaya beach in Karawang, West Java, July 27, 2012. Local residents were paying the equivalent of half a US dollar each for boat rides close to the whale. Some had jumped off the boats and onto the whale on Wednesday, causing wounds to its body.

Rescuers in Indonesia fought Friday to help a sperm whale stuck in shallow waters to return to sea, as their efforts were hampered by local residents arriving on boats and driving it back to shore.

The 11-metre (36-feet) whale has been stuck near Pakis Jaya beach in West Java since Wednesday, said Benvika, a rescuer from the Jakarta Animal Aid Network, which is leading the rescue bid.

"We almost set it free a few times yesterday, but the noise from the engines of dozens of boats bringing in local residents confused and disoriented the creature, and it couldn't swim out to sea," he told AFP.

"It is still breathing normally but losing a lot of energy," he said by phone from the beach, 120 kilometres (75 miles) east of the capital Jakarta.



Rescuers try to free a sperm whale (C) stuck in shallow waters at Pakis Jaya beach in Karawang, West Java, July 27, 2012. The rescue attempt was hampered by local tourists arriving on boats and driving the animal back into shallow waters.

"It seems to have difficulty moving its tail, and we have to work quickly to save its life," he said, adding 16 divers were involved in the [rescue effort](#).

Local residents were paying the equivalent of half a US dollar each for boat rides close to the whale, he said.

Some had jumped off the boats and onto the whale on Wednesday, causing wounds to its body, Benvika said.

Before [rescuers](#) arrived [fishermen](#) had also tried to crudely pull the animal back to sea, also hurting it in the process, he said, adding the whale was covered with blisters on its back.

Up to 30 boats carrying tourists had converged around the whale at one time, he added.

He said volunteers were stopping boats setting sail from the Pakis Jaya beach, but were unable to intercept vessels arriving from neighbouring coastal villages.

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