

Ship strike kills two whales in Norfolk waters

November 29 2013



One of the minke whales washed up dead on Cromer East beach showing clear signs of damage Credit: © PopplandNature via Twitter.

Two dead minke whales have been found on Norfolk beaches in the past week.

The whales were discovered washed up on Sea Palling and Cromer East beaches. It is thought they had been hit by a ship.

More [humpback whales](#) have also been spotted in the same area, raising concern they may also be hit by ships.

Locals noted large shoals of herring off the coast, which means the

whales were probably following the fish, which brought them in too close to the fishing vessels.

Museum cetacean strandings officer Molly Clery said 'I can't remember the last time I saw a ship strike on a big whale, let alone two so close together.'

Cause of death

The Museum collects records of all whales, dolphins and porpoises (collectively known as cetaceans) that get stranded on UK coastlines. Smaller cetaceans, such as porpoises and dolphins, are regularly killed by ships as they are more likely to come closer to shore to feed.

The first minke whale discovered last week was too decomposed for a proper postmortem, but large cuts to its body showed it likely died from a ship strike.

The second whale, discovered on Monday, was taken by scientists from the Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP) for a postmortem. It was found to be in good health, with a belly full of fish, but had internal damage and broken bones.

Reporting strandings

A minke whale also washed up last week on a County Londonderry beach, the third in three months to be found dead on the Northern Irish coast.

Fourteen [minke whales](#) have been reported dead on UK coasts this year. Around 400-800 cetaceans are reported annually to the CSIP and the Museum.

This year marks one hundred years that the Museum has been collecting data, which provides detailed insight into the lives and deaths of UK [whales](#), dolphins and porpoises.

Minke whale populations have been increasing in the North Atlantic, but both Norway and Iceland hunt a certain number every year.

Provided by Natural History Museum

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