

Whales on French beach may have washed up voluntarily: expert

November 2 2015



Firefighters and animal rescuers gather around long-finned pilot whales stranded on a beach in the northern French city of Calais on November 2, 2015

A school of 10 whales that washed up Monday in northern France may have done so voluntarily after the death of the dominant male, an expert said.

Seven of the whales found on the beach in Calais have not survived.

"The group was in the middle of a deep-sea migration towards the Faroe

Islands to reproduce and feed," said Jacky Karpouzopoulos, of the Centre for Marine Mammal Research at La Rochelle.

"It's possible that this was a voluntary family beaching, whereby the [dominant male](#) died at sea and the rest followed his body," she said.

Six of the black pilot whales were already dead when they were found. Among them was a 4.5-metre male and a large female.

An autopsy will be carried out to determine the cause of death.

A seventh, female whale died during attempts to return her to the water by local firefighters and an animal rescue team.

The remaining three [whales](#)—a female and two calves—were successfully returned to sea when the tide came in.

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