

# Scientists gather data from observations of minke whale carcass

August 10 2016

---



Credit: Center for Coastal Studies

For the past three days, CCS researchers have been monitoring the carcass of a small minke whale in Cape Cod Bay off North Truro. Data collected during these 72 hours shows that there is as much to be learned from the whales in death as in life.

The carcass was reported to the Center on Wednesday morning. Once on scene they found an 11-foot long, female minke whale floating belly up. The carcass was intact and in good condition, indicating the whale had not been dead for long. There were no outward signs of the cause of death and samples were collected before leaving the carcass.

On Thursday the carcass was again reported, not far from where it was seen a little more than 24 hours before. The team responded and found the carcass in radically different condition. At least two white sharks

were attending the whale and had removed the tongue, internal organs and most of the muscle. The carcass was still floating but was essentially little more than the spinal column and skull. The team left the carcass and alerted town and State officials.

On Friday morning, the remains of a small whale washed up on Beach Point in North Truro, likely of the same whale.

Scott Landry, Director of the Marine Animal Entanglement Response team at the Center, explained that, while the vast majority of cetacean research focuses on live [whales](#), it is equally as important to study deceased individuals.

"Had we not had the opportunity to closely examine this whale over the last 48 hours and witness firsthand the rapid deterioration of the carcass, we might have assumed that these reports represented separate individuals" Landry explained. "How carcasses change over time is helpful in understanding the likelihood of discovering [whale carcasses](#) at sea and how this relates to our understanding of populations."

Members of the public are reminded to exercise caution if they find remains similar to these in the water, as they represent a significant food source for large predators including several shark species. Such sightings should be reported immediately to the US Coast Guard on VHS 16 or to response teams like the Marine Animal Entanglement Hotline at 1-800-900-3622.

Provided by Center for Coastal Studies

Citation: Scientists gather data from observations of minke whale carcass (2016, August 10) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-08-scientists-minke-whale-carcass.html>

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.