

Sri Lanka saves pod of stranded whales

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Pilot whales in New Zealand. Sri Lanka's navy and local residents have rescued a pod of about 20 stranded pilot whales off the northeast coast of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's navy and local residents rescued a pod of about 20 stranded pilot whales off the island's northeastern coast on Wednesday, an official said.

Navy spokesman Chaminda Walakuluge said sailors with the help of residents pushed the [whales](#) back in to deeper waters after they washed up on the Sampur coast near the port of Trincomalee.

"It was a delicate task to push them back without hurting them,"

Walakuluge told AFP. "But there was a happy ending when all of them could be sent back to deeper waters."

He said it was not clear why the mammals got stranded in the area, but noted that the sea was rough due to the effects of Cyclone Mora in the Bay of Bengal and which hit Bangladesh on Tuesday.

In April 2011, a [sperm whale](#) was stranded inside the Trincomalee harbour and two navy boats were deployed to guide the mammal out into [deeper waters](#) where it was reunited with waiting whales.

Trincomalee, 260 kilometres (160 miles) northeast of Colombo, is a natural harbour and is also a popular tourist spot for whale watching.

Trincomalee is also known as the location where both of the world's two largest mammals—elephants and whales—can be seen.

The waters around Trincomalee, which was used by Allied forces as a staging post during World War II, have a high concentration of blue and sperm whales while the surrounding jungles have herds of wild elephants.

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