

Whale dies in Thailand after swallowing 80 plastic bags

June 3 2018



Pollution poses a serious threat to marine life, with plastic bags a particular danger for marine mammals like whales and dolphins

A whale has died in southern Thailand after swallowing more than 80 plastic bags, officials said, ending an attempted rescue that failed to nurse the mammal back to health.

Thailand is one of the world's largest consumers of plastic bags, which kill hundreds of marine creatures living near the country's popular beaches each year.

The small male pilot whale became the latest victim after it was found barely alive in a canal near the border with Malaysia, the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources said on their Facebook page Saturday.

A veterinary team tried "to help stabilise its illness but finally the whale died" on Friday afternoon, the post said.

An autopsy revealed 80 plastic bags weighing up to eight kilograms (18 pounds) in the creature's stomach, the department added.

Photos accompanying the post showed a group of people using buoys to keep the whale afloat after it was first spotted on Monday and an umbrella to shield it from the scorching sun.

The whale vomited up five bags during the rescue attempt before it died, the department said.

Thon Thamrongnawasawat, a marine biologist and lecturer at Kasetsart University, said the bags had made it impossible for the whale to eat any nutritional food.

"If you have 80 [plastic bags](#) in your stomach, you die," he said.

At least 300 marine animals including pilot [whales](#), sea turtles and dolphins perish each year in Thai waters after ingesting plastic, Thon told AFP.

"It's a huge problem," he said. "We use a lot of [plastic](#)."

The pilot whale's plight generated sympathy and anger among Thai netizens.

"I feel sorry for the animal that didn't do anything wrong but has to bear the brunt of human actions," one Twitter user wrote in Thai.

© 2018 AFP

Citation: Whale dies in Thailand after swallowing 80 plastic bags (2018, June 3) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-06-whale-dies-thailand-swallowing-plastic.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.