

Dead whale had 115 plastic cups, 2 flip-flops in its stomach

November 21 2018



In this undated photo released by Akademi Komunitas Kelautan dan Perikanan Wakatobi (Wakatobi Marine and Fisheries Community Academy or AKKP Wakatobi), researchers collect data of the carcass of a beached whale at Wakatobi National Park in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The dead whale that washed ashore in eastern Indonesia had a large lump of plastic waste in its stomach, including drinking cups and flip-flops, a park official said Tuesday, causing concern among environmentalists and government officials in one of the world's largest plastic polluting countries. (Muhammad Irpan Sejati Tassakka, AKKP Wakatobi via AP)

A dead whale that washed ashore in eastern Indonesia had a large lump of plastic waste in its stomach, including drinking cups, bottles and flip-flops, a park official said Tuesday, causing concern among environmentalists and government officials in one of the world's largest plastic-polluting countries.

Rescuers from Wakatobi National Park found the rotting carcass of the 9.5-meter (31-foot) [sperm whale](#) late Monday near the [park](#) in Southeast Sulawesi province after hearing that villagers were beginning to butcher the rotting carcass, park chief Heri Santoso said.

Santoso said researchers from wildlife conservation group WWF and the park's conservation academy found about 5.9 kilograms (13 pounds) of plastic waste in the animal's stomach containing 115 plastic cups, four [plastic bottles](#), 25 plastic bags, 2 flip-flops, a nylon sack and more than 1,000 other assorted pieces of plastic.

"Although we have not been able to deduce the cause of death, the facts that we see are truly awful," said Dwi Suprapti, a marine species conservation coordinator at WWF Indonesia.

She said it was not possible to determine if the plastic had caused the whale's death because of the animal's advanced state of decay.

Indonesia, an archipelago of 260 million people, is the world's second-largest plastic polluter after China, according to a study published in the journal Science in January. It produces 3.2 million tons of mismanaged plastic waste a year, of which 1.29 million tons ends up in the ocean, the study said.



In this undated photo released by Akademi Komunitas Kelautan dan Perikanan Wakatobi (Wakatobi Marine and Fisheries Community Academy or AKKP Wakatobi), researchers collect samples from the carcass of a beached whale at Wakatobi National Park in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The dead whale that washed ashore in eastern Indonesia had a large lump of plastic waste in its stomach, including drinking cups and flip-flops, a park official said Tuesday, causing concern among environmentalists and government officials in one of the world's largest plastic polluting countries. (Muhammad Irpan Sejati Tassakka, AKKP Wakatobi via AP)

Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Indonesia's coordinating minister of maritime affairs, said the whale's discovery should raise public awareness about the need to reduce plastic use, and had spurred the government to take tougher measures to protect the ocean.

"I'm so sad to hear this," said Pandjaitan, who recently has campaigned

for less use of plastic. "It is possible that many other marine animals are also contaminated with plastic waste and this is very dangerous for our lives."

He said the government is making efforts to reduce the use of plastic, including urging shops not to provide [plastic bags](#) for customers and teaching about the problem in schools nationwide to meet a government target of reducing plastic use by 70 percent by 2025.

"This big ambition can be achieved if people learn to understand that [plastic waste](#) is a common enemy," he told The Associated Press.



In this undated photo released by Akademi Komunitas Kelautan dan Perikanan Wakatobi (Wakatobi Marine and Fisheries Community Academy or AKKP Wakatobi), researchers remove plastic waste from the stomach of a beached whale at Wakatobi National Park in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The dead

whale that washed ashore in eastern Indonesia had a large lump of plastic waste in its stomach, including drinking cups and flip-flops, a park official said Tuesday, causing concern among environmentalists and government officials in one of the world's largest plastic polluting countries. (Muhammad Irpan Sejati Tassakka, AKKP Wakatobi via AP)

© 2018 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Dead whale had 115 plastic cups, 2 flip-flops in its stomach (2018, November 21) retrieved 19 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2018-11-dead-whale-plastic-cups-flip-flops.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.