



Over 130 whales die on Aus beach

Stranded whales on the beach at Hamelin Bay

Perth
One hundred and thirty-five whales have died after being washed ashore in Western Australia.

A rescue operation began yesterday morning in Hamelin Bay, on the state's south-western tip, to save the remaining 15, with volunteers and vets trying to keep the surviving short-finned pilot whales alive before deciding when to herd them out to sea.

One witness described trying to steer one of the animals out to sea, only to

watch it beach itself again.

Jeremy Chick, who is controlling the rescue attempt near the town of Augusta, said the main priorities were to ensure the welfare of the remaining live whales and the safety of everyone involved in the operation before any rescue attempt was made to herd the whales back out to sea.

"The strength of the animals and the windy and possibly wet weather conditions will affect when and where we attempt to

move them out to sea," he said.

People were asked to avoid the area because rescuers had enough staff there.

Authorities warned the public to take care near the water because the dead and dying animals could bring sharks closer to shore. A three-metre shark was seen in the bay within a few hours.

Hamelin beach is closed from Hamelin Caravan Park to North Point including Grace Road and Reserve Road, and a shark alert has been issued for the area.

The largest mass stranding of whales in WA happened in 1996 when 320 long-finned pilot whales stranded themselves in Dunsborough.

Short-finned pilot whales inhabit tropical and subtropical waters and may be seen in the hundreds but groups usually number fewer than 100.

Yesterday, the whales were first spotted by a commercial fisherman at 6am yesterday. *(theguardian)*

Pilot whale

One of the largest members of the dolphin family

Weight: up to 2,300 kg
Length: 7.6 m

Named pilot whales because it was thought that each pod followed a "pilot" in the group

Can dive to depths of about 600 m

One of the whale species most often involved in mass strandings

Source: CSIRO/MOFA Fisheries, IUCN, NZ Department of Conservation



Two types:
Long finned: *Globicephala melas*
Short finned: *Globicephala macrorhynchus*

Differ slightly in size
- tooth count
- flipper length
- skull formation

Large bulbous forehead

Commonly seen in tight, sociable pods
Each pod has between 20-100 whales

Sickle-shaped flippers

Tyson the stray hippo captured

Mexico City

A stray hippopotamus that had been roaming around the countryside in Mexico has been captured after a 10-day hunt and relocated to a wildlife refuge, authorities said yesterday.

"Tyson," as locals had named the stray hippo, drew a large fan following -- and even inspired his own Facebook page -- after mysteriously showing up several weeks ago in a rural area in Las Choapas, in the eastern state of Veracruz.

But with locals flocking to take his picture, feed him and even pet him, Mexican environmental authority Profepa feared a tragedy in the



A hippopotamus--named Tyson by local residents-- is seen in a stream, where it was found at Las Choapas locality, in Veracruz state

making. Nile hippopotami are notoriously dangerous, and have been known to maul and even devour people.

"Since this is an exotic species of African origin and its presence in the fields of

the Las Choapas municipality posed a high risk to people and the ecosystem ... Profepa launched a special operation to relocate him to a secure site," the authority said in a statement. *(AFP)*

#PollToday



US and China are engaging in a trade war. Do you think this could be an opportunity for other countries?

Yes No Cant Say



"The treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention remains a human rights priority for the UK. We will continue to call upon Israel to improve its practices in line with international law and obligations,"

-Angela Merkel

German Chancellor on migration

Rest in sight

Buhari meets with Dapchi girls



Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari received the released Dapchi girls in a meeting clouded by the absence of a Christian student still held by Boko Haram for refusing to convert to Islam.

Suu Kyi ally set for Myanmar presidency

A close ally of Myanmar's de-facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi took a step closer to becoming the country's new president after the lower house overwhelmingly voted for Win Myint as its candidate.

Brazil court suspends Lula's jail sentence

Brazil's Supreme Federal Court granted former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva temporary jail relief until April.

South Africa detects avian flu in seabirds

South Africa has detected an outbreak of avian flu in seabirds, citing the highly pathogenic H5N8 strain that infected the country's poultry industry last year.

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Olive ridley turtles hatch in Mumbai after two decades

Mumbai

Tiny olive ridley turtles have hatched in India's financial capital Mumbai for the first time in two decades after a major cleanup of a beach, officials said yesterday.

Dozens of the threatened species cracked out of their egg shells and slowly waddled their way into the Arabian sea off Versova beach on Thursday, delighting wildlife conservationists.

"We found around 90-95 olive ridley hatchlings... and the volunteers safely released them to the sea," Prashant Deshmukh, an environmental officer with the Maharashtra state government, told AFP.

"The turtles have returned to Mumbai's coastline after nearly 20 years. This is big news and the clean-up drive seems to be yielding results," he added. *(AFP)*

Tiny Atacama skeleton was girl with bone disease: study



A tiny, mummified skeleton discovered in 2003

Miami

The discovery in 2003 sparked international intrigue -- a tiny, mummified skeleton with an alien-like head, tucked into a leather pouch found behind a church in the Atacama desert of Chile.

The notion that it was an extra-terrestrial was long ago debunked, but researchers said Thursday they have gleaned new insights from a full genetic analysis of the skeleton, nicknamed "Ata."

It belonged to an infant girl with a handful of rare gene mutations linked to dwarfism, deformities and apparent premature aging,

said the study in Genome Research.

Experts have said previously the bones appeared to belong to someone between the ages of six and eight, but this advanced wear on the bones was likely a consequence of the child's deformities, not a reflection of her actual age.

In fact, the study said she likely didn't live long, and may have been born premature.

"Given the size of the specimen and the severity of the mutations... it seems likely the specimen was a pre-term birth," said the study. *(AFP)*

Pacific plastic dump far larger than feared: study

Paris

The vast dump of plastic waste swirling in the Pacific ocean is now bigger than France, Germany and Spain combined -- far larger than previously feared -- and is growing rapidly, a study published Thursday warned.

Researchers based in the Netherlands used a fleet of boats and aircraft to scan the immense accumulation of bottles, containers, fishing nets and microparticles known as the "Great Pacific

Garbage Patch" (GPGP) and found an astonishing build-up of plastic waste.

"We found about 80,000 tonnes of buoyant plastic currently in the GPGP," Laurent Lebreton, lead author of the study published in the journal Scientific Reports, told AFP.

That's around the weight of 500 jumbo jets, and up to sixteen times greater than the plastic mass uncovered there in previous studies. *(AFP)*