

# *1,000 Pieces of Plastic Found Inside Dead Whale in Indonesia*

By Daniel Victor

Nov. 21, 2018

More than 1,000 assorted pieces of plastic, including 115 cups, 25 bags, four bottles and two flip-flops, have been found inside a dead sperm whale in Indonesia, according to local officials.

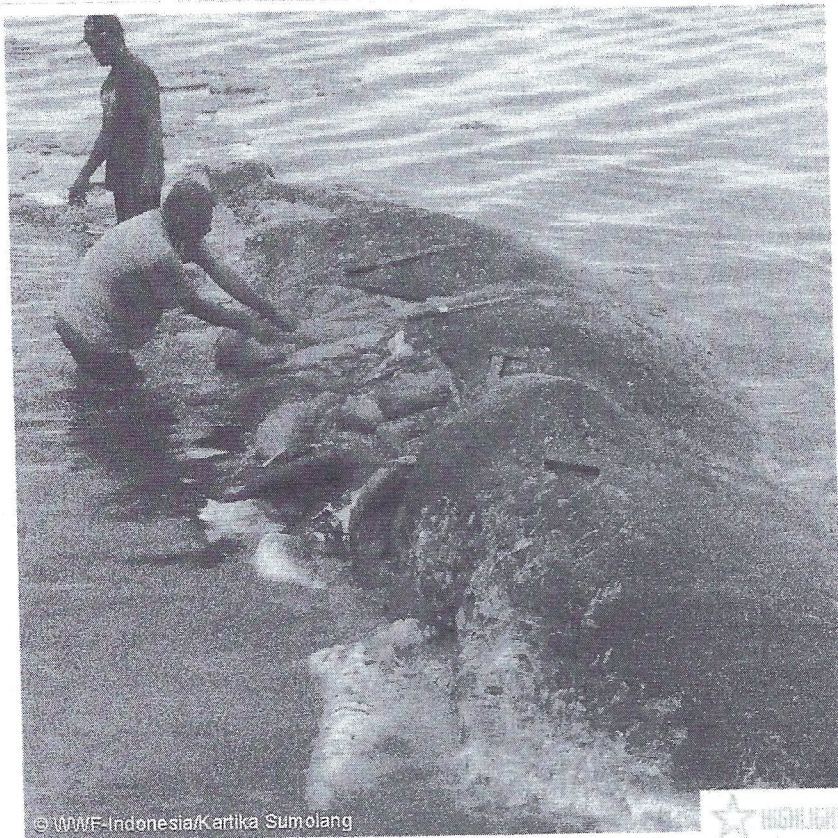
The whale, found washed ashore Monday in Wakatobi National Park, was already decomposing when rescuers arrived, so investigators were unable to determine if the plastic caused its death, said Lukas Adhyakso, the conservation director of the World Wildlife Fund in Indonesia. The plastic weighed about six kilograms, or 13 pounds, he said.

But images of the dead whale resonated in Indonesia, a country that has started to reckon with its outsize use of plastics. Indonesia, a nation of about 260 million people spread over thousands of islands in Southeast Asia, was the world's second-biggest producer of plastic waste in 2015, behind only China, according to a study in the journal *Science*.



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Sobat, seekor Paus Sperma (*Physeter macrocephalus*) terdampar di Pulau Kapota, Wakatobi dlm kondisi sdh membusuk (18/11). Kondisi paus saat ditemukan tdk baik & bagian tubuhnya sdh tdk lengkap. Pihak berwenang tdk bisa melakukan nekropsi u/ mengetahui penyebab kematian paus tsb.



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5,9 kg sampah plastik ditemukan di dlm perut paus malang ini! Sampah plastik yaitu: plastik keras (19 pcs, 140 gr), botol plastik (4 pcs, 150 gr), kantong plastik (25 pcs, 260 gr), sandal jepit (2 pcs, 270 gr), didominasi o/ tali rafia (3,26 kg) & gelas plastik (115 pcs, 750 gr). [pic.twitter.com/ZFWZgkbnzu](https://pic.twitter.com/ZFWZgkbnzu)

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Ingesting plastic can give whales a false sense of satiation, leading them to eat less food that provides the nutrients they need, said Nicholas Mallos, director of the Trash Free Seas program at Ocean Conservancy, an environmental nonprofit. Consumption of plastics can lead to reduced weight, energy and swimming speed, making whales more vulnerable to predators.

More than 800 species of marine animals are susceptible to the estimated 8.8 million tons of plastics deposited each year in the ocean, Mr. Mallos said, and often in ways that do not lead to graphic imagery like the whale in Indonesia. Plastics can entangle and trap animals, sometimes causing them to drown, or pierce elements of their digestive systems after being swallowed.

“What is concerning is that the likelihood of these types of interactions, and these types of horrific encounters between marine organisms and plastic debris, is only likely to continue unless some drastic measures are taken,” Mr. Mallos said.

In 2010, the top six plastic waste producers were in or near Southeast Asia: China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Much of the waste comes in the form of single-use items that do not decompose like bags, food packaging, straws and cutlery. The European Parliament voted to ban such items in October, with the ban taking effect in 2021.

While Indonesia outpaces much of the world in plastic use, there are efforts underway to curb it. The country has set a goal of reducing plastic waste by 70 percent by 2025, setting aside \$1 billion per year to combat the problem. In one effort to increase recycling, residents of Surabaya, the country's second-largest city, can pay their bus fare by recycling 10 plastic cups or up to five plastic bottles.

A patchwork of laws in United States cities has encouraged consumers to give up disposable items like plastic straws and bags, and some companies have pledged to limit their availability. But disposable plastics remain a staggering worldwide challenge.

In June, a dead whale found in Thailand had nearly 18 pounds of plastics in its stomach. A whale in Spain was discovered to have 64 pounds of trash clogging its intestines and stomach.

Mr. Adhyakso said the solution required "the entire world to start thinking about it."

"We will start doing our part, but all the regions should do the same," he said.

A version of this article appears in print on Nov. 22, 2018, on Page A6 of the New York edition with the headline: Plastic Junk Found in Dead Whale in Indonesia