

Washed Ashore: Fourth whale discovered, 'purely a coincidence'

January 23, 2023



A fourth whale has washed ashore along Oregon's coast.

This latest incident comes days after three other whales washed up along the south and north coasts of Oregon.

The Seaside Aquarium reports that the fourth whale, a gray whale, had been spotted by the Coast Guard floating about a mile offshore. Saturday afternoon, Jan. 21, the whale washed ashore on Crescent Beach, which is located in Cannon Beach.

"While all these whale strandings may seem concerning, there is no connection between them," the Seaside Aquarium states in a Facebook post. "It is purely a coincidence."

Recent weather patterns, coupled with strong westerly winds, dead marine mammals that have been floating offshore get pushed onto the beach, according to the Aquarium.

The most recent whale has been dead for at least a month, maybe two, according to the Aquarium, which added Its state of decomposition makes it difficult to determine the cause of death.

"We did notice a sizable shark bite which occurred after the whale died," the Facebook post states. "The whale's location is going to make a full necropsy nearly impossible."

A crew did reach the whale on Monday, Jan. 23, to take a closer look at the whale and take some external measurements.

Other incidents this month

Three other whales have washed ashore along Oregon's coastline in separate incidents over the past few weeks.

The first, a gray whale, was spotted on the beach Jan. 11 at Winchester Bay near Reedsport on the Southern Oregon Coast. The Marine Mammal Stranding Network said the whale was likely killed by orcas.

Within days of that incident, two large whales washed ashore along the North Oregon Coast near Astoria.

A 40-foot sperm whale was discovered on the beach near the shipwreck Peter Iredale Saturday, Jan. 14. Biologists said that whale died after being stuck by a ship at sea, according to the Associated Press.

The Seaside Aquarium reported that the whale had been dead for a while before washing ashore and that there were a few large gashes on the whale. See video of the whale with this story at thechronicleonline.com.

Crews from the Seaside Aquarium and state parks removed the whale's lower jaw so that the teeth remained intact for scientific purposes, the Aquarium said in a Facebook post. The whale is believed to be a juvenile male.

Male sperm whales can reach nearly 60 feet and weigh well over 40 tons. They have been known to live up to 60 years, with males maturing around the age of 50 at a length of approximately 52 feet. They feed on deep water species, such as squid, sharks, skates, and fish, according to the Seaside Aquarium.

While their population is recovering, sperm whales are still considered endangered.

A gray whale washed ashore Jan. 18 approximately 100 yards north of the sperm whale. The Seaside Aquarium reported the baby gray whale was about 12-feet in length.

"Like the sperm whale, it had been dead for a while before washing in," the Aquarium said in a Facebook post. "There are no indications that this whale was struck by a ship or died from human interaction. Most likely, this is a case of failure to thrive."

Gray whales are currently migrating south to their birthing and breeding grounds near Baja.