



SAD END:
Blood was seen oozing out from the whale's fin and there were blotches all over its body. PHOTOS: THE STRAITS TIMES



What's this whale's tale?

Report by **RONALD LOH**
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The carcass of a sperm whale was found beached near Jurong Island yesterday.

Measuring between 12m- and 15m-long, it is the first reported sighting of a sperm whale in Singapore.

This is because sperm whales prefer deeper waters, said Professor Peter Ng, head of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum.

"It's a surprising find and we are still trying to handle this unusual situation," he said.

The cause of death is unknown.

When *The Straits Times Online* visited the scene, blood was seen oozing out from its fin while a pungent smell like that of dead fish wafted through the air.

The carcass was picked up by Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum staff for analysis.

A museum employee, who declined to be named, told *The New Paper* that the sperm whale was dark grey with blotches all over its body. The water around the carcass was reddish.

The carcass was secured with rope to a nearby structure to prevent it from drifting away.

"When we walked up to it, we collectively gasped because we knew what it was. It had a very distinctive shape," Prof Ng said.

"After overcoming the initial shock, I felt privileged that I was able to see one of these creatures. But I was also sad to see it dead."

Prof Ng said the museum is working with the authorities to properly handle and dispose of the carcass, as well as salvage its skeleton and other parts.

"All large animal carcasses have a tendency to explode due to the build-up of gases inside. But this one is fresh.

"It may have been swimming near our waters as it was transiting from one place to another when it died."

Male sperm whales can grow to a length of 20m while females can measure up to 12m.

The sperm whale, the largest of the toothed whales, can be found in all of the world's oceans.

— Additional reporting by
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