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Whale Death Caused by Plastic Bags

posted by [Jake Richardson](#) May 11, 2011 2:01 pm

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A rare Gervais beaked whale was found on a beach in Puerto Rico with ten pounds of twisted plastic in its stomach. The ball of plastic [caused the whale to starve to death](#). It was a juvenile female, and was emaciated due to not eating for days.

In February of this year, [another beaked whale died](#) after ingesting a single plastic bag because the chemicals reacted with the whale's internal organs very negatively. Some whales mistake the plastic shopping bags for jellyfish, because they are moved by water currents in ways that resemble the motion of jellyfish. Once a whale swallows a plastic shopping bag, they can't digest it properly, and it can kill them.

It isn't the first time a whale has died due to a stomach blockage composed entirely, or in part, of plastic bags. Last year Discovery News reported a gray whale [near Seattle washed ashore](#) after dying from having too much plastic in its stomach. In this case, the contents included 20 plastic bags, small towels, surgical gloves, sweat pants, plastic pieces, duct tape, and a golf ball.

A recent Scientific American article stated the world [creates 260 million tons of plastic](#) each year, and much of it winds up in the oceans. We can do our part by not using plastic shopping bags.

This video is disturbing, so if you don't want to be upset don't watch it. It shows a whale that ingested plastic bags, although it is not the exact one mentioned above.

Image Credit: noaa.gov

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