

# Stillborn whale washes ashore

## Gray whale first landed ashore in Gearhart

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

A gray whale calf washed ashore Monday, Dec. 12, in Gearhart but drifted back out to sea, leaving only its intestines. Two days later, it washed back up at 16th Avenue in Seaside.

Because of the time of year and its size, the 10-foot-long whale was most likely stillborn, Tiffany Boothe of Seaside Aquarium said.

According to Boothe, gray whales migrate past the Oregon Coast on their way to breeding grounds in Mexico.

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A 38-foot humpback whale that drifted ashore in Cape Falcon earlier this year was pulled back to sea before researchers could arrive to conduct a necropsy.

The whale eventually landed on the north end of Short Sand Beach in Oswald West State Park. The cause of that whale's death was inconclusive.

This week, a similar scene was re-enacted in Gearhart.

A necropsy had been scheduled, but the whale disappeared off the beach.

Two days later, the whale washed back onto the beach in Seaside and the necropsy was conducted.

Visually there were no



TIFFANY BOOTHE/SEASIDE AQUARIUM

Gray whale carcass in Gearhart. It later washed out to sea.

signs that pointed to the cause of death. "Closer analysis of the heart and lungs will be done back at the lab to determine if the animal was indeed a stillborn," Boothe said.

Like the humpback that washed ashore at Falcon Cove in September and then washed back out the next day leaving only kidneys behind, the only evidence that this calf had been on Gearhart beach was a small isolated

pile of intestines, Boothe said. Researchers believe the carcass is heading north, but will be hard to follow while drifting. Since it is not bloated, it may sink instead of float.

Gray whale migration is an approximately 10,000-mile round trip, Boothe said, from their feeding grounds in the Arctic to their birthing and nursery grounds in Mexico.

The fall migration usually takes place from October to February and the spring migration usually takes place from March to July, although sometimes as late as September.

"We did try to secure the animal when it first washed in, but even though it was a very small whale we were still unable to pull it up higher on the beach," Boothe said.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A propane truck crashed on Highway 26 on Friday, Dec. 9. The driver did not suffer life-threatening injuries.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Hazmat truck responds to the rollover.

## Hazmat cleanup on Highway 26 forced 6-mile road closure

Seaside Signal

A propane truck crash on U.S. Highway 26 Friday, Dec. 9, snarled traffic and caused delays.

The road was opened in all directions by the end of the day.

The crash occurred 4 miles east of the Necanicum Junction at milepost 13.

The Oregon Department of Transportation had closed the highway from milepost 12 to 18.

Oregon State Police, the Department of Transportation and fire departments from Hamlet and Elsie responded to the scene.

Four Elsie Fire and Rescue personnel responded to a 911 report of a vehicle rollover at 9:56 a.m. "As things progressed, we were notified it

was a delivery truck with more than 80 percent of its load on board leaking propane," Elsie Fire and Rescue's Diane Jette said.

The hazardous material response required a half-mile evacuation, Jette said.

Responders found the truck rolled over and leaking propane and shut the highway down.

Medix transported the driver, who did not sustain life-threatening injuries.

Hazmat teams were called to manage the propane leak. Crews from Suburban Propane and Hillsboro towing righted the damaged vehicle and cleared the highway, while Hamlet firefighters provided water coverage.

Highway 26 was closed to traffic for about six hours.

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