

# Freed whale found dead

Luulumbo's carcass spotted in waters off Pulau Gaya

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**KOTA KINABALU:** Luulumbo is dead.

The worst fears of rescuers, who freed the injured 24m-long Bryde's whale, were realised when the animal was found dead yesterday at almost the same spot where it got stuck in shallow waters off Pulau Gaya on Friday.

Hopes were high that the whale had survived the ordeal after it was towed to sea and not sighted on Saturday.

However, Pulau Gaya islanders said they noticed the whale, known to Kadazanduns as Luulumbo, at about 2.30am yesterday.

And sunrise revealed the animal lying on its side with waters around the carcass turning dark red as blood began leaching out from the carcass.

As word of the animal's death spread, dozens of islanders, locals and tourists came in boats to look and take pictures of the carcass which was already smelly.

Worldwide Fund for Nature marine mammal researcher Dr Linsay Porter, who was among the dozens of marine scientists



**MORBID FASCINATION:** Pulau Gaya villagers taking a closer look at the carcass in the waters off Kota Kinabalu yesterday. — *STARpic* by NORMIMIE DIUN

and volunteers involved in freeing the whale, said that although she had been hopeful after animal was freed, its death came as no surprise.

"When a marine creature like that becomes stranded it means there is something very wrong with it. Its natural instinct is to stay away from the shore," said Dr Porter.

She said rescuers tried to quickly tow the 22-tonne whale

to open sea to give it a chance to survive although they did not know the extent of the internal injuries it suffered apart from some bruises and cuts on its body.

The whale had been trapped in the shallow waters since Thursday and after several attempts, it was finally towed out by tugboat at about 7.45pm on Friday.

Dr Porter said she had recom-

mended to the Sabah Parks officers that the carcass be towed to the open sea and allowed to decompose naturally.

She said the carcasses of marine mammals like whales tend to decompose quickly, more so in the tropical heat.

Sabah Fisheries Department director Rayner Stuel Galid said the department had hired a fishing vessel to tow the whale which was removed at

about 1pm.

He said the whale was towed some five nautical miles from Pulau Gaya and was anchored with weights on the seabed about 70m below the surface.

He said the skeletal remains of the whale could later be retrieved if the Sabah Museum Department or Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Borneo Marine Research Institute were keen on them.