

Injured melon-headed whale rescued, returned to sea in Sarangani

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GENERAL SANTOS CITY — A wounded male melon-headed whale (*Peponocephala electra*) was rescued in the coast of Barangay Tambilil of Kiamba, Sarangani on Friday and later returned to the wild, environment officials said.

Carmelo Velasco, Kiamba municipal environment and natural resources officer, said the wounded whale was found by fisherman Sabas Verde.

Verde told Julia Mosqueda, a public school teacher, about the rescued whale, who, in turn, alerted Kiamba environment officials.

Verde said fisherfolks living in the coast of Barangay Tambilil spotted two huge whales early Friday morning slowly swimming toward the shore.

“We thought that they were dolphins, just swimming around. Dolphins are commonly seen here,” Verde said.

“Later on, two whales were seen approaching the coast but the other left as if it just accompanied the wounded one,” said Aileen Tenio, information officer of the Kiamba environment office, quoting the villagers.

She said personnel from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) arrived and conducted ocular inspection on the whale.

Tenio said DENR personnel found a one-inch wound near the fin and scratches in its snout.

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The whale weighed more than 130 kilograms with total body length of more than two meters.

Marine wildlife experts believed the whale may have encountered a Cookiecutter shark, causing the injuries.

Dr. Ali M. Hadjinasser, DENR’s community environment and natural resources officer in Kiamba, said that after more than three hours of observation, the wounded whale moved back to the sea, which indicated it may have regained its strength.

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