



Whale Mass Strandings

Why in News

Over **450 long-finned pilot whales** have died in **Australia's largest recorded mass-stranding event**. The whales were **beached at a remote beach in Tasmania's west coast**.



Key Points

▪ Beaching/Stranding Events:

- Beaching refers to the **phenomenon of dolphins and whales stranding themselves on beaches**.
- There are **around 2,000 strandings each year** worldwide, with most **resulting in the death of the animal**.
- Whales strand themselves on beaches either **singularly or in groups**. While **individual strandings** are mostly attributed to **injury or sickness**, it is **not clear why exactly whales beach themselves in groups**.

▪ Possible Reasons behind Whale Mass Strandings:

- Some whales **follow schooling fish or other prey** into shallow waters, which causes the whales to become disoriented, as a result of which they get stranded.
- Another reason could be **panic from being trapped by a predator** such as killer whales or sharks.
- Another possibility is that **whales might be drawn to land by prey-rich currents.**
- Some scientists believe that **sonar signals and other man-made loud underwater noises** may contribute to beaching events.
- Further, the **shape of the beach** and the **coastline** could also have a role to play.
- **Protection:** Scientists and workers try to drag the whales away from the shore and guide them back into the water.
- **Long-finned pilot whales:**



- **Scientific Name:** Globicephala melas
- These are **one of two species of pilot whale**, along with short-finned pilot whales.
- These prefer **deep temperate to subpolar oceanic waters**, but they have been known to occur in coastal waters in some areas.
- They have been documented near the **Antarctic sea ice** and associated with the colder **Benguela and Humboldt Currents**, which may extend their normal range.
- **Protection Status:**
 - **CITES:** Appendix II
 - **IUCN:** Least Concern

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