Tanzania drives demand for free and fair poll as violence spreads

## frica turns on Muga

## ALGOA BAY BRUTE'S FINAL RESTING PLACE



## Woman jumps to death while on phone to sister

Giant carcass of humpback whale found washed up on Kings Beach

**Guy Rogers** ENVIRONMENT &0x0026; TOURISM EDITOR

A HUMPBACK whale, one of the most spectacular examples of the natural wealth of Algoa Bay, was washed up on Port Elizabeth's Kings Beach yesterday.

The huge carcass was washed up near the harbour wall during Wednesday night and its presence quickly drew dog-walkers, joggers and other onlookers yesterday morning.

The Herald received an early alert from the marine conservation group Ocean Messengers. Founder Rainer Schimpf said the stranding was confirmation of the substantial humpback population that passed through the bay at this time of the year.

"There is also clear evidence of great white shark bites on the carcass - so we have confirmation of two amazing protected species in our bay."

He said that, although it was up to scientists to judge the cause of the whale's death, damage to its skull seemed to indicate it could have been hit by a ship.

"Whatever the finding, it should be a warning to us that if ship movement increases in our bay the danger of whales being hit will rise."

Bayworld marine mammal expert Greg Hofmeyr said the whale was 10,8m long.

"It's an adult humpback. We can't tell what sex it is because it's lying on its belly and we can't see the positioning of its ventral slits. I would guess it died about a week ago."

When the port at Coega was being built, the environmental impact assessment advised that blasting should be avoided when whales were in the area because the vibrations could interfere with their hunting technique.

Hofmeyr said the species had recovered strongly since whaling stopped in the mid-60s, and the population was growing. Two years ago, Plettenberg Bay's Centre for Dolphin Studies estimated a global humpback population of about 9000.

The species is still classified as vulnerable.

Hofmeyr said there was no clarity as to what had killed the Kings Beach specimen.

"The damage to the skull looks to be just from decay. There are a number of white shark bites, but these could have happened after it died.

"Even though humpbacks are not permanent residents here, they are still a spectacular part of our bay and a great tourist drawcard. It's sad this one is dead – but its appearance is a sign that more and more of them are out there."

The carcass will now be disposed of by the Nelson Mandela Bay municipality beach office. Options – including blowing it up and then burying it, or towing it out to sea – are still being considered.