



SPADE-TOOTHED WHALE: ENVIRONMENT

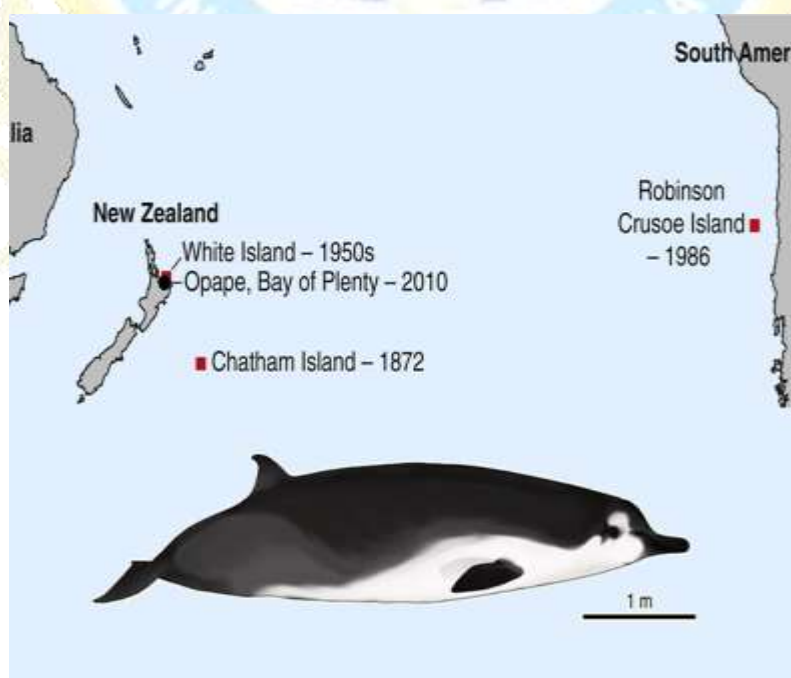
NEWS: Scientists gather to decode puzzle of world's rarest whale

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The spade-toothed whale, the world's rarest whale species, was recently studied for the first time after a male specimen washed ashore in New Zealand. This elusive marine mammal, sacred to the Maori iwi, highlights New Zealand's status as a whale-stranding hotspot.

Spade-Toothed Whale and Its Study

- **Rarest Whale Species:** Only seven specimens documented; part of the beaked whale family (*Ziphiidae*).
- **Recent Discovery:** A 5-meter-long male washed ashore in New Zealand in July 2024; first detailed dissection conducted.
- **Distinct Features:** Named for its unique spade-like teeth; habitat includes the Southern Pacific Ocean.
- **Conservation Status:** Data Deficient (IUCN); listed under CITES Appendix II.
- **Scientific Name:** *Mesoplodon traversii*; discovered in Pitt Island, New Zealand (1872).
- **Cetacean Overview:** Infraorder of aquatic mammals including whales, dolphins, and porpoises under order Artiodactyla.
- **Cultural Significance:** Sacred (taonga) to New Zealand's Maori iwi; Pacific Indigenous leaders recognize whales as "legal persons."





New Zealand as a Whale-Stranding Hotspot

- **History:** Over 5,000 strandings since 1840.
- **Significant Finds:** Spade-toothed whale bones from Pitt Island (1872) and Robinson Crusoe Island (1986).
- **Recent Specimen:** Marks from cookie-cutter sharks observed but not the cause of death.

Maori Iwi (Tribes)

- Indigenous tribes of New Zealand with a rich cultural heritage.
- Guardians (Kaitiaki) of natural resources, with deep connections to whales and nature.

Source : <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/scientists-gather-to-decode-puzzle-of-worlds-rarest-whale/article68938102.ece#:~:text=The%20spade%2Dtoothed%20whale%20has%20never%20been%20seen%20alive%20at%20sea&text=Almost%20nothing%20is%20known%20about,t o%20decode%20decades%20of%20mystery.>

