The strandings. Multiple strandings of sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) have occurred along the coastal North Sea since the medieval times (Smeenk 1997). In January and February 2016, however, the largest sperm whale mortality event to date was reported in the area. A total of 30 sperm whales stranded, of which 13 animals died at the coast of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany (Figs. 1 and 2). Necropsies were conducted on 12 individuals. Age was determined by counting growth layer groups in the teeth, and further detailed investigations were carried out to gain the maximum information from the animals. Each digestive tract was completely opened and contents were collected and preserved. All whales were immature males. Body lengths ranged between 10.16 m and 12.34 m, and age varied from 10 to 15 years (Table 1).

**Condition, diseases, parasites and debris.** Based on blubber thickness and muscle condition the whales were in a good nutritional status. No signs of severe trauma, apparent infections or diseases were found. Metazoan parasites were present on the skin, in the blubber (mainly larval stages of the octopus *Phyllobothrium delphinii*; Fig. 3b), stomach, intestine, and on the skin mostly associated with mild lesions. Four whales displayed marine litter in the digestive tract. This included fish remains and general debris such as netting, plastic buckets, and a car part (Unger et al. 2016, Table 1).