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The prodigal son returns

A 42-foot skeleton of an Indian fin whale (*Baleaenoptera indica*) used to dominate the gallery of the Raffles Museum, and remain a household name for decades. When it was taken down in 1974 and gifted to the Muzium Negara (National Museum) in Kuala Lumpur, the nation mourned and pined for their lost whale.

As it so happens, Singapore found itself another whale during its golden jubilee in 2015 when a dead sperm whale (*Physeter catodon*) was spotted off Jurong Island. The skeleton of the whale, nicknamed Jubi Lee, was prepared by the museum staff and eventually put up on display in 2016.



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The way to science is through its stomach

When the sperm whale (see previous story) was dissected, museum staff were most keen to get to its gut, where the answers to its life history and diet lay. There, they learnt from the thousands of squid beaks left undigested that the whale (like others of its kind) enjoyed snacking on squids.

To study this material they invited none other than giant squid specialist Professor Tsunemi Kubodera, who spent much of his research career attempting to photograph and film a giant squid (*Architeuthis dux*) alive in its natural habitat, and eventually becoming the first to do so just before his retirement!

