

Whale Entrapments in Fishing Gear and other Marine Animal Incidental  
Entrapments during 2000

A Report to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans- Newfoundland and  
Labrador Region

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## Summary

Assistance to fishers with incidentally entrapped whales was provided by the Environmental Response Program of Canadian Coast Guard during 2000. The authors were hired to assist with whale releases. Calls were relayed via a toll-free number advertised to the fishing community. Whales were released with the assistance of fishers.

Nineteen whales were reported entrapped in fishing gear in 2000.

Eleven humpback whales were entrapped (Table 1), seven (n=7) were other large whales that were unidentified and one (n=1) beluga whale.

Seventy white beaked dolphins (*Lagenorhynchus albirostris*) were reported ice entrapped. Four large unknown whale species were reported dead and drifting. One humpback (*Megaptera novaengliae*) was reported dead. Other dead stranded whales were one Orca (*Orcinus orca*), one long-finned pilot whale (*Globicephala melaena*) and one harbour porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*).

Whales were entrapped in a variety of demersal gillnets, crab pots, whelk pots and discarded shrimp twine.

## Methods

The whale entrapment assistance program was organized by the Canadian Coast Guard in 2000. The program was given technical advice from Dr. Jon Lien of the Whale Research Group of Memorial University (MUN) during transition. Response action was similar to how the program operated in the past. A toll free number was broadcast to fishers throughout the region and cards were distributed to Department of Fisheries and Oceans Conservation and Protection offices. Calls were received by the Coast Guard Traffic Center and relayed to release personnel. The authors were hired to release whales with the logistical support of the Coast Guard and fishers. Tools used to release entrapped marine animals were from the Whale Research Group MUN. Only live entrapments were responded to. Dead animals were not examined to determine causes of death.

## Discussion

Although down significantly from 1992 pre moratorium entanglements, when the majority of entrapments occurred in cod-traps (Lien, *et al.*1990), whale collisions continue to pose major problems for both inshore and offshore fishers. Numbers of whales, fishing gear density and abundance of bait determine entrapments. With the diversification of the Newfoundland fishery different types of gear are being used and entrapments continue to occur.

Two humpbacks were released from whelk pot gear. Those whales were entangled in strings of gear consisting of five gallon buckets with cement in the bottom for weight. Netting covers the top and bait is set in the bucket. The gear is set in strings of 30-50 pots with 40 meters between each pot. One whale had one pot tangled tight against the side of its mouth. Both whales were entangled in multiple strings of gear.

One humpback was entangled in discarded shrimp netting. The netting was wrapped around the head of the whale.

Eleven large whales were reported towing fishing gear in 2000. The fate of those animals is unknown.

Table 1. Humpback whale incidental entrapments in fishing gear reported in the Newfoundland region during 2000

<b>DATE</b>	<b>AREA</b>	<b>GEAR TYPE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
6 February	Little Hrb. Placentia Bay	Boat mooring	Released alive
10 February	Arnolds Cove, Placentia Bay	Herring nets	Released alive
5 May	Leading Tickles. N.D. Bay	Herring net	Released alive
21 May	47° 44 N 48° 40 W	Crab gear	Towing the gear
1 July	Garnish, Fortune Bay	Lump nets	Released alive
11 July	La Scie, White Bay	Gillnets	Towing gear, weather too bad for attempt release
20 July	Lower Island Cove, Conception Bay	Whelk pots	Released alive
27 July	Witless Bay, Southern Shore	Rope/Buoy	Unable to relocate
28 July	Witless Bay	Gillnet	Head and foots of gillnet wrapped tight around body. Tried for three days but could not catch hold of whale
12 August	Pass Island, Hermitage Bay	Rope/Buoy	Towing gear, reported by Coast Guard helicopter
15 August	Ochre Pit Cove, Conception Bay	Whelk pots	Released alive
21 September	Fogo Island, Notre Dame Bay	Discarded shrimp netting	Released alive from a netting bag around head

Table 2. Other unknown species of large whales reported entrapped in fishing gear in the Newfoundland region during 2000.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>AREA</b>	<b>GEAR TYPE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
30 June	Codroy, West Coast	Unknown	Believed entrapped
8 July	Blanc Sablon, Labrador Coast	Gillnets	Released alive
11 July	Fogo, Notre Dame Bay	Gillnets	Towing gear. Weather too bad for attempt at release
9 August	46° 51 N 52° 51 W	Unknown	Towing gear
12 August	46° 47 N 52° 55 W	Rope/2 Buoys	Dead floating. Possibly same as 9 August
16 August	48° 55 N 44° 02 W	Crab Pots	Released dead
23 August	46° 48 N 52° 51 W, Cape Ballard	Rope	11 m whale dead floating
7 September	46° 52 N 56° 03 W	Rope	8.5m dead whale floating

Table 3. Small cetaceans reported entrapped in fishing gear in the Newfoundland region during 2000.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>AREA</b>	<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
8 August	Rocky Harbour, Northern Peninsula	Beluga	Self release

Table 4. Stranded and dead floating whales reported in the Newfoundland region during 2000

<b>DATE</b>	<b>AREA</b>	<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
22 February	St. Andrews, Codroy Valley	White beak dolphins	70 animals caught in ice; est. 30 died
18 April	Cheesemans Provincial Park, S.W Coast	Sperm	Large dead stranded
18 April	46 37 N, 57 26 W	Est 60-80 ft. long	Dead floating
4 May	47 37N, 51 46W	Unknown large whale	Dead floating

6 June	Biscay Bay, southern Avalon	Dolphin (spp)?	Stranded on beach, rotten
7 June	45 52N, 54 27W	Unknown large whale	Dead floating
11 June	47 25 N, 52 30W	Orca	Dead floating
6 July	Piccadilly Flats, Port au Port Peninsula	Long-finned pilot	Dead stranded with calf
23 June	47 03N, 55 57W	Unknown large whale. Est 20 ft	Dead floating
11 July	Port au Port Peninsula	Unknown	Dead stranded
22 July	Pte. Lance, Cape St. Mary's	Orca	Dead stranded
7 August	46 55N, 59 37W	Beluga	Dead animal floating
13 August	Pouch Cove, Cape St. Francis	Large whale spp?	Dead stranded
17 August	Cape St. Francis	Large whale spp?	Dead floating. Possibly same as 13 August
31 August	46° 51 N 52° 53 W	Large whale spp?	Dead floating
31 August	Cape Freels	Large whale spp?	Dead floating
15 Sept	South Labrador Coast	Humpback	Dead
15 Sept	Milltown, Connaigre Peninsula	Harbour Porpoise	Injured, Dispatched by DFO officers

Table 6. Other sightings of cetaceans reported during 2000

<b>DATE</b>	<b>AREA</b>	<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
30 June	Piccadilly Flats, Port au Port Peninsula	Long-finned pilot	Acting curious

#### References

Lien, J., J. Huntington, and W. Ledwell. 1990. *Incidental entrapments by inshore fishing gear reported in 1990: a preliminary report to the Development Branch, Fisheries and Oceans Canada - Newfoundland Region; and the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Fisheries.*