

Incidental entrapments and entanglements of cetaceans and leatherback sea turtles and strandings and harrassments reported to the Whale Release and Strandings Group in Newfoundland and Labrador and a summary of the Whale Release and Strandings Program during 2016

A Report to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada –
Newfoundland and Labrador Region

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The Canadian Coast Guard Marine Traffic and Light Station Centers diligently report entrapped and stranded marine animals and sightings regularly to the hot line. Thanks for the service. Thank you to the town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. To the fishermen of this Region who have continued to support this program throughout its long history, the success of our work releasing entrapped animals would not be possible without your continued support and participation.

Whale Release and Strandings Group

The Whale Release and Strandings Group (Tangly Whales, Inc.) is a non-profit environmental organization responsible for the disentanglement and strandings of marine animals in Newfoundland and Labrador since 2000 and incorporated in July 2002. The organization has a board of directors. The Mission statement for the Whale Release and Strandings Group is:

- To conserve biodiversity
- To release whales from fishing gear
- To attempt to save fishing gear to the extent possible during a disentanglement
- To coordinate strandings on marine animals
- To conduct research work on marine animals
- To conduct all other work on marine animals as seen fit

From 1978 through 2016 assistance has been offered to fishers in the Newfoundland Region who incidentally have large whales, leatherback sea turtles and basking sharks entangled in their fishing gear and for live stranded marine animals. This service has been provided with cooperation from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada.

Summary reports

During this time period (1978-2016) information from fishers regarding whale interactions has been recorded and monitored, included are the incidences of entrapments, strandings and sightings of leatherback sea turtles, sharks and 20 different species of cetaceans have that been recorded in continuous reports and summaries from 1978 - 2016.

This report represents the thirty-ninth (39) of such reports in a similar format produced by the Whale Research Group and the Whale Release and Strandings Group. The purpose of these reports is to summarize yearly activities of important events such as entrapments/entanglements/strandings of animals under study and research and educational studies undertaken. These reports are catalogued at the Memorial University Library and Fisheries and Oceans Canada and with the Whale Release and Strandings Group. One of the benefits of these reports is quick access to changes in entrapments and entanglements in this region related to changes in fishing gear and distributions of large marine animals as well as the various strandings, ice-entrapments and strandings and sightings of rare animals and animals under study.

Introduction

The program, which has been run by the Whale Release and Strandings Group since 2001, plus providing one-year mentorship with the Canadian Coast Guard in 2000, uses

methods of which the most important are working stakeholders for disentangling large whales from fishing gear, which were pioneered by Dr. Jon Lien (Lien 1980) and with a few modifications remain those of choice today.

The disentanglement program in use today was designed and developed for the highly rural nature of over 800 fishing communities spread over the 17,000 km coastline of Newfoundland and Labrador. The disentanglement assistance program has benefited fishers, whales, leatherback sea turtles and the people of Canada. It provides assistance to often financially stretched fishers, saving them thousands of dollars in what would be lost fishing gear and downtime if they did not have skilled support in releasing a large whale entrapped in their gear. It releases large and often endangered whales, leatherback sea turtles and basking shark from fishing gear and allows them to continue their life processes. We have the largest feeding population of humpbacks in the northwest Atlantic, with about 5,000 individuals visiting NL waters during spring, summer and fall. These whales are the basis for a large tourism industry in the region.

The program also responds to all reported live and dead cetaceans and sea turtles, as well as pack ice entrapments.

The purpose of the assistance is: (1) to assist fishers in releasing whales from fishing gear, thus decreasing downtime and damage to fishing gear. The length of time a large marine animal is entrapped in fishing gear is directly correlated to greater gear damage and loss of income due to the gear not fishing properly or at all (Lien 1983), (2) to release entrapped marine animals as quickly and safely as possible to allow them to continue their life processes, such as feeding, migrating, mating, rearing its young, (3) to communicate with fishermen and communities about marine animals, including species at risk, habitat protection, and (4) to add to the scientific knowledge of cetaceans, leatherback sea turtles and sharks that inhabit Newfoundland and Labrador waters.

Fish harvesters have come to realize that calling a government sponsored program offers them a faster and more efficient alternative to dealing with a gear-entrapped animal than attempting a release on their own. Fishers and untrained persons who take whales out of gear often leave large amounts of fishing gear on the animal perhaps because they do not or cannot look underwater to see all the gear that is on the entrapped animal. Whales caught in crab gear that are cut loose by fishers and other untrained persons are often released with vast amounts of rope and pots still attached (Ledwell and Huntington 2001, 2002, 2006). This provides more opportunity for whale re-entrapment and more gear damage and allows the animal to move from the vicinity in which it was entrapped and be difficult to relocate, and/or difficult to catch to remove the gear still on it. A timely response by experienced personnel results in the removal of most if not all gear from the animals, less gear damage and fishing downtime, particularly important to the economically marginalized inshore fishers.

From 1979 to 2016 one thousand and sixty (1060) humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), one hundred and sixty (160) minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), fourteen (14) fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*), two right whales (*Eubalaena*

glacialis), one bowhead whale (*Balaena mysticetus*) and eighty-seven (87) unknown large whales were reported entrapped or entangled in fishing gear in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Eighty-two (82) leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) have been reported entangled in fishing gear in this region with a mortality of 25%. There have been fourteen (14) reported leatherback turtle strandings with 10 of those being dead animals reported in the region. Two (2) live leatherbacks that had stranded were rescued and returned to sea by members of the WRS group. A loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) was collected cold stunned in Hermitage harbor and returned to ocean from the Harbour Breton harbor after it was rewarmed (Ledwell and Huntington 2007).

Entrapments, strandings and sightings of other cetaceans either unusual to the area or under study or animals free swimming but in poor health and marine animals such as sea turtles, sharks, walrus have also been documented (Lien 1994; Ledwell and Huntington 2000-2012; Ledwell, Huntington and Sacrey 2013-2015).

From 1992 to 2000 funding for a marine animal release program was varied and at times non-existent.

The most common types of fishing gear associated with entanglements in this region currently includes gillnets (cod, herring, mackerel, lumpfish, flounder, monk, skate and turbot) snow crab pots, whelk pots, toad crab pots, box traps (caplin, cod, herring, mackerel and squid), unspecified and illegal gillnets, ropes/buoys and moorings. In other words, most types of fishing gear have the potential to incidentally catch whales and they do. In recent years fishing effort in Newfoundland and Labrador has shifted offshore. This shift in gear has led to an increase in the number of offshore entrapments reported and offshore entanglements have primarily involved snow crab and whelk pot gear.

Methods

Whale, leatherback sea turtle and basking shark entanglements in fishing gear and strandings and sightings of marine animals were reported to the Whale Release and Strandings Program in 2016 by calling an advertised toll free number (1-888-895-3003) which can be accessed 24 hours a day seven days a week year around. A trained release team responds by providing suitable, safe advice or sending expert personnel to the site for needed assistance. The trained crew is equipped and ready to deploy immediately with an inflatable zodiac and necessary specialized tools for disentanglement of whales, leatherback sea turtles and basking sharks. The objective of each disentanglement is the safe, clean release of the whale or other marine animals from the fishing gear and minimal or no damage to the fishing gear involved in the entanglement. The disentanglement crew also responded to whale and leatherback sea turtle strandings. Calls concerning entanglements, strandings and dead floating animals were also forwarded to the group by DFO Conservation Officers, Coast Guard Centers, fishers, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Crime Stoppers and the general public. Fisheries and Oceans Canada funded the program in 2016. Additional funding was provided through Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) Environment Canada, the Community Sector Council NL

Student Work and Services Program (SWASP), NL Department of Advanced Education and Skills Student Summer Employment Program (SSEP), and the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's.

Results and Discussion

Results of the Entrapment Assistance Program from previous years have been summarized in annual reports to Fisheries and Oceans and the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Fisheries (Lien 1980; Lien and Aldrich 1982; Lien et al. 1982; 1983; 1984; 1985; 1986; 1987; 1988; 1989; Lien 1990; 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; Ledwell, Huntington and Lien 2000; Ledwell and Huntington 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; Ledwell, Huntington and Kelly 2010; Ledwell and Huntington 2011; 2012; Ledwell, Huntington and Sacrey 2013; 2014; 2015).

Humpback Whales

Seventeen (17) humpbacks were reported entangled/entrapped in fishing gear in 2016 in a variety of inshore and offshore fishing gears (Table 1).

23rd February

The humpback released on February 23rd was entangled in the frame of a herring net. It was towing a jumble of ropes with 2 poly buoys with one rope through its mouth. The animal was reported in Back Bay in the Bay L'Argent area of Fortune Bay on the 15th of February towing a poly buoy. A weather window on the 23rd allowed the Whale Release and Strandings Group with assistance from the Marystown and Harbour Breton DFO detachments to release the animal gear free on the afternoon of the 23rd. The whale had been reported by local community members as entangled and towing the gear a week prior to the rescue but the weather was too windy and the animal had moved out of the immediate area. A weather window on Tuesday allowed for a search of the area and the animal was found and released of all fishing gear. The fishing gear was the frame for a herring fishing net reported missing by a fisherman just prior to the initial sighting of the entangled whale. Despite being entangled for a week Mrs. Huntington said the whale was in good shape when released and it just took off. Mrs. Huntington, who has been releasing large whales from fishing gear with the Whale Release and Strandings group since 2001 and prior to that with the Whale Research Group of Memorial University during heavy entrapment/entanglement years said this is typical behaviour of whales when disentangled "they just boot it away from you" and that the objective of all disentanglement attempts is three fold: 1. the clean removal of all gear from the whale, 2. saving and retrieving fishing gear, and 3. making sure all the crew come home safe. The gear was retrieved and returned to the fisherman.

This disentanglement was a season first for the Group and the earliest they have done. "The challenges are different this time of year" said Mrs. Huntington, "there's the wind, the snow and the cold you have to contend with but that's what we do." She also said this whale may be one of the year long resident whales that we have that did not make the winter migration to the Caribbean preferring to stay and feed instead. It is long known that we have a small resident population of humpbacks that reside here year long.

2-13th July

WRS was called to Mobile Bay by a tour boat on the evening of the 2nd July of a humpback towing a large amount of fishing gear and trailing approximately 100m of rope attached to a medium sized red polyform buoy. The gear was traced to a snow crab fisherman from Bar Haven in Placentia Bay. The fisherman had last hauled his pots on the 28th June and lost 18 crab pots, ropes, haul-ups and the fishing balloon when he checked his gear again on the 2nd.

WRS members searched unsuccessfully on the 2nd.

On the 5th July the whale was resighted off of Valleyfield, Bonavista Bay travelling north at 3-5 knots still towing the poly buoy but no evidence of other trailing gear which was easily seen and partially photographed on the 2nd by the tour boat.

On the 13th July the whale was seen off of Forteau, southern Labrador feeding amongst a group of humpbacks and still trailing the poly buoy. This whale had travelled from Placentia Bay in southern Newfoundland to Forteau off Labrador in less than 2 weeks.

28th July

WRS members released a humpback from 2 cod gillnets plus 2 haul up ropes, anchors and fishing balloons on the 28th off of Plate Cove West in Bonavista Bay. When the crew responded the day of the call after a 5 hour drive the whale had taken all the gear and disappeared. After a 3 hour search of the bay the crew relocated the whale and during a 3nm tow of the disentanglement crew by the whale all gear was removed and returned to the fisherman.

1st August

WRS members responded to a very aggressive/dangerous whale entrapped in the leader of caplin trap in Northern Bay in Conception Bay on the 1st August. The fishing crew had initially tried to retrieve the 100 m leader from the entangled whale but once they had ½ of it in their boat the whale went berserk and almost overturned the boat tearing the leader, they had already aboard, out of the boat. A dangerous situation. WRS team was called and we managed to make one cut into the rope that was through its mouth before the animal went dangerous again and left the area thrashing violently with the partial leader in tow. It is thought that the fishing crew were pulling roughly on the leader that was through the animal's mouth and around one of its pectoral fins (sensitive areas) thus causing the animal to become distressed and more active.

22nd August

A humpback entrapped about 1.5 nm from Long Harbor in Placentia Bay for 3 months was reported to the WRS on the 22nd August. A fisherman called on the evening of the 21st about a whale that he believed was the same animal they had seen in mid-May still in the same general area. They were not aware it was entangled at the time. WRS, with assistance from the Placentia Fisheries and Oceans field office, responded and removed all the gear from a large humpback. The whale was unable to use its tail and tried to swim using its pectoral fins and was emaciated and began drifting towards shore into the community of Long Harbor with a strong south west wind carrying it in. Late that

evening the whale was almost ashore onto a sandbar in the community and expecting a live stranding WRS members arrived in the community early morning of the 23rd to find the whale was working its way out of the harbor partially using the lower portion of its body to swim. Late that evening the whale had moved out of the harbor area and into Placentia Bay. WRS hired a longliner to retrieve the gear (that we had buoyed off) the whale was entrapped in and discovered it to be derelict old pound trap gear with grapnels, rope and floats attached. It is thought the whale had picked it up while feeding and that the gear had been lost and or sunk prior to the whale becoming entangled into it.

24th October

WRS members released a humpback from whelk pot gear on the afternoon of the 24th October off of Main Brook in Hare Bay on the Great Northern Peninsula. The whale was thought to have to have been entangled for a number of weeks and was in poor body condition. It is believed from talking to the fishermen that the whale had towed away the gear from an adjacent community and had anchored itself in this area as boaters had seen the whale but didn't know it was entangled. The whale was released gear free. The gear was left buoyed off as we couldn't lift it and due to darkness/snow when we had to leave the area.

Minke whales

2 November

WRS members responded to a minke whale towing fishing gear in the Bonne Bay in Gros Morne National Park on the 5th and 6th of November. Due to 2 separate sightings the group decided to respond and after searching the area for two consecutive days were unsuccessful in relocating the animal. WRS received no other reports of the entanglement.

Strandings

Point Lance Leatherback

The Whale Release and Strandings Group conducted a field necropsy on a female Leatherback Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) with carapace width of 134 cm at Point Lance on the southern Avalon on the 9th August. The animal was in an advanced stage of decomposition having drifted onto the beach, however its internal organs were intact. A large green garbage bag was found blocking the gut of the animal and intertwined through the intestine.

Ingestion of plastic bags and other plastics is very common in leatherbacks as they can mistake the water filled bag for jellyfish or just consume it mistaking it for food.

Over a 1/3rd of leatherbacks that have been found dead stranded here have been found to have plastics of one kind or another in their stomachs.

A second leather was towed ashore by fishermen into Garnish on the Burin Peninsula. This animal, a 340 kg male, was also in advanced stages of decomposition and the

necropsy by DFO Marine Mammals did not provide any indication of death (J. Lawson pers. Comm.)

Possible Melon-headed whale in Harbour Grace

A significant and very interesting stranding occurred in Riverhead, Harbour Grace on the 14th of November. The Whale Release and Strandings Group was called for advice on a live stranding whale. A response was mounted and got the animal off shore but it re-stranded and died soon afterwards. This whale was either a Melon-headed whale (*Peponocephala electra*) or Pygmy killer whale (*Feresa attenuate*) although it is thought more melon-headed. Both of these animals are in the dolphin group, are small < 3m in length and look very similar with a torpedo shaped body.

What is interesting is that both of these whales are tropical and sub-tropical whales with only one recorded sighting of a Melon-headed whale in the western North Atlantic (Celtic Sea). Whether it is one or the other any record of one or both of these animals are new to our waters.

This whale appeared to be a calf and was emaciated. Unfortunately the carcass washed out to sea and was not retrieved for pathology and definite species differentiation. Both of these animals are deep water whales and feed on squid. There were squid present in the Harbour Grace area so it is possible that its mother could have been in the area also. However, based on its poor body condition as evident in a video, for reasons unknown, it is likely this calf was separated or abandoned.

Unless this animal is a total stray we can also take this unusual species stranding here as a subtle sign of ocean warming and scientists should be extra curious. These events are an opportunity to learn more about a species not previously known in our waters and people are encouraged to report such incidents to the Whale Release and Strandings Group or to the local Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Common dolphin ice-entrapments

On the 21st December upwards of 50 common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) ice-entrapped in Miller's Passage on the Connaigra Peninsula in Fortune Bay. The animals were discovered by members of the Northern Harvest Sea Farms in the middle of the 2 km. passage which was frozen over at both ends. The activity of the animals kept a section open. One dolphin was dead on top of the ice and it was thought 2-3 others were dead in the ice. The Aquaculture tender and a commercial fishing vessel managed to break the ice in the wider, deeper end of the passage but the dolphins began retreating towards the fast ice in the narrower southern end and stayed in the passage. W. Ledwell consulting with the manager of the company designed a plan whereby the boats would enter the passage on the 22nd staying as clear of the dolphins as possible and try and break through the northern end passage again. Strong winds on the night of the 21st aided in

breaking the ice and the boats managed to skirt the dolphins and break the rest of the ice the morning of the 22nd. The dolphins then left the passage into the open waters of Fortune Bay. Two of the dead animals were retrieved upon request of Mr. Ledwell and brought to the Harbour Breton Detachment of Fisheries and Oceans for future necropsy.

Ice entrapment situations require immediate response due to cold, windy winter weather, and the enormous distances we deal with in this region for responses and they require community members to act to save animals. These people are used to dealing with extreme weather events, ice and sea conditions and with assistance from an expert who has experience in dealing with these situations successful outcomes for the animals can be achieved as was the case with these animals. It's a technique used quite frequently for successful rescues in this region over the years.

Interestingly also this is the first record of common-dolphins ice entrapped in this region

Harassments

The WRS group received numerous reports of harassments of humpback whales by sea - doos and fast speedboats this summer. These reports have been steadily increasing over the years as concerned citizens witness aggressive behavior by recreational boaters around the animals.

New disentanglement tools

The Whale Release and Strandings Group designed a new cutting knife and cutting grapple in 2016. Both were versions of older tools used by the group since 2002 but were re designed with a Swiss manufacturer. The knives are now in use with all the Center for Coastal Studies, NOAA, California, New Zealand, South African and British Columbia disentanglement groups. Discussions are also under way for their use by fishers for releasing leatherback sea turtles in NL by members of the fish union.

Education activities

Stickers advertising the assistance program were sent to all Harbour Authorities, all DFO, Canadian Coast Guard, Crime Stoppers, coastal municipal offices, SPCA, Humane Society, media outlets and outdoor marine adventure companies throughout the region as well as to groups and fishers who requested them. An ad was also placed throughout the year in the fisheries trade magazine – The Navigator.

The Whale Release and Strandings Group helped organize the sixth “Whale Day” at Cape Spear and participated by displaying a full minke whale skeleton and life size humpback canvas rollout as part of their “bones, barnacles and baleen” educational presentations. A full-size fiberglass replica of a leatherback sea turtle that stranded here was also displayed.

The Group also carried out various presentations to kids in the St. John's area with the “bones, barnacles and baleen” theme.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Funding agreements should be in place and funds available before entrapment season begins. Agreements need to be established that are assurances to provide support to an organized program over a period of years. Programs that do not have these assurances will be very difficult to maintain and staff on an on-going basis (Lien 2004).

Recommendation 2. All vessels in the Newfoundland region should have the toll-free number stickers onboard alerting them who to call when they have an entrapped whale or see an entrapped whale or leatherback sea turtle. By having the toll-free number visible in the wheelhouse fishers may decide to call for expert advice when they have or see a whale or leatherback entrapped and not attempt to cut animals free and leave them with large amounts of gear attached which may cause the animal to die or become re-entrapped. This situation can be at least partially avoided if boats have the entrapment assistance hot line number easily visible onboard and upon calling can be advised on the proper release procedures or be advised that a release team is available to attend to the entanglement. This may lessen the number of whales or sea turtles each season swimming around with large amounts of snow crab and other gear attached. See Appendix I for toll-free sticker.

Because of the dangers inherent in fishing boats encountering entangled large whales in their fishing gear in the offshore especially snow crab gear fishing groups need to be advised by an experienced disentanglement group on procedures to lessen gear loss and protect lives.

Table 1. Humpback whales reported entangled in fishing gear in Newfoundland and Labrador during 2016

| Date | Area | Gear type | Description |
|----------|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| 25 Feb | Bay L'Argent Fortune Bay | Herring net | Whale reported entangled 15 th Feb towing poly buoy. Animal disentangled by WRS on 25 th Feb. Whale had rope through mouth and towing multiple ropes with 2 poly buoys. Whale released gear free |
| 20 April | Pool's Cove South Coast | Lobster pot buoy | Whale towing white/green lobster pot buoy. Reported to DFO |
| 20 May | Cuckhold's Cove, St. Johns | Herring net float and head rope | Whale towing gear with rope from herring net through the mouth or around right pec with cork float visible. No gear on tail as animal swimming/diving freely |
| 25 May | 5nm S.E. Branch | Snow crab gear | Whale caught through the mouth and around peduncle. Fishermen didn't know whale was in gear and it began spinning the 10m boat around in circles. They cut it loose still hog-tied with 10 pots and about 700 meters of 9/16 rope. They removed the balloons |
| 2 July | Witless Bay/ Mobile Bay/ Great and Bird and Green Island areas | Netting/rope poly buoy | Whale towing large amount of some sort of gear wrapped around right fluke and trailing about 100m of what looks like head and lead rope from forward of pectorals to a medium size poly buoy with a white plastic bottle attached to it. Appears to be at least one head rope float on the floating rope. Searched until dark but were unable to relocate the whale |
| 5 July | Off Valleyfield Bonavista Bay | Rope/poly buoy | Same whale from 2 July free swimming at 7-8 knots when seen by Inshore Coast Guard rescue RHIB. Whale looks as if it has shed some of the gear as it lifted its tail flukes and no gear could be seen |
| 13 July | Eastern end St. Pierre Bank | Snow crab gear | Humpback released from crab gear by fishing crew. Whale was observed towing a fleet of crab gear. Crew removed 3 snow |

| | | | |
|------------|--|--|--|
| | | | crab pots plus the fishing balloon and 220 meters of 9/16 in. rope |
| 13 July | Off Forteau, Labrador | Rope/buoy | Same whale from 2 nd July feeding amongst a group of humpbacks. Lots of humpbacks in the area early in the week |
| 14-15 July | Green Island Brook, Great Northern Peninsula | Herring nets/60 lb. grapnel/rope and collapsed balloon | Whale had towed the grapnel and anchor and collapsed balloon into the herring net. Gale force winds day and night and animal was gone at daylight leaving the grapnel/rope and balloon into the herring net |
| 20 July | Renews | Herring net | Whale released by fisherman. Animal had some twine left on it |
| 28 July | Plate Cove West. Bonavista Bay | Cod gillnets | Whale towed 2 cod gillnets, an anchor and 2 cod gillnets plus 2 medium sized poly buoys 9 nm from fishing site. We released all gear from the whale returned the gear to the fishermen who collected 500 lbs. cod from them |
| 27 July | The Drook, Conception Bay | Caplin trap | Whale entangled in caplin trap leader. Self-released before WRS got there |
| 28 July | Northern Bay, Conception Bay | Caplin trap | Whale entangled in leader and side of trap. Self-released |
| 1 August | Northern Bay, Conception Bay | Caplin trap leader | Whale towing 25 fathoms of caplin trap leader through mouth. Fishermen took 25 fathoms off the whale and it went berserk almost sinking the boat. WRS managed to make one mouth bridle cut before whale became too dangerous and was moving too much to release rest of the gear |
| 19 August | Ship Cove, Great Northern Peninsula | Mackerel trap leader | Whale reported entrapped since morning. WRS took the call late afternoon and left at 0330 on a 14-hour drive to the area on the 20 th for Ship Cove. The fisherman called at 0600 to say the whale was still entangled. At 1100 the fisherman called back to say the whale had self-released with minimal damage to the mackerel trap and with very little, if any twine or rope missing. WRS terminated travel to the area which would have been another 6-hour drive to Ship Cove |
| 22 August | Long Harbour Placentia Bay | Old pound trap, cod/mackerel /caplin? | Large humpback hog tied for 3 mos. Near shag rocks Long harbor. WRS took the call late evening 21 st and released the whale gear free on morning 22 nd . Whale |

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| | | | was seen by fishermen mid-May and subsequently over the 3-month period but they didn't know it was entangled. WRS retrieved the gear. Whale appeared to survive and was followed throughout the day and next by WRS group |
| 13 October | Topsail Conception Bay | Towing small red ploy buoy | Humpback observed from dwelling towing small red poly-buoy. WRS activated but were unable to relocate the whale |
| 24 October | Main Brook, Hare Bay, Great Northern Peninsula | Whelk pots? | Disentangled gear free by WRS. Whale was entangled for lengthy period in what was thought to be local whelk pots |
| 2 November | Bonne Bay, Great Northern Peninsula | Towing small red poly buoy | WRS and DFO searched the area for 2 days and were unable to relocate the whale |

Table 2. Minke whales reported entangled in fishing gear in Newfoundland and Labrador during 2016

| Date | Area | Gear type | Description |
|------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| 2 November | Bonne Bay, Great Northern Peninsula | Towing small red poly buoy | WRS with DFO Rocky harbor searched on the 5 th and 6 th Nov but were unsuccessful in relocating the whale. Although it is almost certain this was a minke based on description and the number of minkes in the area at the time species identification is not confirmed |

Table 3. Other whales reported entangled in fishing gear to the Whale Release and Strandings Group in 2016

| Date | Area | Species | Description |
|-----------|-------------------------|---------|--|
| 23 August | Bonaventure Trinity Bay | beluga | Solitary social juvenile beluga with cod jigger hook in lower lip. WRS unsuccessful in relocating animal |

Table 4. Leatherback sea turtles reported stranded in Newfoundland and Labrador during 2016

| Date | Area | Description |
|----------|----------------------------|--|
| 9 August | Point Lance, St. Marys Bay | Female in advanced state of decomposition 134 cm carapace. Large green garbage bag |

| | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|---|
| | | found in gut and laced into intestines |
| 22 September | Garnish, Burin Peninsula | Dead 340 kg. male animal towed in by fisherman. DFO Mar. Mam retrieved it. Necropsy by DFO showed no obvious sign of death. Carcass in advanced state decomposition |

Table 5. Leatherback sea turtle sightings reported in Newfoundland and Labrador during 2016

| Date | Area | Description |
|-----------|--|---------------|
| 2 July | Off Renewes | Free swimming |
| 10 August | Lewisporte | Free swimming |
| 2 Sept | Western end Great Island, Southern shore | Free swimming |

Table 7. Ice entrapped, stranded and dead floating cetaceans reported in Newfoundland and Labrador during 2016

| Date | Area | Species | Description |
|------------|---|----------|--|
| 1 May | Point au Gaul | minke | Dead on beach. Been dead for 2-3 weeks |
| 5 June | Tinkers Point Tors Cove | minke | Dead on beach. Been dead for couple weeks. No evidence of entanglement |
| 30 June | Cooks Harbour, Great Northern Peninsula | humpback | Freshly dead. Ashore in community |
| 8 July | St. Lawrence Burin Peninsula | humpback | Freshly dead. Ashore in community |
| 25-26 July | Bell Island | humpback | Whale reported in trouble off Bell Island late evening 25 th . Reported again morning of 26 th off Little Bell Island. W. Ledwell and J. Huntington of WRS responded and waited around a sick animal as it died while we were on scene |

| | | | |
|----------------|--|------------------------------|--|
| 5 August | Bonavista | minke | Small minke freshly dead in crevice east side Bonavista. Pictures sent. No evidence of entanglement |
| 15 August | Elliston Bonavista Bay | sperm | Dead drifting. Looks dead for couple weeks. Pics by CG helicopter |
| 12 September | Twillingate | sei | Small ~10 m Sei whale very thin ashore in Twillingate. David Boyd retrieved the animal for its skeleton |
| 20 September | Point Leamington, North East Coast | northern bottlenose | Live stranded ~10m whale moved back to deeper water by locals. WRS contacted for advice on getting animal to safe water. Whale moved on |
| 28 September | New Ferrole Lighthouse, Great Northern Peninsula | humpback | Whale stranded on shoals in distress. First reported entangled but after consultation with WRS we determined it was stranded. Whale free itself on the rising tide |
| 2 October | Lords Cove, Placentia Bay | humpback | Whale stranded on shoals between Sandy Cove and Swale Island. WRS consulted and prepared to leave for area when the whale released itself on the rising tide |
| 11 October | Boyds Cove, New World Island | white-sided dolphins | Mixed group of 10 animals with 3 calves live stranded. They were pushed back out by locals but all re stranded and died. No necropsies |
| 14 November | River head, Harbour Grace Conception Bay | melon-headed or pygmy killer | Small <3m whales (calf) live stranded and died after being pushed back out to sea. Animal not collected for necropsy |
| 16 November | 51 12N, 53 20W. NE of the Funk Islands | 6-7m whale spp; | Reported drifting by fishing vessel |
| 21-22 December | Miller's Passage, Fortune Bay | >50 common dolphins | Ice entrapped and led to safety by locals breaking the ice in the passage on consult with W. |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---------|
| | | | Ledwell |
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Table 7. Miscellaneous cetaceans reported in Newfoundland and Labrador during 2016

| Date | Area | Species | Description |
|--------------|---|---|--|
| 24 February | Admirals Beach, St. Marys Bay | beluga | Solitary social beluga in area. Animal has wounds and scars. Sent info to DFO and J. Lawson. WRS contacted multiple times as residents could not get in touch with any DFO officials |
| 9 April | Francois, South Coast | beluga | adult beluga in harbour |
| 20 May | Off Cuckholds Cove | Several groups of 20 or more harp seals | Seals swimming on their backs photographed close to shore after heading to the south east |
| 16 June | Tail of the Grand Banks 43 30N, 50 00W | 15-20 kws | Boat dragging for yellow tail approached by group of 9-10 kws with small calves, one observed as if sucking. A group of 4-5 males was observed circling the group |
| 10 July | Cape Freels/Straits | Kw groups | Observed free swimming – J. Lawson |
| 25 July | Admirals Beach | beluga | Solitary social beluga still in and around community. Concerned citizen called |
| | | | |
| 2 September | Summerville, Bonavista Bay | beluga | Adult beluga in harbour |
| 25 September | Admirals Beach, St. Marys Bay | beluga | The solitary social beluga that has been in the community since February has an injury above its eye |

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Appendix I

WHALE AND TURTLE NOTICE

1-888-895-3003

If you have a **WHALE** or **TURTLE** or basking shark (live or dead) caught in your fishing gear, call this toll-free number and a trained crew will respond to assist you. If you see any whales, turtles or dolphins (live or dead) on a beach, please call. Should you see any leatherback sea turtles please call.