S.African rescuers free entangled humpback whale

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A Humpback whale jumps in the waters of the Pacific Oceanon August 21, 2010. South African rescuers free a nine metre (30-foot) humpback whale that was entangled in seven fishing ropes north of Cape Town.

South African rescuers on Thursday freed a nine metre (30-foot) humpback whale that was entangled in seven fishing ropes north of Cape Town.

The juvenile whale was found south east off Dassen Island near

Yzerfontein with its mouth snared by one heavy rope.

"We had to first cut away the line through the mouth... as this would have affected the whale's ability to feed in the future," said Mike Meyer of the Department of Environmental Affairs.

During the nearly five-hour rescue operation, the team attached a large flotation buoy to the whale to prevent it from diving below surface as the rescue boat approached.

"The large floatation buoy, kept the whale buoyant enough, and high enough in the water for us to successfully cut away that particular rope that entangled through the mouth," said Meyer.

The rest of the ropes in a bundle on top of the flukes and around the tail stem were also removed.

The whale was not seriously injured and appeared to be "spritely and healthy", Meyer said in a statement released by the SA Whale Disentanglement Network.

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