

Rescuers free entangled humpback whale off California coast

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In this photo taken Dec. 13, 2019, provided by Marine Life Studies Whale Entanglement Team, a young humpback whale entangled in fishing gear is freed in Monterey Bay, Calif., days after it was first spotted by a fisherman. (Marine Life Studies via AP)

A rescue team helped free a young humpback whale that was tangled in

fishing gear south of San Francisco days after a fisherman first spotted it, a conservation group said Tuesday.

The team in a small inflatable boat in Monterey Bay attached five large, hot-pink buoys to the [fishing line](#) to slow down the whale and keep it near the surface Friday, said Peggy Stap, founder and executive director of Marine Life Studies, a Northern California conservation group.

They could then cut the fishing line running across the whale's back, all the gear fell away and the animal swam free, she said.

A fisherman first saw the whale on Dec. 9, but when the U.S. Coast Guard responded, it was already gone, Stap said.

The whale was spotted again two days later, but conservation groups and the Coast Guard couldn't find it after an all-day search.

Stap said another boat spotted it Friday, when a Marine Life Studies team was nearby and able to stay with the giant mammal until rescuers arrived.

The number of whale entanglements is growing, and officials are trying to reduce them. This year, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife pushed back the commercial Dungeness crab season by a month to lower the risk of whales getting tangled in fishing lines.

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