

Whale had fishing lines 'embedded' into body: Rescue took multiple days

July 4 2024, by Brendan Rascius, The Charlotte Observer



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A whale entangled in fishing gear was recently cut free by rescuers during a multiday operation off the coast of South Africa, video footage shows.

The animal—a juvenile southern right whale—was first spotted June 28 near Hermanus, located about 75 miles southeast of Cape Town, according to a news release from the National Sea Rescue Institute, a nonprofit.

Soon after, an NSRI vessel equipped with cutting tools approached the whale to attempt a rescue.

Measuring about 30 feet in length, the animal had "a large amount of tuna monofilament long line entangled around (its) tail, flukes and caudal peduncle."

The line had "embedded into the flesh," indicating the whale had been entangled "for quite some time" and that it urgently needed assistance, NSRI said.

After cautiously getting close to the whale, the team was able to cut off most of the line, though its equipment was damaged in the process.

Before all the line could be removed, the whale—having gained more maneuverability—submerged, and rescuers lost track of it.

But, hours later, a charter vessel spotted the animal in the nearby area, and the NSRI vessel again approached it.

Upon reaching the whale, the team noticed it "moving along more freely," though it still had line wrapped around its tail and other [body parts](#).

They were then able to cut free "at least 90% of the remaining line," NSRI said, noting that the line that remained appeared to have loosened.

But, again, the animal dove back below the surface.

On July 2, the whale was spotted once more, and an NSRI vessel was dispatched to it, but the ocean conditions made a rescue attempt implausible.

"We are continuing to monitor to see if the opportunity arises to get the last bit of line off the whale," the organization said.

It's not yet clear where the fishing lines came from, but their origins will be investigated.

Southern right whales, which are found throughout the Southern Hemisphere, are considered endangered, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

In addition to entanglements with [fishing gear](#), they are threatened by [vessel](#) strikes, [habitat loss](#), and ocean noise, among other factors, according to the NOAA.

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