

## **Dangerous situation of a Southern Right whale playing with a huge plastic burlap bag in Gulf Nuevo in waters off Puerto Madryn**

Red de Fauna Costera del Chubut (RFC)

On August the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014, a group of scientists from the Patagonian National Center (CENPAT-CONICET) who were performing a whales survey in the Gulf Nuevo, observed a sub-adult Southern Right whale that was playing with a big plastic burlap bag of the type used for construction (capacity: 1,700kg). The whale was swimming below the bag and pushing it while surfacing.

Upon emerging, the bag covered its head. One of the veterinary of RFC's Stranding Network who was aboard the boat, decided to remove the bag from the water to avoid an accident as the bag was so big that the whale could have put its head inside, or the bag could have ended in its mouth.

This case received a lot of media coverage, and helped raise awareness of marine plastic pollution. The news was released in the major newspapers, TV channels and radio stations all across Argentina, and it was also spread abroad.

These actions are performed within the framework of the Stranding Network of RFC, depending on Chubut's Wildlife Agency.

