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Update on Southern Right Whale  
entanglements at Peninsula Valdes,  
Argentina (2012-2014)

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INTERNATIONAL  
WHALING COMMISSION

# Update on Entanglements of Southern Right whales (*Eubalaena australis*) in Gulf Nuevo, Chubut, Argentina, 2012-2014

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Between 2012 and 2014 five new entanglement cases were reported, four of which were sighted in the whale watching zone near Puerto Piramides, and one in front of the land based whale watching area “El Doradillo”. In total, 14 entangled Southern Right whales have been sighted in Gulf Nuevo, Península Valdés, 13 of which have been reported since the Cetacean Stranding and Disentanglement Program was established in 2009.

## Detailed case histories for documented entangled Southern Right whales in the period 2012-2014

**Case #10:** Adult Southern Right whale, sex unknown

**Date of the sighting and report:** July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012

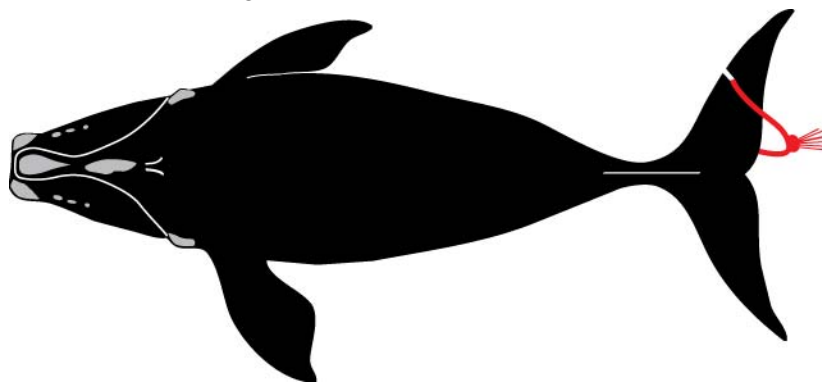
**Sighting location:** El Doradillo, near Puerto Madryn

**Type of entanglement:** Rope embedded around the right lobe of the caudal fin

**Whale activity level:** Swimming, apparently without difficulty

**Participants:** Reported by: María Cabrera (Director of Conservation of El Doradillo Protected area); Search organized by: Gabriela Bellazzi, Ricardo Orri; Participants of the search: Argentine Coast Guards, El Doradillo Park Rangers, members of the Nautical Club of Puerto Madryn, whale watching companies, whale watching guides association.

**Result:** The whale was not re-sighted



## REPORT:

On July the 17<sup>th</sup>, the Park Rangers of the protected area “El Doradillo” (a land based whale watching site) observed a sub-adult whale with a rope embedded around its caudal fin. They took a photo of the entanglement and sent it to the coordinator of the Stranding and Disentanglement Program, Gabriela Bellazzi, who alerted the participants of the Program and reported the case to the Wildlife Agency. The photo was forwarded to the Coast Guards, to the Nautical Club of Puerto Madryn, to

the whale watching companies and to the network's team. In spite of the search efforts, the whale was not resighted in Puerto Madryn nor in the whale watching zone near Puerto Piramides.



**Case #11:** Subadult southern Right whale, sex unknown

**Date of the sighting and report:** August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012

**Sighting location:** Cormorants island, near Puerto Piramides, Peninsula Valdes

**Type of entanglement:** Rope around the caudal fin

**Whale activity level:** Swimming fast, along with another whale

**Participants:** Pinino Orri, Pablo Fioramonti, Claudio Nicolini, Cristian Campos, Luis Trucco

**Support Boat:** "Deyje 2"; **Disentanglement boat:** "Esperpento"

**Result:** It was impossible to approach the whale, which was not re-sighted

## REPORT

On August the 31<sup>st</sup>, the crew of a whale watching boat observed an entangled sub-adult whale during an excursion, and reported the case immediately. The whale was sighted in front of Cormorants island, 2 km offshore. Later the same day, the whale was re-sighted 3 km off the sea lion colony at Punta Pirámide by Captain Pablo Martín, who stayed with the whale until the disentanglement team arrived at 4 pm. The whale was swimming very actively with another animal and it was impossible to approach it and try to disentangle it. The whale was not re-sighted.





**Case #12:** Adult female Southern Right whale

**Date of the sighting and report:** October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013

**Sighting location:** Punta Pardelas, Peninsula Valdes

**Type of entanglement:** Rope around flippers, head and mouth, and jammed between baleen plates

**Whale activity level:** Swimming slowly with its calf

**Participants:** Juan Benegas, Juan Manuel Barbieri; **Disentanglement boat:** “La Virginia”

**Result:** Partial disentanglement

## REPORT

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, in the afternoon, a whale with a rope around its body was reported by the Captains Daniel Rossitto and Eduardo Suarez, who were able to approach the animal and attach a buoy to the rope to make it visible. Approximately at 4:30 pm one of the members of the disentanglement team, Juan Benegas, was requested by the coordinator to locate the whale and disentangle it if possible, using the disentanglement tools donated by the International Whaling Commission after the training workshop by David Mattila. Juan located the whale and called the coordinator to describe the type of entanglement: the rope was entangled around the body, the pectoral fins, the head, the whale’s mouth and part of it was jammed between the baleen plates, which was life threatening. The whale was calm, and Juan was able to cut the rope, he cut beside the mouth first, hoping the piece of rope would eventually fall out on its own. Then he succeeded to cut the rope around the head and flipper. The whale remained calm but the calf stayed besides her making it impossible to approach from the other side and continue to cut. Therefore the disentanglement was partial. After removing the rope, we noticed it had some hooks attached (see photo below).



**Case #13:** Subadult Southern Right whale, sex unknown

**Date of the sighting and report:** August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014

**Sighting location:** La Adela Bay, near Puerto Pirámides, Peninsula Valdes

**Type of entanglement:** Fishing net around caudal peduncle and flukes

**Whale activity level:** Swimming apparently without difficulty, actively lobtailing

**Participants:** Pinino Orri, Pablo Fioramonti, Micky Sosa, Chochi Owem, Marisa Berzano, Pablo Fioramonti, Romina Bottazzi, Gabriela Bellazzi

**Result:** In spite of the search efforts, the whale was not re-sighted

**REPORT:**

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, during a whale watching excursion, Captain Chochi Owen and photographer Marisa Berzano sighted a sub-adult Southern Right whale with a net around its caudal peduncle. The following day, a search was conducted by boat but the animal couldn't be found. Unfortunately the harbor remained closed for several days due to bad weather conditions, and the search had to be interrupted, although the search efforts will continue throughout the season.



**Case #14:** Southern Right whale calf, sex unknown

**Date of the sighting and report:** October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014

**Sighting location:** Puerto Pirámides, Peninsula Valdes

**Type of entanglement:** Fishing line around upper jaw

**Whale activity level:** Swimming with its mother

**Reported by:** Lucia Alzugaray (ICB)

**Result:** Could not be re-sighted

**REPORT:**

On October 27<sup>th</sup>, during a whale watching excursion, Lucia Alzugaray, volunteer at Instituto de Conservacion de Ballenas (ICB), sighted a Southern Right whale calf with something that appeared



to be a thick monofilament line around its upper jaw. The following day, Lucia re-sighted the calf and two days later the report arrived to the Cetacean Stranding and Disentanglement program. A search was conducted by boat but the animal couldn't be found.



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