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Humpback Whale Is Stuck Off Sandy Hook

By JENNIFER 8. LEE

United States Coast Guard A humpback whale has become entangled about eight miles offshore in New York waters.

A humpback whale has become entangled in fishing gear about eight miles offshore in New York waters, the Coast Guard said on Wednesday. Until the team from [Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies](#) in New England arrives at the spot, near Sandy Hook, N.J., on Thursday, the Coast Guard has [established a 500-yard safety zone](#) around the stranded whale, [which it announced via Twitter](#).

The Coast Guard boat first arrived at the scene around 12:30 p.m., which is close to the approach to the [Ambrose Channel](#). It is not clear when the whale became entangled. The whale is about 25 to 30 feet long, and reportedly visible on the surface and breathing, said Barbara Patton, a Coast Guard spokeswoman said. However, the entanglement could be considered life-threatening.

The [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) said it encounters 25 to 30 cases of large whale entanglements each year on the stretch of coast from Canada to Florida, said Jamison Smith, the large whale disentanglement coordinator. The cases are not often easy to spot, he said.

“There is a direct correlation that the more you look the more you find,” Mr. Smith said.

Sometimes a lot of time can pass before an entanglement is even reported. “With an entanglement it can go on for months and months,” Mr. Smith said. “Sometimes it can die and sink because it’s in such bad shape. It has depleted all blubber.”

Or sometimes the whales break free, but take some of the lines and gear with them, which drags them down, he said.

“It can restrict feeding,” Mr. Smith added. “It can cause infection.”

Disentangling the whales can be a very dangerous process, for the whales as well as the rescuers. The rescuers use very sharp knives and, with the whales often in pain, they don’t realize that people are there to help, Mr. Smith said.

“They could associate that pain with whoever is right there, which doesn’t help in getting them out of gear,” he said.

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