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## Recovered Gear Analysis of North Atlantic Right Whale Snow Cone Eg #3560

Photo Credit: DFO Science Aerial Survey

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### On this page

- [Executive summary](#)
- [Event details](#)
- [Recovered gear](#)
- [Contact with harvester](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [Related information](#)
- [Photos of inspected gear](#)

### Executive summary

Eg #3560, 'Snow Cone' is a mature female North Atlantic right whale, born in 2005. She was last observed gear free on July 24, 2020, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. On March 10, 2021, the Center for Coastal Studies (CCS) aerial survey team first observed Snow Cone entangled approximately 15.4 km north of Sandwich, Massachusetts (U.S.) and removed 89.6 m (294 ft) of 5/8 inch diameter rope. CCS relocated Snow Cone on March 12, 2021, and were able to cut some of the trailing line. A second disentanglement effort took place led by the Campobello Whale Rescue Team (CWRT) on May 11, 2021, in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence east of Lamèque Island, New Brunswick (Canada) and removed 14.5 m (47.5 ft) of 5/8 inch diameter rope. Snow Cone was resighted on July 8, 2021, by a DFO aerial team, and CWRT responded by removing another 6 m (20 ft) of the trailing line which was not retrieved nor examined for this report. The last documented sighting of Eg #3560 was on September 21, 2022, south of Nantucket, where it appeared she had picked up more gear in addition to the original entanglement.

This analysis considered gear retrieved by CWRT and provided to DFO during the May 11, 2021, disentanglement operation. Gear from the March 10 disentanglement efforts by CCS is also described in this report based on gear analyses published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The retrieved ropes from both disentanglement operations on March 10 and May 11 totaled 104.1 m (341.5 ft) and did not bear any coloured gear markings and there was no visible evidence of other types of gear or markings (e.g., surface buoys or traps) to assist in determining fishery of origin. Based on the available evidence, the fishery of origin for the entanglement of Eg #3560 is indeterminate.

**Conclusion of gear origin:** Indeterminate of fishery or country

#### Event details

- **ID and/or date:**
  - March 10, 2021 (in U.S.)
  - March 12, 2021 (in U.S.)
  - May 11, 2021 (in Canada, Fig. 1)
  - July 8, 2021 (in Canada)
- **Event type** (stranding, death, disentanglement): Entanglement
- **Species:** North Atlantic right whale
- **Last seen gear free:** July 24, 2020, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence
- **Entanglement status:** Last observed entangled on September 21, 2022.
- **Conclusion of gear origin:** Indeterminate, unknown origin
- **Active or ghost gear:** Unknown
- **Harvester submitted lost gear report:** N/A

#### Recovered gear

##### Recovered gear in U.S.

Gear retrieved by Center for Coastal Studies on March 10, 2021, off Nantucket Island, U.S.:

- **Floats:** None
- **Buoys:** None
- **Traps:** None
- **Trap tags:** None
- **Rope:** 7 m (186 ft) of 5/8" diameter sink rope with beaded lead yarn (Fig. 2) and 32.9 m (108 ft) of 5/8" diameter float rope
- **Coloured gear markings:** None
- **Source:**
  - [2021 Atlantic Large Whale Entanglement Report](#)

- [2022 Atlantic Large Whale Entanglement Report](#)

### Recovered gear in Canada

Gear retrieved by Campobello Whale Rescue Team on May 11, 2021, in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada:

- **Floats:** None
- **Buoys:** None
- **Traps:** None
- **Trap tags:** None
- **Rope:** 14.5 m (47.5 ft) of 5/8" diameter 3 stranded, positively buoyant rope (Figs. 3 and 4). It was light green with a yellow tracer. Rope construction was composed of 20 twisted bundles in each of the 3 stands (Fig. 5). On July 8, 2021, an estimated 6 m (20 ft) of rope was removed by CWRT but not retained by DFO.
- **Coloured gear markings:** None
- **DFO Conclusion:** Indeterminate, unknown origin

### Contact with harvester

N/A

### Conclusion

There were no marked floats, traps, coloured line markings or other identifying information on the ropes recovered from Eg #3560, nor was there anything other than rope observed on Eg #3560 by aerial surveillance or from those aboard nearby vessels. Fishery-specific buoy line colour markings have been required for the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence snow crab fishery since 2018 and for all non-tended fixed gear, trap and pot fisheries in Eastern Canada since 2020.

Beaded lead sink rope in a wide range of diameters is available in marine commercial fishing supply stores in eastern Canada and the northeastern U.S. The diameter of 5/8 inch rope is also used in both Canada and U.S. fisheries and possibly other marine activities (e.g., aquaculture). Therefore, these rope characteristics are not a distinguishing feature linking the entanglement to a specific fishery or country.

In the Canadian retrieved rope section, the construct (i.e., number of twisted bundles per strand) was inconsistent with ropes widely sold by marine fishing supply stores in Canada,

but is not a distinguishing feature linking the entanglement to a specific fishery or country (see [Recovered gear analysis of North Atlantic Right Whale Eg #3920 'Cottontail'](#)).

### Related information

- [DFO Eastern Canada Mandatory Colour Scheme for non-tended, fixed gear fisheries](#)
- [NOAA Gear Marking for Northeast Lobster/Jonah Crab Trap Pots](#)
- [S. National Marine Fisheries Service 2021 Atlantic Large Whale Entanglement Report, Fishery Interaction Gear Analysis: E04-21.](#)
- [S. National Marine Fisheries Service 2022 Atlantic Large Whale Entanglement Report, Fishery Interaction Gear Analysis: E22-22.](#)

### Photos of inspected gear



Figure 1. Snow Cone observed May 11, 2021, in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence with trailing line to which telemetry buoys were attached by the Canadian Whale Institute. Photo credit: DFO Science Aerial Surveillance)



E04-21 image – Sink line showing the beaded lead yarn.

Figure 2. Photo of beaded lead in a section of the 5/8 inch diameter rope removed from Snow Cone on March 10, 2021 off Nantucket Island, MA. Source: U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service 2021 Atlantic Large Whale Entanglement Report, Fishery Interaction Gear Analysis: E04-21. Photos of other sections of the recovered rope are not included in the NOAA publication.



Figure 3. 14.5 m (47.5 ft) of 5/8 inch diameter light green, positively buoyant (float) rope removed from Snow Cone on May 11, 2021 in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence (Photo credit: U. Brideau).



Figure 4. Same rope as in Figure 3 showing its positive buoyancy. The irregularity in the line is a cinched loop (Photo credit: E. Trippel).



Figure 5. 5/8 inch diameter float rope removed on May 12, 2021 showing its construction composed of 20 twisted bundles in each of the three strands. (Photo credit: E. Trippel).

**Page details**