

# The Extraordinary Rescue of 'Bird', An Entangled Humpback Whale in Iceland

*In the remote Icelandic Westfjords, a humpback whale became entangled in fishing lines but was freed by local communities.*

DRANGSNES, ICELAND, October 17, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In September, a critical rescue took place in the small fjord of Steingrímsfjörður, Iceland, where a young humpback whale known as Bird was successfully disentangled from fishing gear. This operation, coordinated by the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority (MAST), local fishers, rescue teams, and [Whale Wise](#) (a marine conservation non-profit), underscores the importance of collaboration in protecting marine life.



"Bird", a humpback whale in the Westfjords of Iceland

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Entanglement in fishing gear is a global threat to marine mammals, including large whales. Without this incredible rescue effort from local communities, Bird the humpback whale may not have survived.”

*Dr Tom Grove*

Bird is named for a distinctive mark on its tail, which resembles a bird in flight. This young whale has been a familiar presence in Steingrímsfjörður since early August, feeding on fish and krill in readiness for a long migration to the tropics. The whale was being monitored by Whale Wise, using a drone to capture aerial images, as part of the organisation's ongoing whale research efforts in Iceland.

On September 11th, Whale Wise received a report from Judith Scott, a whale-watching guide from [Láki Tours](#), who spotted Bird struggling in fishing gear during a tour. Shortly after, local fishers shared a video confirming that

Bird was still alive and entangled. These first informants played key roles in enabling a swift rescue response.

Upon receiving the reports, Whale Wise launched their drone, equipped with a 7x zoom camera,

to monitor Bird from above and confirm that the whale was still entangled. The drone footage revealed a line wrapped around Bird's tail stock and scars along its body, showing the fishing line may have shifted along its body. This monitoring was guided by advice from the British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) Large Whale Disentanglement Team, who helped us assess the extent of the entanglement.



"Bird" the humpback whale, entangled in a fishing rope in the Westfjords, Iceland

In an amazing display of teamwork, three fishing boats and an ICE-SAR rescue boat arrived on the scene. Informed by Whale Wise's drone footage (showing the position of the entanglement), these trained professionals worked slowly and carefully to disentangle Bird without causing further stress or harm. After precise manoeuvring, the whale was finally free, lifting its tail and swimming back into the fjord.

Whale Wise is dedicated to whale conservation in Iceland, and continues to study the threats of entanglement through the "[Scars from Above](#)" research project. In collaboration with Dr. Charla Basran from the University of Iceland, Whale Wise is using drones to monitor and understand these threats in humpback whales. Entanglement in fishing gear is a global threat to whale populations, and watching Bird struggle in real time was a heart-wrenching reminder of the dangers these animals face. Without intervention, Bird may not have survived.

Dr Tom Grove

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