

Entanglement Kills Thousands of Mammals



TAKE ACTION ON ABANDONED FISHING GEAR STOP THE BLAME GAME WITH PLASTICS

COMMON ASSUMPTION: Plastic shopping bags kill thousands of ocean mammals and fish yearly through entanglement or ingestion. More than 100,000 ocean mammals are killed each by plastic shopping bags.

THE REALITY: The deadliest type of marine debris is abandoned and discarded fishing nets, lines and traps, not plastic shopping bags, plastic straws or plastic bottles.

A widespread and common problem, discarded fishing gear kills hundreds of thousands of whales, seals, turtles and birds annually; slow and agonising deaths.¹

Ocean mammals are four times more likely to be impacted by fishing gear through entanglement than all other forms of marine debris combined. A staggering 640,000 tonnes of plastic gear is left in our oceans each year, which could account for at least 10% of all plastic pollution and perhaps as much as 70% of all macro plastics when estimated by weight in our ocean.²

THE FACTS: SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Abandoned Fishing Gear Kills

- 71% of marine animal entanglements involve ghost gear³

¹ <https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/plastics-in-the-ocean/global-ghost-gear-initiative/>

² <https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/plastics-in-the-ocean/global-ghost-gear-initiative/>

³ <https://www.worldanimalprotection.ca/news/celebrate-world-oceans-day-2018-fighting-ghost-gear-your-mobile>

- Gear traps, injures, mutilates and kills hundreds of thousands of whales, seals, turtles and birds annually – more than 136,000 large whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions and turtles become entangled in ghost gear.⁴
- More than half the 70 North Atlantic right whale deaths recorded over the last 16 years were caused by entanglement in fishing gear or vessel collisions^{5 6}

Fishing Nets and Microplastics

- More than 70% of macroplastics (plastic pieces larger than 5mm) in the ocean by weight are fishing-related⁷
- Conservative estimates suggest 640,000 to 800,000 tons of fishing gear is lost annually worldwide.⁸
- Ghost gear, often made of plastic, can continue to trap and kill animals for 600 years.

Ghost Gear Is Depleting Fish Stocks

- **125 tonnes of fish caught = about 1 tonne of gear discarded**
- **an estimated 5-30 percent decline in some fish stocks and damage to important marine habitats can be attributed to ghost gear**

TAKING ACTION: WHAT GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO CONSIDER DOING

Actions

1. Federal Government is responsible for the fishery and needs to do more than join the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI). It needs to take aggressive action to police the industry.
2. The federal government needs to mandate electronic or other tracking devices on all fishing gear, nets, traps and lines and mandate end-of-life management for fishing gear.
3. The Federal Government needs to put in place reduction targets and a monitoring system that tracks gear losses and efforts to recover with proper enforcement.

⁴ <https://www.worldanimalprotection.ca/news/celebrate-world-oceans-day-2018-fighting-ghost-gear-your-mobile>

⁵ <https://www.rcinet.ca/en/2019/06/21/deaths-of-endangered-north-atlantic-right-whales-driven-by-manmade-causes-says-study/>

⁶ [Endangered Species Research](#)

⁷ <https://www.worldanimalprotection.ca/news/celebrate-world-oceans-day-2018-fighting-ghost-gear-your-mobile>

⁸ <https://oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/plastics-in-the-ocean/global-ghost-gear-initiative/>