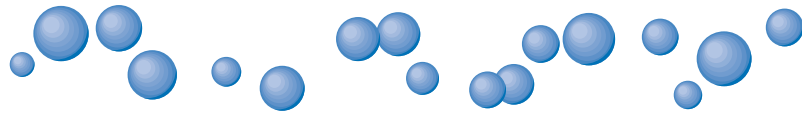


Releasing Porpoises from Herring Weirs:

Things to Remember



Porpoise in weir © Scott Taylor



IN THE WEIR

- Set the seine as slowly as possible.
- Scan the water for the porpoise.
- Check bags and billows in the seine.
- Porpoises must surface to breathe:
 - 1) Remove any weed from the seine.
 - 2) Prevent the seine from collapsing.
- If the porpoise hits the seine underwater:
 - 1) corks will move.
 - 2) bubbles of air may be released.
 - 3) quickly pull the net up to free the animal.
- If the porpoise hits the seine near the surface:
 - 1) lift porpoise with both arms supporting its body.
 - 2) do not lift by its flippers or tail.

IN THE BOAT

- Porpoises will not bite.
- Gently lay porpoise on padding (e.g. life jacket, oil skins).
- Tuck front flippers along its side.
- Keep area clear of sharp objects, especially around its head.
- Keep porpoise moist and cool.
- Use a wet sponge or shirt to gently squeeze water on porpoise.
- Avoid splashing water into open blowhole.
- Sponge fins, flippers and tail often to keep porpoise cool and wet.

If the porpoise stops breathing:

- Splash water over the head or support it over the side with both arms.
- Release porpoise immediately into open water.

If the porpoise begins to arch its back or thrash:

- Kneel over porpoise placing knees on either side of tail stock.
- Do not sit directly on the porpoise.
- Use hands to steady porpoise; be firm but gentle.
- If porpoise continues arching/thrashing or begins to vomit, release the porpoise immediately into open water (see below).

RELEASING THE PORPOISE

- Lift porpoise with both arms under its body.
- Do not drop or throw porpoise into water.
- Slowly lower porpoise into water.
- Hold porpoise with its head above the water.
- Allow porpoise to take a breath before you release it.



Sponging © GMWSRS, R. Ronconi



Sitting position © GMWSRS, D. Johnston



Porpoise release © Scott Taylor

Grand Manan Whale and Seabird Research Station - <http://www3.nbnet.nb.ca/gmwhale/>

Developed with support from the Fundy Community Foundation- <http://www.fcf.nb.ca> - For more information on harbour porpoises see <http://www.phocoena.org>

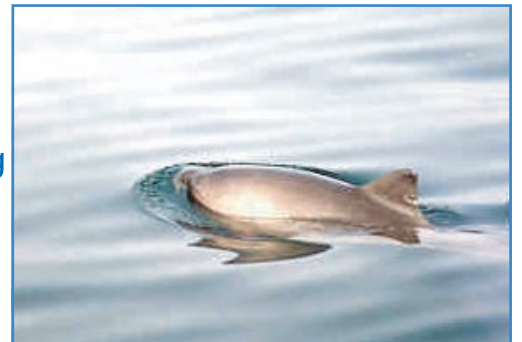
HARBOUR PORPOISES

Harbour porpoises are one of the most common marine mammals in the Bay of Fundy and are most abundant in the Bay from July to September. These toothed whales can be recognized by their small size, blunt heads, and dark triangular dorsal fins. Adults are 1.4 - 1.6 meters (~5ft) in length and weigh 40 - 70 kg (88 - 155 lbs). In the summer, adult females are frequently accompanied by a single calf. In Atlantic Canada, harbour porpoises are considered a threatened species.

Harbour porpoises occasionally swim into herring weirs at night, following schools of herring. While in a weir, porpoises can swim and breathe freely but they may become entangled or smothered when herring are seined out.

Since 1991, the Grand Manan Whale and Seabird Research Station (GMWSRS) has been working with fishermen to safely release porpoises from their weirs without disrupting herring catches. If you find a porpoise in your weir, please contact the Research Station (506-662-3804) for assistance.

However, if this is not possible, this card provides a quick guide to help you release porpoises from your weir.



Harbour porpoise © R.Ronconi

REMOVING PORPOISES FROM WEIRS

Porpoises can be removed by sweeping them out through the mouth or by seining them. In either case, a specially designed seine net (mammal seine) is available in the Grand Manan area. This seine net is made from dragger twine and allows herring to pass through while retaining the porpoise. If porpoises are seined from a weir, they should be lifted into a skiff, taken outside the weir and released as soon as possible (see reverse).

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Porpoises are mammals that breathe air through a blowhole on the top of their heads.
- They must breathe frequently (at least every 3-4 minutes) or they will die.
- Take care when handling porpoises so they are not injured.
- **RELEASE THE PORPOISE IMMEDIATELY IF YOU SEE** arching, thrashing, violent shaking, vomiting, if it stops breathing, or if the mouth or blowhole are held open.
- **MULTIPLE PORPOISES:** Sweep the porpoises out with the seine.
- **MOTHER & CALF:** The primary concern should be the safe release of the mother. Try to keep them together in the boat and release them together.



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