

# Operation Longtooth

In 2009, officials with Environment Canada were tipped to a U.S. investigation into narwhal tusk smuggling that reached across the border—and to an unlikely suspect: a retired RCMP officer. What follows is the inside story of the investigation that ensued and how it led to one of the largest punishments ever under Canadian wildlife law

By David Hayes Illustration by Pete Ryan

Early on the morning of Thursday, Aug. 20, 2009, Glen Ehler and Quentin Deering sat in a blue Chevy Venture minivan joking about how, despite the vehicle, two solidly built men with shaved heads would never be mistaken for soccer moms. As commanders of a six-vehicle sting operation, they had positioned themselves at a strategic spot outside Grand Bay-Westfield, a suburb of Saint John, New Brunswick. Officers in five other vehicles, each one different and as nondescript as the Venture, were in place, spread out enough not to draw attention.

It was a clear, bright day and from this vantage point, Ehler, director of wildlife enforcement for Environment Canada's Atlantic region, and Deering, a wildlife enforcement officer with Environment Canada's Prairie and

northern region, could see Highway 102, the likely route of their quarry, as well as a wooded area at Crystal Beach, across the Saint John River, where two more officers had under surveillance a house on Woodmans Point, about half a kilometre away.

At 7:30, Ehler received a message from the Crystal Beach team about activity at the house. The garbage was being taken out, curtains were being drawn. It looked like the occupants were preparing to leave. According to intelligence provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the target of the stakeout, Gregory Logan, a retired RCMP officer, was planning a trip to Bangor, Maine, that day to deliver contraband. The day before, the officers at Crystal Beach had observed him carrying a narrow, two-metre-long

object wrapped in a black material to a beige 2004 Chevy Avalanche parked in the driveway, where he affixed it to the underside of the truck.

Ninety minutes later, Logan and his wife Nina left their home. As anticipated, they pulled out onto Highway 102, which, a little more than an hour later would bring the couple to the Milltown Port of Entry at Calais, Maine, unaware that a caravan of carefully positioned vehicles was tracking their route. One of the chase vehicles would follow for a while, then exit and fall to the back of the pack as another took over, so Logan would never look in his rear-view mirror and see the same vehicle behind him for long.

In the language of crime novels, the noose was tightening.

Two years later, on Dec. 14, 2011, Environment Canada charged Gregory and Nina Logan with 28 counts under the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (known by the ungainly acronym WAPPRIITA). While the charges against Nina Logan were later dropped, the investigation — dubbed Operation Longtooth and also involving the enforcement divisions of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration — would eventually lead to a guilty plea and acknowledgement by Gregory Logan that between 2003 and 2009, he illegally exported and sold an estimated 250 narwhal tusks to U.S. buyers for a total price of nearly \$700,000.

The smuggling of narwhal parts — tusks, skulls, teeth and carved ivory handicrafts made from tusks — is only a small part of the \$3-billion illegal global trade in wildlife and wildlife parts, but it involves one of the most mysterious and exotic of all marine mammals. No less exotic is the story of Operation Longtooth itself, which revealed a shadowy network of antique dealers, curiosity collectors and informants. Most important of all, it was the biggest success story in the history of Environment Canada's wildlife enforcement branch and a model of cooperation between two countries — a case study of the enforcement side of wildlife protection.

**The team would need the extra hands, as a lot can go wrong on any surveillance operation... And Logan was no ordinary suspect**

Calais, Maine, is a sleepy town of about 3,000 best known for having three border crossings into the U.S. over the St. Croix River from St. Stephen, New Brunswick. At 10:33 a.m., the Logans lined up in a queue of cars at one of the crossings and 10 minutes later were waved through, as had been pre-arranged by U.S. authorities. According to the original plan, that should have been where Ehler, Deering and their team handed off the surveillance to their U.S. counterparts with whom they were in constant contact. But some of the U.S. officers had been involved in another big case the previous evening and were running late. That posed no problem. Although once in the U.S. the investigation fell under the jurisdiction of U.S. Fish and Wildlife officers, the Canadians had been authorized to work under their direction if necessary. Custom officials let them pass.

The team would need the extra hands, as a lot can go wrong on any surveillance operation. If Logan became aware he was being followed and discontinued his smuggling operation, authorities on both sides of the border would have a weaker case to present in court. And Logan was no ordinary suspect. As a former RCMP officer, the wildlife officials feared he might wise up to the events unfolding around him. “We knew he had general duty experience with the RCMP,” says Deering, a six-foot tall, 42-year-old who has a degree in conservation law enforcement. “And we knew that later he was with major crimes. But we didn’t know how much surveillance training he’d had, or whether he’d been trained in counter-surveillance. He might be taking steps to determine whether he was being investigated. We didn’t want to draw any attention to our operation.”

At 9:55 (because of the switch from the Atlantic to the Eastern time zone, it was now an hour earlier in Maine), the Logans drove to a bank in Calais and from there pulled into the parking lot of Marden’s, a Maine-wide chain of discount department stores. Logan, on this day wearing sneakers, khaki shorts and an off-white T-shirt, entered the store with



his wife. Deering followed close behind to keep an eye on them while Ehler, still outside, watched as a U.S. Fish and Wildlife officer approached the driver’s side of the truck, knelt down and looked underneath. He later confirmed that the long, black-wrapped object was still there, affixed with electrical ties.

Half an hour later, the Logans left the parking lot, drove south on Main Street and turned west onto Route 9 for the roughly two-and-a-half-hour drive to Bangor. Close behind was “the eye,” the lead car in a surveillance operation that follows the target, describing streets, key buildings and landmarks to the rest of the team. Or, in this case, the panoramic views of spruce forests, glacial bogs and blue berry barrens along a twisting, two-lane highway known as “the Airline.”

At noon, about halfway to Bangor, Logan abruptly pulled off the highway, made a U-turn and backed along a side road into a secluded, heavily forested area. The current rotation meant Ehler and Deering were following “the eye” (a two-man team from U.S. Fish and Wildlife), who drove past, reporting what Logan had done. Ehler and Deering had to make a quick decision. Was Logan doing a “heat check,” to see if he was being followed? How to handle the line of vehicles — the Canadians and several U.S. Fish and Wildlife officers — following at staggered distances? If Logan became suspicious, he might abort the trip. Driving casually past the side road, they instructed the others, “Hold back until he’s on the road again,” and pulled into a dirt road farther down the highway where they could see Logan’s Chevy once he resumed the drive to Bangor.

One of the Fish and Wildlife officers managed to make his way through the woods and got close enough to see what Logan was doing. He had taken from underneath his truck the long object and packaged it into a plywood box, which he then put in the back of his truck. “He’s mobile again,” the officer reported, but Ehler and Deering relaxed only when they saw Logan was back on the highway

toward Bangor. The surveillance resumed. (Where Logan had parked, the officer recovered plastic electrical ties and observed long indentations in the soil and grass.)

At 1:15, Logan took the Banair Road exit to Bangor and drove directly to a FedEx outlet.

“By the time we reached Bangor,” Ehler recalls, “U.S. agents started appearing from out of nowhere. There were vehicles coming from left and right, so we held back and let them take over.”

At FedEx, Logan went inside with the long plywood box. Once he’d left, U.S. investigators inspected the shipment and found two narwhal tusks, one measuring 1.8 metres, the other 2.2 metres. Mission accomplished.

For centuries, we’ve been fascinated by the mysterious, romantic narwhal, the “unicorn of the sea.” A medium-sized whale with a distinctive spiral tusk that can grow up to three metres long, it lives in shifting cracks in the Arctic sea ice, mainly in Greenland and the Canadian Arctic.

Centuries ago, ocean-going traders sold narwhal tusks as unicorn horns for many times their weight in gold (ground up, the tusks were thought to be an aphrodisiac and a treatment for poisoning). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, English explorer Martin Frobisher, returning from an expedition to the Canadian North, presented a horn to Queen Elizabeth I, who kept it in her cabinet of curiosities. As explorers and naturalists learned more about the world’s animals and fish, the “sea-unicorn” was identified as a whale with a long tusk. The Swedish zoologist Carl Linnaeus, in his seminal *Systema Naturae* written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, called it “narwhal” from the Norse word nar, or “corpse,” referring to the mammal’s mottled grey pigmentation thought to resemble the flesh of a drowned sailor.

Today, with an estimated population of 75,000 to 80,000, the narwhal is identified as a species of “special concern” by the Committee on the Status of Endangered

IN DETAIL

## The Tale of the Tusk

The narwhal tusk one of nature's most mysterious creations. Actually a tooth that erupts out of the upper left jaw, it is similar to a walrus or elephant tusk — except that it is the only tusk that grows straight. The purpose of the tusk, meanwhile, is the subject of debate. Some scientists argue that, because the tusks are packed with nerves, they are sensory organs to help narwhal survive in the dark ocean. But if that were the case, others counter, one would expect females to grow tusks as well, which occurs only rarely.

Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), meaning that narwhal are not “threatened” or “endangered,” but do face risks. The Inuit are permitted to harvest a restricted number — they use the skin, meat, organs and blubber (the top layer — the maqtaq — is a prized delicacy) and sell the tusks or fashion them into art. Tusks sold in Canada must carry tags indicating they were obtained in a legal Inuit hunt and generally fetch around \$125 per foot. But the big money is in resale to collectors in countries with import bans such as the U.S., where the trade is prohibited (with a few specific exceptions) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and the Marine Mammals Protection Act. Restrictions also exist in a number of other countries because narwhal are listed in the 170-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Despite layers of regulation and controls, it is possible to legally buy and sell narwhal tusks or other parts, but it requires a lot of documentation.

Reputable sellers won't touch a tusk that doesn't come with a harvest tag, which keeps track of the number of narwhals killed to ensure hunters don't go over the annual quota. A marine-mammal transportation licence is required to take tusks out of Nunavut. To remove them from Canada to one of the countries where it's legal to import them requires various CITES approvals and permits from Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Still, for anything desirable and potentially profitable, even if it's heavily regulated and subject to criminal codes (from drugs to weapons to exotic animal parts), there will

be a black market. This is what lured a former RCMP officer over to the wrong side of the law.

The man at the centre of this case is an enigmatic figure. Greg Logan has a medium build and pale complexion, and grew up in Saint John, the only boy in a family of three children. After high school, he worked for the New Brunswick Telephone Co. for a year before joining the RCMP in 1978, when he was 20. After training at “Depot,” the RCMP academy in Regina, he was posted to a detachment in Valleyview, Alberta, in 1979, followed by postings to Edmonton, the Leduc rural detachment and the Leduc freeway patrol. In 1982, he was transferred to the eastern Northwest Territories (now Nunavut), where he served in Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit) and then Sanikiluaq until 1985. From that year until 2003 he served in a variety of capacities with the detachment in Grande Prairie, Alberta.

When the case against Logan made it to the New Brunswick Provincial Court in 2013, a profile emerged of a dedicated and respected officer who had received positive evaluations throughout his career, but also one who had paid a price in the line of duty. In an affidavit filed in court, Logan described his experiences as a law enforcement officer that led to a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder in 2004. Among the events:

- *Extracting a human skull that was smeared to the pavement following a motor vehicle fatality and placing it into a body bag with the deceased's remains.*
- *Using a hack saw to separate and seize a segment of a deceased's leg, which was frozen in ice...following an airplane crash...*
- *Finding a deceased boy on a sand bar, whose leg detached from his body in my hands as I moved him from the scene onto a boat...*
- *Attending on the scene of a bear attack and finding a young woman whose foot was almost totally severed and her stomach area clawed open...*
- *Attending an industrial accident where an individual unloading wood chips from a tractor trailer unit by-passed a procedure to save time and as a result was decapitated.*

Logan suffered physical injuries, too. In 1979, his cruiser hit a moose while he was on patrol, resulting in two fractured vertebrae in his neck and severe damage to his shoulder blade. (After the accident, he spent time recuperating in Saint John, where he married Nina, with whom he raised a family.) Over the years, following altercations with suspects and two more car accidents while on duty, he ended up with a torn rotator cuff in his right shoulder and a lower back injury. He also suffered hearing loss and tinnitus after a shotgun was fired through the wall of an apartment where he was investigating a crime. (Logan needed hearing aids following this incident.) After a medical examination in 2000, the RCMP determined that his injuries were serious enough that he couldn't go back to his previous role as an officer. The force assigned him to an administrative position until 2003, when he completed 25 years of service and qualified for a pension. He was 45 years old.

It was during the early 1980s, while posted to the Eastern Arctic, that Logan became aware of narwhal tusks, which can be bought in some remote communities in the gifts shops of local co-ops such as the Koomiut Co-operative Assoc. Ltd. in Kugaaruk (formerly Pelly Bay) and Naujat Co-operative Ltd. in Repulse Bay. According to the background presented by his lawyer, Brian Greenspan, in court appearances in 2013, Logan bought some tusks for himself, for family members and friends and, eventually, began selling them legally on “a modest commercial basis” within Canada.

The larger question, of course, is why Logan's initial dabbling became an illegal enterprise. At sentencing — Logan pleaded guilty to seven counts under the wild animal and plant protection act, forgoing the need for a full trial — Greenspan reminded the judge of Logan's long record as a law enforcement officer, explaining that after his injuries essentially forced his retirement, he “ended up with a significant impairment of his enjoyment of life and... pain and suffering that he continues to have on an ongoing basis.” Greenspan added, “that's not meant to excuse his involvement in these offences...” although the statement suggested a link between Logan's pain and suffering and his decision to make money by illegally selling narwhal tusks to U.S. clients.

“Mr Logan comes before the Court and has to, perhaps, cash out on the good that he did in the community and the contributions he made in the community and balance that against his infraction...” Greenspan continued. Logan “finds himself in a situation where he accepts... the fact that he became a law breaker rather than a law enforcer and that is indeed a terrible experience for him...”

Concluding, Greenspan said, “[U]ntil he discovered the Internet and the market for these tusks in the United States he really didn't have any thought about exportation. And all of a sudden a modest side hobby became a bit of a supplement to his medical and RCMP pensions...”



**Tusks sold in Canada must carry tags indicating they were obtained in a legal Inuit hunt and generally fetch around \$125 per foot**

The origins of Operation Longtooth can be traced to 2004, when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was alerted by customs officials at JFK International Airport to a package, sent from Odessa by a Ukrainian named Andriy Mikhalyov, with a label that read “tooth of white whale” (a reference to Melville's fictional sperm whale, Moby Dick). It contained 548 sperm whale teeth, which, like narwhal tusks, are banned under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. An investigation revealed that one of Mikhalyov's clients was Nantucket-based David Place, who sold touristy, maritime-related items from his antique shop while operating a more profitable shadow business dealing in sperm whale teeth and narwhal tusks. On eBay, Place listed his products — with little subtlety — as being a “whale of a deal,” or having “a nice ivory colour.”

Among the evidence gathered by investigators and filed in court was a May 17, 2001, email Place sent to one of his narwhal tusk suppliers, a Canadian named Nina Logan. It read in part: “Next time we do this I would like to get whatever documents I can certifying that these were taken legally, but for now I have managed without.”

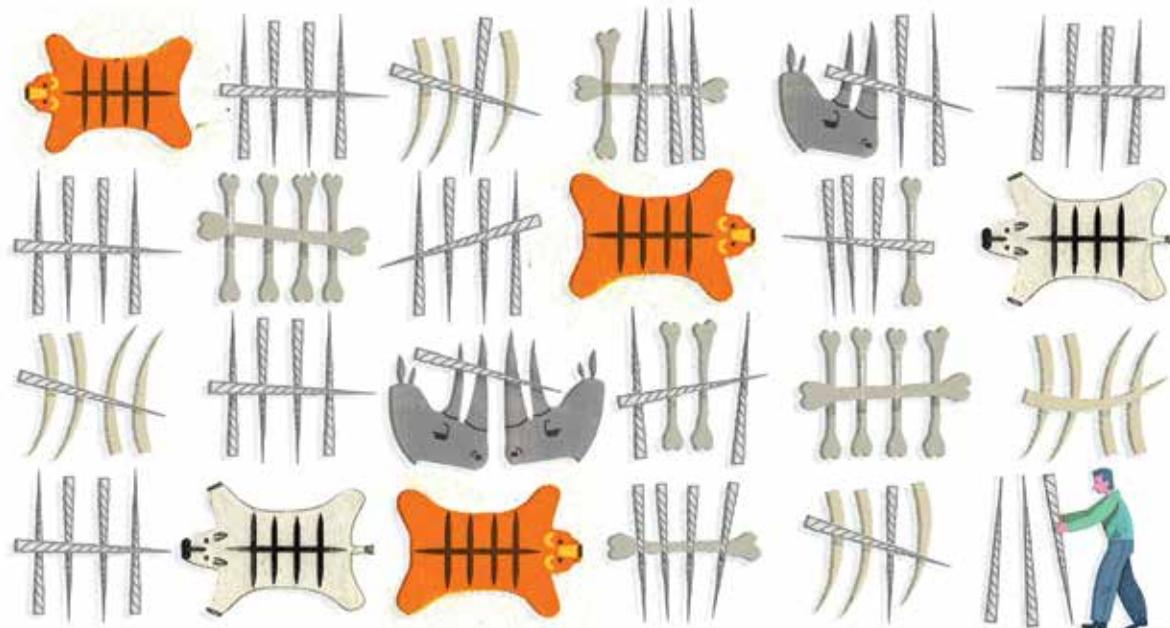
Nine days later he had another exchange with Logan: Place: “...every time I mention the tusks to anyone they want to know if they have papers.”

Logan: “...your customers are very correct in requesting supporting documentation.”

Place: “I can still sell them without papers to other customers, but it would be wonderful if everything were above board with papers, if you know what I mean!”

No one would have a hard time parsing Place's meaning, but the Logans couldn't provide supporting documentation for items being smuggled into the U.S. If Place was concerned, it didn't stop him from continuing to do business with them.

In March of 2011, Place was convicted in a Boston court of illegally importing and trafficking in sperm whale teeth and narwhal tusks. He received a 33-month prison sentence.



## In the spring of 2009, U.S. Fish and Wildlife officers contacted Quentin Deering at Environment Canada and told him they'd learned of a Canadian who was smuggling narwhal tusks from the North to American buyers

(After being arrested entering the U.S., Mikhalyov — Place's source in Odessa — served a nine-month sentence on related charges and was deported to the Ukraine.)

But the investigation — in the U.S., separately code-named Operation Nanook — was ongoing. In January 2013, Jay Conrad, a former roofing contractor and collector of shrunken heads (who, coincidentally, lived on Canada Road in Lakeland, Tennessee, a suburb of Memphis), was arraigned on 29 conspiracy and money-laundering charges relating to the smuggling of narwhal tusks. According to U.S. authorities, Conrad and a partner who lived nearby, Eddie Thomas Dunn, paid Logan \$126,000 for 135 tusks, in cheques or money orders that were sent to a mailing address in Bangor or directly to the Logans in Canada.

Conrad's windfall from marketing the tusks to buyers in Alaska, Washington State, Ohio, Florida and Tennessee was estimated to be between \$400,000 and \$1 million, and Dunn's at \$1.1 million. (Dunn, who would later play a key role in the investigation of Logan, plea-bargained and agreed to cooperate with authorities for a reduced sentence.)

Meanwhile, federal agents had come to realize that an informant, Andrew Zaruskas, who had been providing them with information about David Place's illegal dealing in sperm whale teeth, was also part of the narwhal tusk conspiracy. Zaruskas, who ran a construction business, but also collected and sold antiques, bought an estimated 33 tusks from Logan between prior to 2008, according to U.S. officials. On Feb. 17, 2010, during a meeting at Café Vivaldi in Union, New Jersey, federal agents confronted him about his involvement with Logan. In an increasingly confused interview, Zaruskas said he thought the tusks came legally from existing collections in the U.S., but also claimed he didn't know it was illegal to import tusks from Canada. At another point, unable to deny knowing the Logans, he explained that he didn't know how Logan brought the tusks across the border (a logging truck, maybe, a boat...?) He was later convicted on six counts of smuggling and money laundering and given a 33-month prison sentence plus a \$7,500 fine.

In the spring of 2009, U.S. Fish and Wildlife officers contacted Quentin Deering, at Environment Canada's Prairie and northern region office in Yellowknife. They told him they'd learned of a Canadian who was smuggling narwhal tusks from the North to American buyers. What began as an investigation out of the northern region office — Logan's primary residence was in Grande Prairie — shifted to the Atlantic region when it turned out Logan

was operating his narwhal tusk business out of a second home in New Brunswick.

"So, we started collecting as much information about him as we could find," says Glen Ehler, a compact, engaging 44-year-old Maritimer with a master's degree in sociology and specialization in criminology.

For a large-scale operation like Operation Longtooth, Ehler needed to assemble a team with specific skills and previous surveillance experience. He and Deering would be the leads, coordinating with U.S. officials and documenting the operation. Two more officers were recruited from Nova Scotia, along with two from Ontario, one from New Brunswick and one from Newfoundland and Labrador.

Deering had extensive experience with the many kinds of legal paperwork required for an investigation like this. Among other things, these included search warrants and production orders (similar to an American subpoena, they compel institutions like banks, Internet service providers and phone companies to make information available to authorities). Fisheries and Oceans supplied records showing Logan's name on a large number of legal narwhal tusks shipments within Canada. Air Canada's records documented Logan's trips from his home in Grande Prairie to New Brunswick coinciding with records from Canadian Border Services Agency that his trips to the U.S. via the border crossing at Calais, Maine, matched FedEx shipments of narwhal tusks sent to U.S. buyers. Logan sometimes arranged for payments to be sent to a post office box at a UPS outlet in Ellsworth, 45 minutes south of Bangor, and he deposited them in various accounts, including one at Maine's Machias Savings Bank and one at the First Bank of Conroe in Texas, where, according to Canadian investigators, he owned a third property. (In Canada, Logan had U.S. dollar accounts with Scotiabank and Alberta's ATB Financial.)

"One thing Mr. Logan was good at was adopting different personas for all the people he dealt with," says Kim MacArthur, one of the team of Canadian wildlife enforcement officers who worked on the file. "If you spoke to each of them separately, they'd all tell different stories about the man they knew as Mr. Logan."

Missing, however, was clear evidence of how Logan did the smuggling. That's why the next step was monitoring when a shipment was promised to a U.S. buyer and mounting a mobile surveillance operation to follow him across the border. That wasn't hard to do. Eddie Dunn had agreed to a plea bargain and was helping U.S. authorities. Dunn arranged to buy tusks from Logan and alerted authorities to the deal.



**A**fter Ehler and Deering followed Logan to Bangor in August 2009, they began gathering more evidence. By the end of 2009, their counterparts in the U.S. told them that Logan might soon become suspicious, so Deering arranged for search warrants and, on Dec. 17, officers entered Logan's home in Grande Prairie and his residence in New Brunswick. Along with seizing the Chevrolet Avalanche he'd used for the Maine trip, investigators also took a utility trailer that he often attached to the back of the truck. It had been modified with a hidden compartment suitable for concealing narwhal tusks. They also found packing materials, including shipping tubes, packing sleeves and plywood panels, identical to those found among the possessions of Logan's U.S. buyers.

On Dec. 14, 2011, Gregory and Nina Logan were charged with violating the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (WAPPRIITA). The case focused on approximately 250 tusks and eight different U.S. buyers (not all were charged), involving 46 different transactions over seven years, for which Logan was paid nearly \$700,000, representing a profit of \$385,000. After plea negotiations between the

Crown attorney in Saint John and Logan's lawyer, Brian Greenspan, Nina Logan's charges were withdrawn and her husband's dropped to seven.

Two years later, on Feb. 1, 2014, Logan was sentenced to four months of house arrest followed by four months under a curfew as well as a fine of \$385,000, the highest ever levied under WAPPRIITA. He was also prohibited from possessing or purchasing marine mammal products for 10 years, and he lost the truck and a trailer he'd used to transport tusks to the U.S. He faces further charges in the United States, having lost an appeal of an extradition order against him in October. (Logan's lawyer, Greenspan, had argued the U.S. charges essentially duplicated the Canadian charges, thus violating Logan's right not to face "double jeopardy" — being convicted twice for the same offence.)

As for Operation Longtooth, it stands as a dramatic example of the challenge of enforcing laws to protect wildlife and the international complexities it can involve. For Environment Canada's Ehler, it also sends "a strong message to those who engage in this type of activity that they will be caught." Above all, it stands as an example of what can be achieved — and a potent reminder of why it matters. 🐋