

Adult right whales can range anywhere from 45-55 feet in length, with calves reaching 15-20 feet long. They can be distinguished from other whales by their “V” shaped water blows that come from their blowhole, in addition to the absence of a dorsal fin. They have black skin with white rough patches, or callosities.

Protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1973, Northern Right Whales are the rarest whales in the world. They can be found in the coastal waters of the southeastern states in the winter months, from December through March. Frequently lying at the surface, right whales are particularly vulnerable to ship collisions, and extreme caution should be taken if a right whale is spotted. This includes slowing down boat activity, moving out of the animal’s way, and contacting authorities immediately.

Northern Right Whale habitat is often near shore in shallow water or in large bays. This makes them susceptible to stranding on shore. Strandings can result from infections that affect their ability to use echolocation, however the habitat in which they dwell can also be the culprit. If the water is rough, the animal may swim too close to the shore, becoming stranded. If water or sand enters the blowhole this may cause the animal to drown if they are stranded lying on their side.

The Northern Right Whale Sighting Network should be contacted when a right whale is sighted. Keeping track of whales and knowing how to identify them is critical in the species’ survival. If you see a right whale, please call them immediately at 1-888-97WHALE.

Other links about the Northern Right Whale

<http://nmml.afsc.noaa.gov/education/cetaceans/right2.htm>

<http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/swcbd/species/right/nprw1.html>

http://www.floridamarine.org/features/view_article.asp?id=18051