

RIGHT WHALE NEWS

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HOWARD ELLIOTT WINN, 1926-1995

Dr. Howard E. Winn, 69, died suddenly and unexpectedly on Sunday, August 13, 1995 at his home while working in the gardens which were his passion. He is survived by his wife, Susan L. Hammen-Winn, four sons and three grandchildren. He was a Professor of Oceanography and Zoology at the University of Rhode Island for the last, 30 years, after ten years on the faculty at the University of Maryland. During that time he was major professor for 22 master's students, 27 doctoral students and 7 current students; and he authored over 160 scientific publications.

Though most of us knew him best internationally recognized authority on Whales his training and early research focused on the ecology, behavior and acoustics of fishes, and he was president of the Animal Behavior Society in 1966. Howard was a prime mover in getting significant funding for North Atlantic right whale research. It was his "rabble rousing" at an International Whaling Commission workshop in Boston in 1983 that eventually led Congressional designation of right whale research as a line item in the NOAA budget - which is now evidenced in an order-of-magnitude increment in our understanding, numerous publications, an approved recovery plan, two recovery implementation teams and a glimmer of hope for the right whale's future.

A fund has been established to plant a memorial garden in Howard's memory on the Narragansett Bay Campus of the University of Rhode Island (URI). Donations, payable to Howard E. Winn Memorial Fund," may be sent in care of Jane Miner, URI Graduate School of Oceanography, Narragansett, RI 02882-11g7.

*Robert D. Kenney
Graduate School of Oceanography
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NMFS TO PURSUE RIGHT WHALE APPROACH RESTRICTIONS

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is planning to proceed with rulemaking to protect the northern right whale from close approaches by vessels. The rulemaking process was initiated by a petition submitted by Max Strahan of the conservation organization, Green World; the NMFS published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on December 27, 1994. The details of what NMFS will propose will, of course, not be known until they are officially released but the establishment of a minimum approach distance modeled after Massachusetts's 500 yard rule and the NMFS rule for humpback whales near Hawaii is expected. The original petition requested a 500 yard minimum approach distance for right whales. The NMFS is also considering seasonal speed restrictions in critical habitats as part of their proposal. The Proposed Rule is expected to be published in the Federal Register near the beginning of 1996.

RIGHT WHALE CRITICAL HABITATS TO APPEAR ON NOAA CHARTS

Thanks to the diligent efforts of Mike Payne, Acting Director of NMFS' s Marine Mammal Division, navigation charts will soon depict right whale critical habitats off Massachusetts, Georgia and northern Florida. The presence of such information on navigation charts should result in a significant improvement in the advance notice to mariners about the need to take precautionary measures to avoid right whales. Increased public awareness has a down side though, in that the charts may encourage directed right whale watching. The anticipated minimum distance rules (see previous item) may help counteract this potential problem.

FISHERIES NOT PERMITTED TO INCIDENTALY TAKE RIGHT WHALES

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (Section 101(a)(5)(E)) requires the NMFS to authorize the incidental, but not intentional, take of endangered marine mammals if certain conditions are met. The first condition requires a determination by the NMFS that the incidental take will have a negligible impact on the species or stock. On August 31, 1995, the NMFS concluded that it was unable to make such a negligible impact finding for the Western North Atlantic population of the Northern Right Whale and six other marine mammal stocks. NMFS also found that there was no documented evidence of fishery-related interactions for the North Pacific stock of the Northern Right Whale and 14 other stocks of marine mammals. As a result, no permit was issued that would have allowed the incidental take of the Northern Right Whale. For more information, call Vicki Cornish at NMFS: 301-713-2322.

REPORT ON THE BAY OF FUNDY FIELD SEASON

This summer was another extraordinary season for right whales in the Bay of Fundy. The weather was unusually cooperative affording us 35 days out on the water during which time we photographed over 1,000 sightings of right whales! The photoanalysis will take several months to complete, but we know that there were at least 150 individuals in the Bay with possibly as many as 30 - 50 more yet unidentified. To witness so many right whales in one place can deceive one into believing that the population is growing quickly. Unfortunately, we documented only seven calves this year from all regions; only three of those showed up in the Bay.

The large concentration of right whales in the area has attracted increasing numbers of whale watchers over the past several years. In 1992, there were three or four whale watching boats approaching right whales in the Bay. This year, there were as many as ten coming from both Nova Scotia and Grand Manan. The majority seem to operate safely around the whales, but the increased numbers of vessels is cause for concern.

Besides photo identification work, this year we monitored systematic hydrophone listening stations to determine if right whales make enough sound to determine their presence by remote hydrophone arrays. Although the analysis is not complete, the initial results show them to be silent when feeding. Often there was courtship activity this season and sounds were heard regularly. Also, Dr. Moe Brown from the College of the Atlantic and Amy Knowlton from the New England Aquarium initiated a dialog with Bay of Fundy Vessel Traffic Services Centre in St. John, New Brunswick, the agency responsible for monitoring and directing ship traffic transitting the Bay. Together we began alerting all large vessels in the vicinity of right whales to their presence. Twice, we witnessed large ships passing within 100 feet of right whales and the animals did not appear to change their course or behavior in response to the ship.

We witnessed a dramatic reminder of the perils of fishing gear to whales this September. We found a four year old right whale dragging over 800 feet of fishing line and floats behind it. The whale had

apparently recently swum through a gillnet lead line near the ocean bottom with its mouth open. With tremendous force it was able to break the line where it was attached to anchors and netting, but was bridled through the mouth by the line. We successfully cut off over 690 feet of line and the buoys, but were unable to get the final length of line that remains coming out of either side of the whale's mouth. Many right whales survive such entanglements, carrying lines in their mouths for years before the line eventually wears through. This animal may be in greater danger as it is still young and will continue to grow. We also saw two other animals carrying lines - both of which we had seen with the gear the previous summer. One has a single line through the mouth with a ball of gillnet trailing. The second has approximately ten wraps around the tail stock and is trailing line. The latter animal was seen segregated from the rest of the whales traveling slowly along the Nova Scotian shore in less than 100 feet of water.

*Philip Hamilton
Right Whale Research
New England Aquarium*

INSHORE AND OFFSHORE SURVEY PLANS FOR CALVING SEASON

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FL DEP) and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) are planning to conduct what may be the most extensive aerial survey ever carried out on a species of marine mammal. Starting in December, 1995 and ending in March, 1996, FL DEP and GA DNR will fly a series of onshore and offshore surveys of the Georgia and northern Florida coasts looking for right whales. The core of the surveys will be the Early Warning System flights, which will occur daily from Brunswick south to Daytona Beach. In addition, the FL DEP will fly south to Fort Pierce once a week and GA DNR will fly north to approximately Savannah weekly. Six offshore surveys will also be conducted in February; they will cover the area between Savannah and Cape Canaveral out to the Gulf Stream (approximately the 100 fathom line).

WELCOME, NEW SE U.S. TEAM MEMBERS

Chairman Mike Harris has welcomed Margie Carter, Art Glover and Bruce Parker as new members to the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale. Ms. Carter replaces Victoria Robas and Art Glover replaces Dean Cousins. Contact information for the new members is:

*Bruce Parker
Director of Planning and Environment
Jacksonville Ports Authority
P.O. Box 3005
Jacksonville, FL 32206
Tel 904630-3057
Fax 904630-3077*

*Commander Art Glover
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*Margie Carter
Port of Fernandina
Nassau Terminals
P.O. Drawer 1543
Fernandina Beach, FL 32035-1543*

Tel 904-261-0753

Fax 9042614407

Current members of the Southeast Team are: Mike Harris, Chair, (Georgia Department of Natural Resources), Ben Blaylock (National Marine Fisheries Service), Bill Brooks (Florida Department of Environmental Protection), Margie Carter (Port of Fernandina), Art Glover (U. S. Navy), Charles Griffen (Georgia Ports Authority), Lorraine Guise (Canaveral Port Authority), Virginia Gunn (Glynn County Commissioner), Wesley Marquardt (U.S. Coast Guard), Wayne McPhee (National Marine Fisheries Service), Hans Neuhauser (Georgia Land Trust Service Center), Rudy Nyc (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), Bruce Parker (Jacksonville Ports Authority), Duncan Powell (U. S. Environmental Protection Agency), Jerry Wallmeyer (U.S. Navy), and Kathy Wang (National Marine Fisheries Service).

For a current list of addresses and phone numbers, contact Barb Zoodsma at GA Department of Natural Resources, One Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA 31523-8600. Tel 912-2647218, fax 912-262-3143.

SE U.S. TEAM MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The Southeastern U.S. Team met in Brunswick, Georgia, on October 31. Agenda items not covered separately in this issue of Right Whale News included a discussion of recommended safe operating procedures for large vessels transiting the right whale calving area critical habitat. detectability of right whales from aircraft and recommendations for a monitoring program, and vessel traffic pattern information.

Entanglements: The Team also considered a draft letter to the-National Marine Fisheries Service recommending that they proceed with rulemaking to restrict the use of fishing gear that poses a significant entanglement hazard to right whales. Four members of the team voted in favor of the letter; nine members abstained, citing agency conflict. No member was opposed. Team members were urged to pursue the proposal on their own.

For a copy of the minutes of the meeting, contact Barb Zoodsma at GA Department of Natural Resources, One Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA 31523-8600. Tel 912-2647218, fax 912-262-3143.

NEW ENGLAND AQUARIUM TO CONDUCT SATELLITE TAGGING STUDY

The National Marine Fisheries Service has awarded a contract to the New England Aquarium (NEA) to conduct telemetry research on right whales in the southeast. NEA researchers plan to use a modified compound bow to fully implant a tag in the mid shoulder area of four and possibly more right whales. The tags are approximately one inch in diameter and 6 inches long. The tags will provide location and surface time information to a satellite. Researchers can retrieve satellite-monitored data by accessing Service ARGOS via computer modem. Tracking will start in January 1996, and is expected to extend for at least three months.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A LARGE WHALE NECROPSY TEAM

The Final Recovery Plan for the Northern Right Whale included a recommendation that every effort be

made to obtain as much information as possible from stranded right whales (objective 2, pp. 27 - 30). A September workshop brought together scientists from Virginia to Florida to discuss the creation of a large whale necropsy team for the southeast region. Participants saw the team as a two-tiered effort. An on-site response team consisting primarily of local stranding network participants would be the first on the scene and would be responsible for assessing the situation, deciding what was needed and responding to media inquiries. A second group of professional necropsy experts would be transported to the scene at NMFS expense to lead the necropsy effort and insure the completeness of the work appropriate to the condition of the specimen. An important component of the effort will be obtaining local cooperation, especially with regard to carcass disposal, before the event occurs. A final report of the meeting will be available soon. For a copy, contact Dr. Ben Blaylock, Southeast Fisheries Center, NMFS, 75 Virginia Beach Drive, Miami, FL 33149 (tel. 305-361-4299).

COAST GUARD'S MIKE LIEBERUM RECEIVES RECOGNITION FOR NAVTEX

During the October 31 meeting of the SEUS Implementation Team, Chairman Mike Harris presented Mike Lieberum of the U.S. Coast Guard, Miami, with a certificate of appreciation for his efforts in connecting ship operators with the Early Warning System through NAVTEX (see Right Whale News, Vol. 2, nos. 1-2, page 5, for a description of this communications system.). Lt. Commander Wes Marquardt accepted the award on Mike Lieberum's behalf. On a related note, the creation and operation of another NAVTEX tower to reduce gaps in the communications system may not be easy. Costs include acquisition of about three acres of coastal land for the facility, installation costs of about \$250,000 and annual operations costs of about \$50,000.

AGENDA FOR THE NEW ENGLAND TEAM MEETING

The New England Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team met on November 1, 1995, to discuss a number of items including: status of team membership, creation of an advisory sub-panel, aquaculture activities and potential whale interactions, sub-seabed construction methodology for connecting the Massachusetts Bay outfall tunnel to the diffuser pipes, closure of critical habitat areas (Massachusetts Bay and Great South Channel), disentanglement contract and network, the FY 96 funding outlook for the New England Fisheries Science Center, human impacts and strandings (last 6 months), the status of the MOU with the U.S. Coast Guard and American plaice monitoring. The minutes of the meeting are being prepared now; for a copy, contact Doug Beech, Chair, at the National Marine Fisheries Service, Habitat and Protected Resource Division, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Telephone 508 ~ 9254.

SIGHTING DATA WANTED

The cooperative right whale research consortium in the Northeast has been funded by NMFS to track down any sighting information that is still out there hiding in file cabinets, desk drawers, or computers. The objective is to update the "big picture" of North Atlantic right whale distribution patterns. This is particularly important, since there have been several distributional shifts or anomalies in the last few years, with potential implications for foraging efficiency and reproductive rates. We are working under the presumption that sightings with photographs suitable for identification of individual animals have

already been submitted to the New England Aquarium, so we are most interested in any other sightings of right whales, anywhere along the east coast of North America from the Gulf of Mexico to Iceland. We are especially interested in sightings from the 1990's, but all data are welcomed as valuable additions to the database. All contributors of sighting data will be acknowledged in any contract reports and/or publications, and contributors of data which are significant additions to the analyses will be offered co-authorship. Minimum information required is: date, latitude, longitude, and number of animals. Nice-to-know data include: number of calves, behaviors observed, sea surface temperature, water depth at sighting location, or associated species and numbers. We are very flexible about data formats; just ask if you have any questions.

Sighting data may be sent to: Dr. Bob Kenney, University of Rhode Island, Graduate School of Oceanography, Box 41 Bay Campus, Narragansett, RI 02882-1197. Telephone 401-792-6664; fax 401-792-6497; rkenney@gsosunl.gso.uri.edu

If you do have identifiable photos which have not already been submitted, they can be sent to: Scott Kraus, New England Aquarium, Central Wharf, Boston, MA 02110-3309.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

MARINE SANCTUARIES TEAM TO PRODUCE EDUCATIONAL UNIT ON RIGHT WHALES

Robert Kenney University of Rhode Island

Gray's Reef and Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuaries have produced an educational unit on the endangered northern right whale. The unit includes a right whale poster and a handbook entitled "From Whaling to Watching" with information covering a brief history of east coast whaling, right whale anatomy and physiology, migration, conservation and teaching activities appropriate for grade 5 and up. The 24" by 64" color poster displays an adult, with an internal view of the largest organs and muscle groups for middle school level comparison with other mammals. The poster includes a map showing east coast migration routes of pregnant females other northern right whales. The handbook and poster will be available at no charge as long as supplies last. Contact either Sanctuary: the Gray's Reef NMS at 10 Ocean Science Circle, Savannah, GA 31411 (tel. 912-598-2381) or the Stellwagen Bank NMS at 14 Union Street, Plymouth, MA 02360 (tel. 508-747-1691).

ST. SIMONS ISLAND SCULPTURE NEARS COMPLETION

In the early 1700s, the Spanish referred to what is now St. Simons Sound, Georgia, as the Bay of Whales. Presumably the name came from the right whales that congregated there each winter. Now the Bay of Whales will be presided over by permanent right whales in the form of a sculpture by North Carolina sculptor Keith Jennings. A life sized sculpture of the head of a right whale cow and a 16 foot long calf will soon be on permanent display in Neptune Park on the south end of St. Simons Island. The model for the cow is Fermata, the whale photographed in 1979 off the Georgia coast by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. These photographs were the first right whale photographs from southeastern waters to be matched with photographs of a right whale taken off the New England coast. A dedication ceremony is expected soon for the right whale cow and calf sculpture. For more information, contact Nancy Thomason, 215 Mallory Street, St.

Simons Island, GA 31522 (tel. 912-638-7282).

FLORIDA VOLUNTEERS EXPAND SIGHTING NETWORK

Under the leadership of Diane Barile and Harry Richter, the Marine Resources Council of East Florida is spearheading an effort to enlist shore dwellers from Daytona Beach to Tequesta to report sightings of right whales. The Council wants people who live facing the ocean to watch for whales and report sightings. A major goal of the program is to find out how far south the whales go and perhaps where they go for the two weeks they disappear in mid-February. People wishing to volunteer are asked to call the Volunteer Whale Sighting Program at 904952-0102 (fax 904952-0103).

RECENT SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE AND REPORTS

Blaylock, Robert A., J. W. Hain, L. J. Hansen, D. L. Palka and G. T. Waring. 1995. North Atlantic Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*): Western North Atlantic Stock. In: U.S. Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Marine Mammal Stock Assessments. Southeast Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, Miami, FL.

Department of the Navy. 1995. Final Environmental Assessment. Realignment of Commander Afloat Training Group Assets by Relocation of the Fleet Training Group at Guantanamo Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Naval Facilities Engineering Command, North Charleston, SC. pp ix & 57 plus appendices.

Hamilton, P. K., M. K. Marx and S. D. Kraus. 1995. Weaning in North Atlantic Right Whales Marine Mammal Science 11(3): 386 390.

Kenney, R. D., H. E. Winn, and M. C. Macaulay. 1995. Cetaceans in the Great South Channel, 1979 - 1989: right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*). Continental Shelf Research 15 (4/5): 385 - 414.

Kraus, S. D. and G. Stone. Coprophagy by Wilson's Storm Petrels on Right Whales. Canadian Field Naturalist, in press.

Lien, J. 1994. Entrapments of large cetaceans in passive inshore fishing gear in Newfoundland and Labrador (1979-1990). Pp. 149 - 157 in: Perrin, W. F., G. P. Donovan and J. Barlow, eds. Gillnets and Cetaceans. Report of the International Whaling Commission Special Issue No. 15. Cambridge, England. ix & 629 pp.

Marine Mammal Commission. 1995. Species of Special Concern, Northern Right Whale. Chapter 4, pp 59 - 66 in: Annual Report to Congress, 1994. Washington, DC.

National Marine Fisheries Service. 1995. Assessment of Fisheries Impacts on Endangered and Threatened Marine Mammals Pursuant to Section 101(a)(5)(E). Washington, DC.

Ohland, D. P. 1995. Systematics of cetaceans using restriction site mapping of mitochondrial DNA. Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution 4 (1): 10 - 19.

Read, A. I. 1994. Interactions between cetaceans and gillnet and trap fisheries in the Northwest Atlantic. Pp. 133 - 147 in: Perrin et al, eds. Gillnets and Cetaceans. Report of the International Whaling

Commission Special Issue No. 15. Cambridge, England. ix & 629 pp.

Small, R. J. and D. P. DeMaster. 1995. Northern Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) North Pacific Stock. pp. 88 - 89 in Alaska Marine Mammal Stock Assessments 1995. National Marine Fisheries Service Alaska Fisheries Science Center. NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-AFSC-57.

SCOPEX SPECIAL ISSUE AVAILABLE

The January, 1995, special issue of Continental Shelf Research contains a number of articles on right whales and related topics such as the paper by Kenney et al cited above. The issue is available for purchase at cost (\$34.00 plus \$1.24 for book rate postage) from Dr. R. D. Kenney, University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, Box 41 Bay Campus, Narragansett, RI 02882-1197.

RIGHT WHALE PAPERS TO BE PRESENTED AT ELEVENTH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE ON THE BIOLOGY OF MARINE MAMMALS

The Eleventh Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals will be held in Orlando, Florida from December 14 through 18, 1995. Sponsored by the Society for Marine Mammalogy, the conference includes invited symposia, oral sessions, poster sessions and other activities. The oral sessions include a number of papers on northern and southern right whale topics:

Moses, E. and J. T. Finn. Using Geographic Information Systems to create a predictive model of North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*) distribution based on sea-surface temperature and bathymetry.

Goodyear, J. D. Dive behavior and the question of food limitation in right whales.

Goldman, L. A., Mayo, C., Lyman, E. and M. Marx. A multi-dimensional resource utilization paradigm for right whales in Cape Cod Bay.

Best, P. B., and L. G. Underhill. The increase in southern right whales off South Africa, 1969 -1993.

Schell, D. M. and P. B. Best. Isotope ratios as indicators of feeding by right whales, Bryde's whales and pygmy right whales in South African waters.

Knowlton, A. R., Korsmeyer, F. T., Kerwin, J. E., H. Wu and B. Hynes. The hydrodynamic effects of large vessels on right whales.

Kenney, R. D., Mayo, C. A., and H. E. Winn. A model of right whale foraging strategies at multiple scales.

Hamilton, P. K., Marx, M. K., and S. D. Kraus. Skin lesions on northern right whales.

Brown, M. W., Knowlton, A. R., Hamilton, P. K., Mayo, C. A., Kenney, R. D. and S. D. Kraus. Age and sex structured distribution of Western North Atlantic right whales, *Eubalaena glacialis*, in five areas of seasonal occupancy.

Hain, J. H. W. and S. L. Ellis. Sightability of right whales in coastal waters of the SE U.S. with implications for aerial survey methodology.

Rivarola, M., Campagna, C., and A. Tagliorette. Watching Southern right whales in Patagonia.

~FOOKS, W. B. Northeast Florida coastal right whale aerial surveys, 1987 - 1995.

Bastida, R., S. Moron, D. Rodriguez and O. Mando. Breathing behavior of Southern right whales in the breeding area off Valdes Peninsula (Argentina).

Marshall, K., V. Rountree, and R. Payne. Kelp gull harassment of right whales (*Eubalaena glacialis*) at Peninsula Valdes, Argentina.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 14 - 18, 1995: Eleventh Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals, Clarion Plaza Hotel and Conference Center, Orlando, Florida. For Further Information (FFI), call: Dr. Dan Odell, 407-363-2662.

January 31, 1996: New England Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team Meeting. FFI:

Dr. Sal Testaverde, 508-281-9368.

February 28, 1996: Tentative opening date for Great Marine Mammals of Northeast Florida exhibit, Jacksonville Museum of Science and History. m: Ms. Cat Varvel, 904396-7062, ext. 247.

March 28, 1996: New England Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Team Meeting. FFI: Dr. Sal Testaverde, 508-281-9368.

April 19, 1996: Meeting of the Southeastern U.S. Implementation Team for the Recovery of the Northern Right Whale, Brunswick, GA. FFI: Barb Zoodsma, 912-2647218.

THANKS, GRAYS REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

The Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary has underwritten the printing and mailing cost for this issue of Right Whale News. Without their assistance, this issue would not have been possible Thanks!