



Right whales are baleen whales. Baleen are long strands of hairlike fibers inside the whale's mouth that filter seawater for krill, the tiny shrimp-like creatures that right whales eat. They use their tongues to collect the krill and flip it back into their throats.

There are three species of right whales. North Atlantic right whales live in the North Atlantic Ocean, mostly along the east coast of North America. They spend summers feeding off the coasts of Canada and the northeastern US. In winter, they head south toward Georgia and Florida to give birth (called calving). North Pacific right whales live in the Bering Sea, which is between Alaska and Russia.



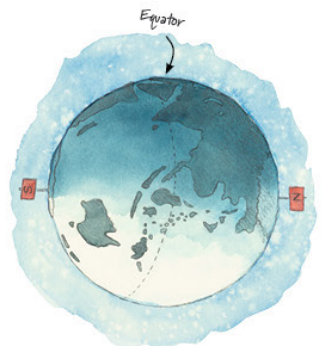
You can identify a right whale by its 'V'-shaped spray.

Whales are mammals, not fish.

The large white patches on right whales are called callosities. They are made of calcium and microscopic creatures. A whale's callosity patterns are as unique as human fingerprints.

Hunting right whales was banned worldwide in 1935, when they were on the verge of going extinct. Today they are also protected under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Southern right whales live in the oceans of the southern hemisphere. They spend summers feeding in the waters around Antarctica and winters calving along the coasts of New Zealand, Australia, southern Africa, and South America.



All right whales are migratory, moving seasonally to feed or give birth. The warm waters at the equator form a barrier that keeps the northern and southern species separate from one another.

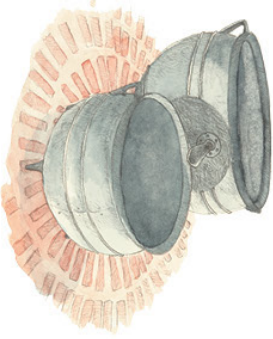
Right whales give birth to just one calf every three to five years. This low birth rate makes it hard for them to increase their population size.

Right whales got their name because they were the favorite of whalers, who hunted them hundreds of years ago. They were hunted for their blubber, baleen, tongues, and bones, which were used to make oil for lamps and machines, soap, fabrics, umbrellas, and more.

Right whales are known for their acrobatics. They love to play.

Even with protections, the North Atlantic and North Pacific right whales are two of the most endangered species in the world. There are only about four hundred North Atlantic right whales and just over one hundred North Pacific right whales left. Conservation efforts have been more successful with southern right whales, whose population has slowly increased to around ten thousand whales.

Although right whales can no longer be hunted, the two most common threats are being struck by ships or getting tangled in fishing gear. As we work to fix these human-caused problems and whales learn to trust us again, we hope to see more of them returning to our waters.



Fix for extracting whale oil

Do you live near an ocean?

What types of whales swim in the ocean where you live?

If you don't live near an ocean, are you planning a trip to visit an ocean this year?

What types of whales live there?

*We can welcome our whale neighbors home and help keep them safe.*

You can help whales wherever you live. You have a voice to do so.

Here are four actions that you can do today:

- Read and learn about the oceans and their inhabitants. Learn about what impact we humans have on whale homes.
- Write to your elected officials, like a senator or the president, about why whales are important to you and that you want our government to take steps to protect them.
- If you live in a state or territory that has beaches along the Atlantic or Pacific, write to your governor, asking them to help protect the whales that call your area's waters home.
- Help keep plastics out of waterways. All our creeks, streams, and rivers eventually empty into the ocean. Protect ocean creatures by collecting and disposing of any plastic trash you see in bodies of water near your home or wherever you travel.

To find out more about important whale conservation efforts nationwide—including the protection of right whales, orca whales, and beluga whales—visit the nonprofit wildlife conservation organization Defenders of Wildlife online at [defenders.org](http://defenders.org).

*One percent of proceeds from sales of this book will be donated to Defenders of Wildlife.*

