

# Right Whales

## Guidelines for Mariners

Precautionary measures should be taken to avoid northern right whales.

**I**t is illegal to approach closer than 500 yards to any right whale! See 50 CFR part 224.103.

See U.S. Coast Pilots for information on the location and seasonal occurrence of right whales and the complete list of recommendations.

- Check Coast Guard Broadcast Notice to Mariners, NOAA Weather Radio, NAVTEX, local authorities and local pilots for recent right whale sighting reports.
- Off the Southeast U.S., whenever practical, minimize travel distances through the critical habitat.
- Maintain a sharp watch with lookouts familiar with spotting whales.
- When the ability to spot whales is reduced (e.g. night, fog, rain, etc.), mariners should bear in mind that reduced speed may minimize the risk of vessel strikes.
- If a right whale is sighted from the vessel, or reported along the intended track, mariners should exercise caution and maintain a safe speed within a few miles of the sighting location.
  - † Reduced speed may minimize the risk of vessel strikes.
  - † Do not assume right whales will move out of your way.
  - † Right whales are slow swimmers, seldom traveling faster than 5 knots.
  - † Their direction of travel may change suddenly.
  - † They often travel in small groups that may be dispersed over an area of several miles.
- Any whale accidentally struck or any dead whale carcass should be reported immediately to the Coast Guard on VHF Ch. 16.

**In the event of a collision the following information should be provided to the Coast Guard:**

- |                                 |                              |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Location and time of accident | • Description of the impact  |
| • Speed of the vessel           | • Fate of the animal         |
| • Size of the vessel            | • Species and size, if known |
| • Water depth                   |                              |



Broad, paddle-shaped flippers

© Center for Coastal Studies



© Center for Coastal Studies



© Center for Coastal Studies

V-shaped blow; no dorsal fin



© Center for Coastal Studies

Callosities on their heads



© Lance Lombardi/IFAW

Deeply notched tail flukes

**For detailed information, see U.S. Coast Pilots.**