

Right Whale Research News

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Catalog #4615 soon after he became entangled. He thrashed around in the gear for hours, but was still entangled the following day. He has not been seen since. Photo: Delphine Durette-Morin/NEAQ/CWI. Taken under SARA Permit.

Summer Field Work in the Gulf of St. Lawrence

In the world of ever-changing Covid-19 regulations and closures, field work has been a challenge. Last summer, our joint research cruises with Canadian colleagues that were slated for the Gulf of St. Lawrence were canceled. This year, because the Canadian border was still closed, we weren't sure if we would be able to join the research cruises that were proceeding. But after months of planning, lots of border-crossing paperwork, Covid-19 tests, and a two-week quarantine, we were finally able to fully participate in the Gulf of St. Lawrence right whale research cruises

this past summer. Similar to 2019 (see [*Field Season Updates in RWRN December 2019*](#)), the field work was a collaboration between the Aquarium, University of New Brunswick, Canadian Whale Institute, and Dalhousie University and consisted of two two-week cruises in July and August aboard the chartered crab vessel *J.D. Martin*. Our focus this summer was to collect photo-IDs, drone footage, biopsy and fecal samples, and conduct oceanographic sampling. It wasn't always easy to juggle a myriad of data objectives, but we were successful in achieving a little bit of everything!

Our full team of seven scientists, a captain, and a first mate arrived in Shippagan, New Brunswick, on July 5. After several days of loading equipment, training, and other preparations, we pushed off the dock for our first survey day on July 8. Right off the bat, we encountered a large aggregation of right whales in the northern portion of the Shediac Valley and were able to continually return to that area over the next couple of weeks to collect as much data as possible. In addition to all of our regular data collection, we also assisted with two right whale disentanglement

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Summer Field..

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efforts: **Snow Cone (Catalog #3560)** on July 8 and **#4615** on July 13. The disentanglement event on July 13 was particularly interesting because while **#4615** was found entangled in the late afternoon, we had actually photographed him just four hours earlier not entangled. Not only did our earlier sighting prove that the entanglement had literally just occurred, but we have hours of photo and video footage of him thrashing around in gear and visibly bleeding. It was an incredibly sobering event to witness this whale go through so much stress and trauma. We were able to attach a telemetry buoy to the trailing gear so a full disentanglement team on an appropriate vessel could work on disentangling this whale over the ensuing days, but unfortunately the tag stopped transmitting the next morning. He has not been seen since a brief re-sight the day following his entanglement and the gear was still attached.

Throughout our survey efforts, we came across some lost crab-fishing gear in the water (the crab fishery in our survey area had already closed for the season, and all gear was supposed to be removed). With permission from the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), our team, along with another chartered crab vessel, was able to haul this gear out of the water. In fact, DFO made a big push in late July to pick up lost gear and their vessels extracted around 30 traps in total. This effort to get lost gear out of the water felt particularly important after witnessing **#4615's** recent entanglement.

After two weeks off and a couple of crew swaps, our second research cruise pushed off the dock on August 4. Unfortunately, the August leg struggled a bit more due to weather and equipment issues, but was still eventful. We quickly noticed an interesting shift in our sightings between the two cruises. In July, we had found that right whales were forming larger aggregations within the Shediac Valley, particularly around a bit of deeper water in the northern section known as "The Hole." In August, we encountered fewer right whales overall and they were more spread out along the edges of the Shediac Valley, but we did have more sightings of other species, including minke, fin, and humpback whales as well as Atlantic white-sided dolphins. There were also lots of birds throughout, including a



After receiving permission from DFO, the catch of a lost snow crab trap was released before hauling the gear aboard the *J.D. Martin* and returning it to shore. Photo: Delphine Durette-Morin/NEAQ/CWI.

rare sighting of a black tern outside of its normal habitat range! Hopefully the oceanographic sampling will eventually provide insights into whether this apparent regime shift was driven by changes in prey type or availability.

All in all, we had an incredibly productive season in the Gulf of St. Lawrence with over 17 survey days across two months. We photographed at least 108 unique right whales and seven of the 18 mother-calf pairs of the year as well as documented four other species of baleen whales. We assisted with two disentanglements and recovered two sets of lost crab gear (and directed others to several more lost gear sets). We collected two biopsy samples from **Gully (#4601)**, and **Lobster's calf** (see *Eighteenth Right Whale Mother/Calf Pair Discovered*) and two fecal samples (**#3940** and **#2904**). Our Canadian colleagues conducted five day/night sampling stations and successfully piloted 34 drone flights. We also worked with a film crew in mid-July, whose footage from our July cruise can now be seen in the recently released documentary *The Last of the Right Whales*. The summer was incredibly busy, but fruitful, and we cannot wait to get back there and do it all over again next summer! —*Kelsey Howe and Amy Warren*

Check out our blog to learn more about our adventures in the Gulf! <https://www.andersoncabotcenterforoceanlife.org/category/right-whale-research/>.

Eighteenth Right Whale Mother/Calf Pair Discovered

On May 20, 2021, Amy Tudor, a naturalist for Mariner Cruises Whale Watching on Brier Island, Nova Scotia, was on the ferry heading toward Long Island, N.S., when she spotted a whale 100 yards from the ferry. It was just a brief look, but being an experienced naturalist, she immediately recognized it as a young right whale. She called her husband and asked him to grab her big camera with a 300mm lens and take photographs from the Brier Island shoreline. Those photographs, taken over a two-hour period, show a mother right whale and a small calf moving back and forth in Grand Passage until they swam west out of the passage and into the Bay of Fundy.

On May 31, some of those images were relayed to Moe Brown of the Canadian Whale Institute, who forwarded them to our right whale team at the Aquarium. Because every mother/calf sighting is important, we reviewed the photos quickly and were able to match them to **Lobster (Catalog #3232)** in the *North Atlantic Right Whale Catalog*, a new mother for the year!

Lobster, so named because the callosity pattern on the front of her head looks like a lobster with claws, was born in 2002 to mother **Catspaw (#1632)** and gave birth to her first calf in 2015 at the age of 13. **Lobster** and her 2015 calf were seen and photographed just briefly by



Lobster and her calf in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence on August 12. Lobster's scarred peduncle is behind the calf. Photo: Amy Warren/ ACCOL/NEAQ/CWI. Taken under SARA Permit.

an observer on a dredge off Brunswick, GA, and that was the only sighting of the pair that year. What luck that a skilled observer with a camera was onboard! It seems **Lobster** has proven equally elusive this year with her second calf. Luckily, Amy was alert during that ferry crossing and knew what was needed to document the pair. **Lobster's** sightings highlight the importance of reporting right whale sightings—one never knows the surprises that a right whale sighting can reveal (see [How the Public Can Support... in RWRN July 2020](#)). Fortunately, as part of a collaborative, shipboard effort (see *Summer Field Work...*), our team saw the pair in July and August and were able to get good photographs and a skin sample for genetics! We were not able to track **Lobster's** first calf, but we will likely be able to track her second. And if this calf is a female, we will be intrigued to see

if she too is elusive in her calving years once she reaches reproductive age.

While right whale mother and calf pairs are usually first detected off the coast of the southeastern U.S., where most calves are born, **Lobster** joins a dozen or so mothers who were first detected with a calf north of the known calving area. For example, in 2017, two of the five mothers were not seen on the calving ground; they were first seen with their calves off Cape Cod in April. Whether **Lobster** and these 2017 mothers gave birth off the southeastern U.S. and were simply not detected, or gave birth in more northern waters is unknown. At least two mothers are known to have calved in northern waters. One of them, **Wart (#1140)**, was first sighted with a calf in Cape Cod Bay in January!

With this sighting of **Lobster** and her calf, the number of documented mothers in 2021 increased to 18.

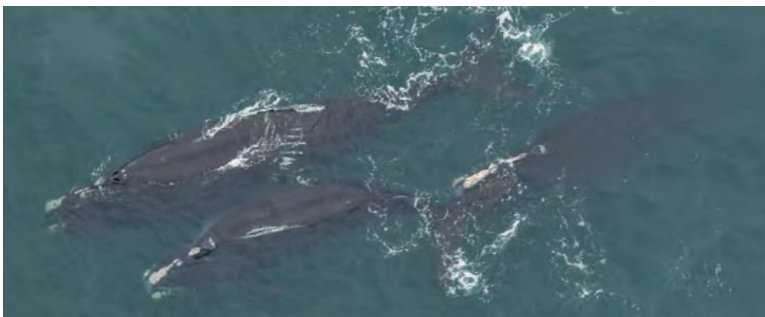
While this is above the average of 12 calves per year in the 2010 decade, it is well below the average of 23 from the previous decade. Still, 18 represents the highest calf count since 2013 and every calf brings us hope. —*Philip Hamilton*

We have some recent additions to our extended Right Whale Team: three baby boys!

- Owen, born to Brooke Hodge on April 17
- Avett, born to Johanna Anderson on September 17
- Dylan, born to Jess Taylor on September 26

Congratulations and best wishes to them all!

Right Whales Sighted Year-Round in Southern New England



Shackleton (#2440), #4714, and #4610 in the waters south of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. Photo: Orla O'Brien/ACCOL/NEAQ. NOAA Permit #19674.

The New England Aquarium has been conducting aerial surveys in a large area (~1,700 nm²) south of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket since 2011 to collect baseline information on marine megafauna in areas sited for wind energy development.* Our team has documented North Atlantic right whales

in this area in every year surveyed. Their presence has been increasing, particularly beginning in 2017, when we sighted right whales in every season. The trend of year-round usage by a portion of the right whale population has continued in subsequent years and makes this a unique habitat compared to those that

are typically seasonally occupied.

In 2021, we have identified 90 right whales to date, approximately 25% of the population. Throughout the winter, the majority of the right whales we observed were adults in surface active groups (SAGs). We observed SAGs on nearly every flight this winter and often saw multiple groups in a survey.

In early spring, we began to see right whales surface feeding, including some recent calving females such as **Derecha (Catalog #2360)**, **Boomerang (#2503)**, **Pico (#3270)**, and **Archipelago (#3370)**. We were also thrilled to see **Flounder (#2420)** and her 2021 calf in March! With only four sightings north of the calving grounds over the last 27 years, **Flounder** is quite elusive, which makes this rare sighting extra special.

We did not see any right whales during April, May, and June.

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Right Whales...

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However, in late July, right whales returned to the survey area. So far we have identified 11 unique individuals including **#4511** (2015 calf of Clover) and **#4903** (2019 calf of Boomerang), who have both been documented in these southern New England waters nearly every year since they were born.

Wind energy construction is likely to begin in summer 2023. We feel it is critical to continue to monitor right whales and other species in this habitat as it becomes further industrialized. Although surveys under our current contract have ended, we hope to be back in the air in the future.

Funding for surveys provided by Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, Bureau of Ocean Management, and four wind energy developers. —*Katherine McKenna*

***For previous articles about our surveys in the wind energy area, see *RWRN Archive* for Dec. 2020, May 2013, Dec. 2012, Dec. 2011**

Mortality and Entanglement Report

In each newsletter, we report on new entanglements and mortalities that we have observed in North Atlantic right whales since the last issue. Although this number is always concerning, we know that it drastically underrepresents what the species is actually experiencing (one study determined that for every carcass observed there may be three times that number that die undocumented). This species is in decline and until the problem of entanglement is solved, they will continue to inch closer to extinction. By sharing these stories, we are keeping you apprised of these deadly anthropogenic events.

Mortalities

There have been no new documented mortality events since the last newsletter. While this is welcomed news, it's important to remember that this update only covers the last six months and the last newsletter reported on four mortality events for 2021.

Entanglements

Catalog #4615 (5-year-old male): This past summer, researchers and filmmakers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence came across this newly entangled whale.



Catalog #3466 entangled in 2019 (top) and free of gear in 2021. Photos: Pete Duley/NOAA/NEFCS. NOAA Permit #21371.

He had been sighted only hours prior not entangled. See *Summer Field Work in the Gulf of St. Lawrence* for a description of this event. His current status is unknown.

Update on Previous Entanglements

Catalog #3466 (17-year-old male): First documented entangled in December of 2019, he was subsequently seen on multiple days in January of 2020 before disappearing from our sighting records for 15 months. Finally, in April 2021, he was sighted free of gear! This is a great example of how some entangled whales can go months or even years without any sightings.

Snow Cone (#3560), 15-year-old female): First documented entangled in March 2021, she was sighted several times in the Gulf of St. Lawrence between July and September. Unfortunately, she is still entangled and line may be tightly wrapped around her rostrum. In July, the Canadian Whale Rescue Team launched a disentanglement effort but was only able to remove about 20 feet of trailing line.

Entanglements are documented every year, and not all cases can be resolved through disentanglement. Sadly, many entangled whales are never seen again after their initial sightings, while others are seen for months or even years with gear still attached before they disappear, likely succumbing to a horrific end of life. In addition, some individuals are seen with severe injuries from entanglement but have no gear attached. With or without gear, the entanglement injuries can lead to death. We monitor these cases in order to better describe the

impacts right whales are facing from entanglements. Just in the past five years, at least 15 whales were last seen with attached gear. After their sixth year of no sightings, we will presume that these whales have died. —*Monica Zani*

Right Whale Management Update

US Efforts

Since our last newsletter, a variety of management actions have proceeded but there remain many legal efforts that could change how things evolve in the months ahead. First, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries published the final [Biological Opinion on 10 Fishery Management Plans](#) (BiOp) in May 2021. In the BiOp, there is a conservation framework that outlines a 10-year plan for reducing entanglement risk by a total of 87%. Reducing the entanglement risk will lower the rate of right whale mortalities and serious injuries. Although this framework is necessary to put various fisheries on notice about changing their present practices, it is too long of a timeline for this critically endangered species. In September 2021, NOAA Fisheries put forward the [Final Rule to Amend the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan](#), addressing entanglement threats to right whales. This is considered the first phase of

rulemaking, as the BiOp notes this will be a phased-in plan. Although the Final Rule is slightly stronger than the Proposed Rule (shifting risk reduction from 60% to 69%), again, we believe it should have been much stronger considering the dramatic decline of the species in the past several years. Phase 2 is currently underway. Scoping meetings are being held to seek input from the public about which measures should be considered to address entanglement threats along the entire coastline. We will provide comments for Phase 2.

In April 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Marine Fisheries implemented stronger entanglement mitigation measures in state waters (out to three miles from shore). These included an expansion of the existing closure to the New Hampshire border during late winter/early spring because right whales have been aggregating in these waters in recent years. Also, outside of the closure period, all fishers in state waters are now required to use 1,700 lb. rope or insertions every 60 feet throughout their endlines to reduce the chance of a lethal entanglement. Although entanglements are rarely observed, in August 2021, a whale watch vessel observed a humpback calf get entangled in Mass. state waters and eventually free itself and shed the gear. NOAA Fisheries reviewed the information in this case and determined that the weak rope parted from the heavy bottom gear and appeared to have worked

as intended. This is encouraging news!

On the vessel strike front, NOAA stated that they will implement rulemaking in the first half of 2022 to address the continuing threats to right whales from both large and small vessels. We will closely monitor those activities and provide input about what we have learned from our evaluation of propeller cut injuries to right whales, including where the strike may have occurred, the relative vessel size involved in the strike, and the fate of the struck whales. We will also provide an assessment of vessel traffic speeds along the Eastern Seaboard to understand how broader speed restrictions would reduce risk of a lethal strike. We are encouraged that NOAA Fisheries will develop these new rules.

Canadian Efforts

Canada continues to conduct extensive monitoring efforts in the Canadian Maritimes, especially in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and adapt and implement important management measures to address the threat of entanglements and vessel strikes. Although Covid-19 postponed the implementation of some of the entanglement risk-reduction measures to the end of 2022, there continues to be progress on the testing of ropeless fishing gear and 1,700 lb. rope/insertions throughout the Canadian Maritimes. In August 2021, Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) announced a \$20 million fund

to develop and test safer fishing gear for whales. Proposals were due by October 1, 2021, so as we learn more about what new ideas are put forward and funded, we will keep our readership apprised.

To reduce the chance of vessel strikes, Transport Canada and DFO expanded mandatory speed restriction zones in the Gulf and required vessels to either avoid the typical aggregation area in the Shediac Valley or transit through at 8 knots. They also maintained a broad scale 10-knot speed restriction throughout most of the Gulf and continued voluntary speed restrictions in the Cabot Strait, where right whales transit into and out of the Gulf.

Fortunately, in 2021, no dead right whales were observed in Canadian waters. One right whale was observed entangled in the Gulf, apparently in lost snow crab gear that remained after the seasonal closure. The whale's fate remains unknown (see *Summer Field Work...*).

For both the U.S. and Canada, because of shifting right whale distribution, multiple lawsuits, and increased public awareness about preventable interactions with human activities, there are finally important actions taking place to address these threats. We need to keep the pressure on our governments and the shipping and fishing industries to improve and expedite these management measures so the species can shift toward recovery instead of their decline toward extinction. —Amy Knowlton

Team Transitions

Studying right whales is a bit like entering the Hotel California, you can check in, but you can never leave! The combination of working to save an endangered species against difficult odds, side by side with really good people, is deeply compelling. For this reason, the Aquarium's right whale team has had remarkably little turnover through the years (with some of us "fossils" hanging on for over 30+ years!). However, occasionally life pulls us in another direction and we have to follow that path. Such is the case with Marianna Hagbloom, who left the project in mid-September to explore other parts of the country. Marianna started with us over 10 years ago as a volunteer and swiftly learned all the skills necessary to become an excellent field biologist and a full-time staff member. Her passion and dedication

served her well as she mastered right whale photo-identification and quickly became one of our best matchers. Her enthusiasm pulled her into many projects, including helping to investigate whether right whales can see certain color ropes better than others, and exploring the ability to detect right whales with night-vision equipment. She was game to participate in any novel research studies that came her way! Even though it has only been a few weeks since she left, our team already misses her commitment, enthusiasm, and great laugh. We wish Marianna well on this new adventure.

Before Marianna's departure, we hired a new researcher. After a thorough and competitive interview process, Kate McPherson joined us in June. Kate studied dolphins and humpbacks before finding her way to North Atlantic right

whales in 2019. She recently worked for the Clearwater Marine Research Institute, where she led their right whale aerial survey program off North Carolina. She has an MSc from Tufts University (Animals and Public Policy) and another from the University of St. Andrews (Marine Mammal Science). What a strange time to join our close-knit team—in the middle of a pandemic with the entire team working remotely! We miss the days of working together in our Aquarium office, where anyone could pop in and ask a question, or we could wander to someone's desk to review images together. Kate has done an amazing job dealing with remote training via Zoom and Microsoft Teams, and is learning the ropes quickly. Welcome to the Hotel California, Kate! —Philip Hamilton

Sponsored Whale Update

Thank you so much for sponsoring a right whale and supporting our program. We have new sightings to report for all seven whales in this issue!

Gemini (#1150) was photographed skim feeding on April 4 by the Center for Coastal Studies (CCS) aerial survey team in Cape Cod Bay.

Manta (#1507) was seen multiple times this spring by the CCS aerial survey team in and around Cape Cod Bay: twice in a SAG and once skim feeding. He was also seen multiple times this summer in the Gulf of St. Lawrence between May 29 and July 18 by Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) aerial survey teams and our own Aquarium team aboard the *J.D. Martin* during collaborative field efforts with our Canadian partners (see *Summer Field Work...*). It was great to see him around and across multiple habitats!

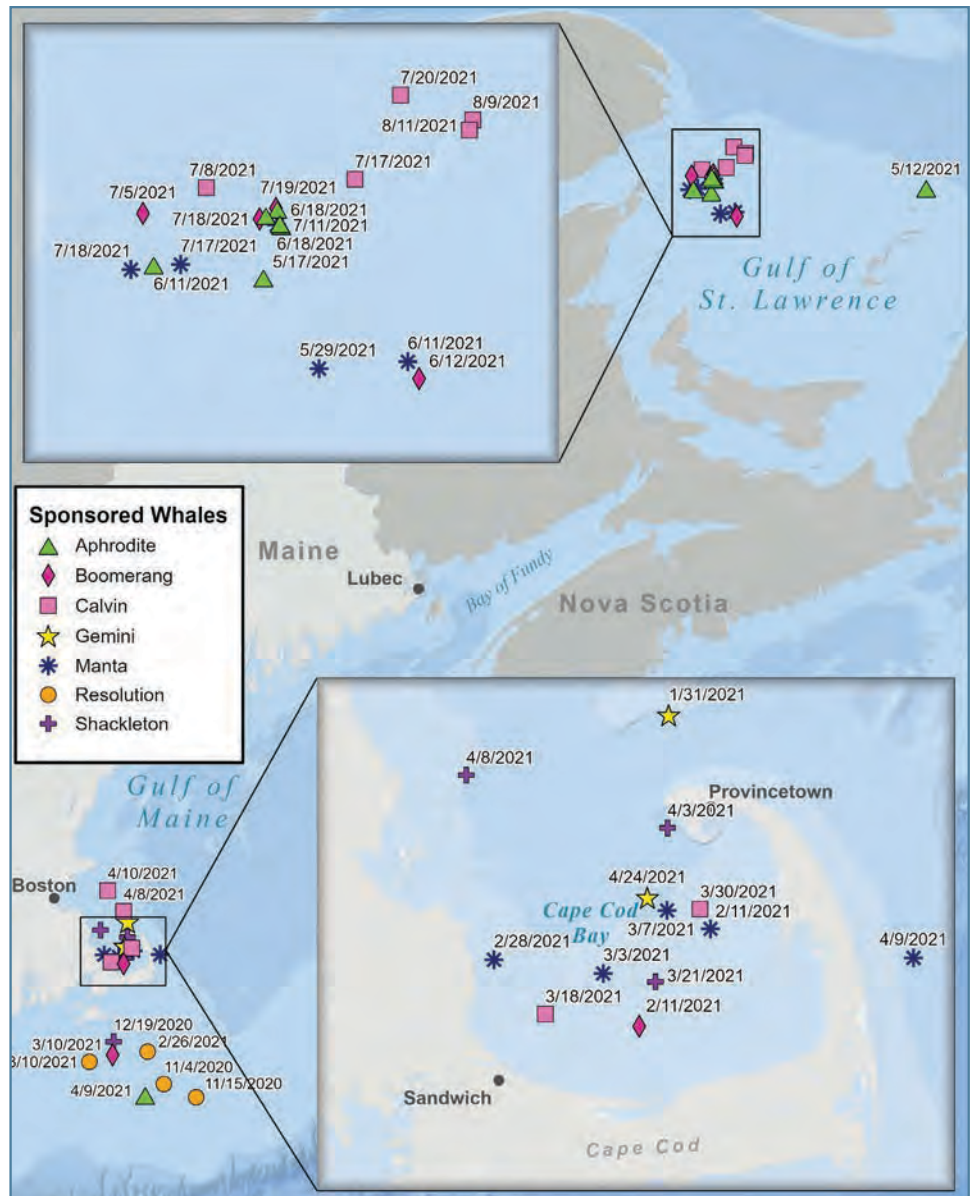
Aphrodite (#1701) was documented by NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center's (NEFSC) aerial team south of Nantucket on April 9 and then multiple times this summer (May–July) in the Gulf of St. Lawrence by various platforms, including DFO, the Canadian Coast Guard, Transport Canada, and the Aquarium team.

Calvin (#2223) was photographed subsurface feeding in Cape Cod Bay on March 18 by the Aquarium team during collaborative studies aboard a Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution vessel. She was then seen by NEFSC in Massachusetts Bay on April 8 and by a whale watch vessel off Stellwagen Bank on April 10. A few months later, she was photographed multiple times by DFO and the Aquarium team in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in July and August.

Shackleton (#2440) was seen several times in late March and early April in Cape Cod Bay and Massachusetts Bay by the CCS aerial and vessel teams. He was usually subsurface feeding.

Boomerang (#2503) was documented south of Nantucket by the Aquarium's aerial survey team on March 3. Over the next few months, she made her way north and was photographed in June and July in the Gulf of St. Lawrence by DFO and the Aquarium team.

Calvin in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in August. Photo: Amy Warren/ACCOL/NEAQ/CWI. Taken under SARA permit.



Map: Sponsored whale sightings September 2020 through September 2021. Map: Brooke Hodge/ACCOL/NEAQ.

Resolution (#3532) was seen on March 10 south of Martha's Vineyard by the Aquarium's aerial survey team.

Please check out the map to see where all the sponsorship whales have been spotted in the past year! —Kelsey Howe



Passages



Remembering Bob Murphy

I first met Bob in December 1999. I was a new aerial observer for the Aquarium's right whale survey team based out of northeast Florida. Our small team of observers drove to the Fernandina Beach Municipal Airport and were directed to an aircraft hangar to meet our pilot. The hangar housed one aircraft, multiple couches, a table, a minifridge, and a workbench. A grill sat outside and the whole scene appeared a strange mix of aircraft hangar, office, and college apartment. A tall, silver-haired, extremely tan man appeared from the back of the hangar, wearing a Hawaiian shirt and an ear-to-ear grin. He stuck out his hand and his voice boomed "Colonel Bob Murphy!" Wow, he was loud! And his demeanor commanded attention.

Born Robert Carroll Murphy, Bob graduated with honors from Syracuse University and went on to become a career Army Officer. He was a recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross and inducted into the Army Ranger Hall of Fame for his "...extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations during his time in the Republic of Vietnam...." After retiring from the military, Bob's love for flying and restoring old military aircraft became his hobby and his business. In the early 1990s, he founded Environmental Aviation Services (EAS), an aerial survey company that quickly became the go-to vendor for providing survey aircraft and pilots to a number of science-based programs from the mid-Atlantic to Puerto Rico. EAS had a fleet of former military Cessna O-2 Skymasters and each carried its own story and unique badge of honor. For example, my team's aircraft had three bullet holes that told the story of her time flying low-level operations along the Ho Chi Minh trail in Vietnam!

Bob's relationship with the Aquarium's right whale team began in the early 1990s when his company was hired to fly the Early Warning System (EWS) surveys on the right whale calving ground. The EWS surveys ran every year from December 1 to March 31 and notified mariners in the area of the presence of right whales in an effort to prevent vessel strikes. Bob also helped us out during one summer by bringing one of his planes to Maine so we could fly surveys over the Bay of Fundy during our field season.

In the right whale community, Bob was known for his love of flying, love for Skymasters, and love for a good party. He had the most epic hangar parties on St. Patrick's Day. I remember one year driving straight there from a disentanglement event; you just didn't want to miss one of his hangar parties! They always included burgers on the grill, bonfires, oysters, and lots of fun. (And one year a quick visit from John Travolta, but that's a story for another time!) Bob also had smaller gatherings that were equally important. Since the field season included the holidays and everyone on the team was far from home, he would invite all the observers to an annual Christmas Day celebration that involved good food, a jug of wine, and lots of laughs.

Bob was demanding, and you needed to prove yourself to him. When I became the Aquarium's aerial survey team leader, Bob and I had to work through some struggles. We had some growing pains, but after a short time, we hit our stride and continued to work effortlessly together for the next few years.

EAS worked with the Aquarium until 2004, and everyone on our team who flew with Bob has their own great stories about him. Bob Murphy had a big heart and I, like many, had great respect for him, his service to our country, and his service to the right whale community. He will be fondly remembered by all of us.

Bob passed away on December 30, 2020, at the age of 81. —*Monica Zani*

Tracey Dean

Tracey Dean, a long-time contributor to the North Atlantic Right Whale Catalog, passed away unexpectedly on May 26, 2021. Tracey worked as an educator for the Huntsman Marine Science Centre in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, for over 30 years. She went to the Bay of Fundy whenever she could and took photographs of right whales when possible. She contributed photographs of more than 60 right whale sightings between 2003 and 2014. Although I never met Tracey, I appreciated her passion and thoroughness when we communicated, and we shared a common love for the Bay of Fundy. Her friends say Tracey was happiest when on the water and, in recent years, she enjoyed going to sea with the *Quoddy Link* whale watch when she was able. In January of this year she reached out, having discovered some photographs from the 1990s that she wanted to share. Now that's dedication! Our condolences to all who cared for her. —*Philip Hamilton*

On July 24, renowned contemporary artist Shepard Fairey painted a mural featuring a North Atlantic right whale on a wall at New England Aquarium. The mural was part of the "Sea Walls: Artists for Oceans" celebration.





New England Aquarium

Central Wharf
Boston, MA 02110-3399



Prescott Technology Conservation Fund

This past summer, the Aquarium's Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life was honored to receive a generous bequest from the estate of John and Sandy Prescott in support of our long-standing Right Whale Research Program. John spearheaded the development of the program in 1980 during his long tenure as the executive director of the New England Aquarium prior to his death in 1998. His wife, Sandy, who was actively involved with right whale surveys and

visits to our field station, remained closely connected with the right whale team until her death in 2020 (see *Sandy Prescott in RWRN December 2020*). The Aquarium will use this bequest to develop the Prescott Technology Conservation Fund to support innovation that drives our research capacities to study and protect the species. We are incredibly grateful to John and Sandy for their commitment to right whales over their lifetimes and beyond. —Amy Knowlton

Editor

Marilyn Marx, mmarx@neaq.org

Contributors

Philip Hamilton
Brooke Hodge
Kelsey Howe
Amy Knowlton

Katherine McKenna
Amy Warren
Monica Zani

In this newsletter, all photographs of right whales in U.S. waters were taken under NOAA research permits under the authority of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the U.S. Endangered Species Act. *Right Whale Research News* is produced and published by the New England Aquarium. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Read more about our project at accol.org.

You may access past issues of *Right Whale Research News* on our website at andersoncabotcenterforoceanlife.org/about-us/newsletters/right-whale-research-news. The archive goes back to 2005, and all but the two most recent issues of *RWRN* are available. Now when one of the articles in the current issue refers to an earlier piece on the same subject, it's easy to check it out!

Thank you!

We would like to thank all the individuals, organizations, and schools that continue to support our research with annual sponsorships and donations. In these difficult economic times, with federal research budgets shrinking, your support is more critical than ever, and we truly appreciate your generosity. Sponsorship funds are used by our Right Whale Program to support activities that directly contribute to the conservation of North Atlantic right whales.



Holiday Gift Ideas



Give the gift of Endangered Species conservation! North Atlantic right whale-themed gifts and [tax-deductible sponsorships](#) are available with proceeds directly supporting our research and conservation work to save this critically endangered whale.

Visit rightwhaleresearch.bigcartel.com to learn more!