

NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE MEDIA ADVISORY
SOUTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**IMPORTANT SIGHTING OF MOTHER AND CALF RIGHT WHALES
CONFIRMED OFF NORTHEAST FLORIDA**

NOAA Asks Mariners To Keep A Lookout And Report Future Sightings

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service) confirmed a sighting of a mother and calf right whale pair off Florida's northeast Atlantic coast earlier this week. A recreational angler snapped photos of these whales on Tuesday, July 17 at 1 p.m. EST approximately 15 miles east of Mayport, Fla. NOAA Fisheries Service is asking mariners to keep a sharp eye out for these whales and please report any sightings to the United States Coast Guard via marine radio channel 16, or via phone to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 1-888-404-FWCC (3922) or the Georgia Department of Natural Resources at 800-2-SAVE-ME (800-272-8363).

North Atlantic right whales are typically found off the southeast United States (N.C - Fla.) from November 15 - April 15, so this is rare. According to the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium Sightings Database, no right whale sightings have ever been reported off the Georgia or Florida coasts for the months of June, July, or August.

The North Atlantic right whale population is now estimated to be approximately 300 animals and is listed as "Endangered" under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. They are also protected under the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. It is illegal to approach or remain within 500-yards of right whales. Mariners are urged to use extreme caution, maintain a sharp lookout, and take prompt action to avoid colliding or approaching this pair of critically endangered whales. NOAA recommends vessels reduce speeds below 12-knots, when consistent with safe navigation.

Media Note:

Photos Available Upon Request

