NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE (*Eubalaena glacialis*): Western Atlantic Stock

STOCK DEFINITION AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

The western North Atlantic right whale population ranges primarily from calving grounds in coastal waters of the southeastern United States to feeding grounds in New England waters and the Canadian Bay of Fundy, Scotian Shelf, and Gulf of St. Lawrence. Knowlton *et al.* (1992) reported several long-distance movements as far north as Newfoundland, the Labrador Basin, and southeast of Greenland. In addition, recent resightings of photographically identified individuals have been made off Iceland, in the old Cape Farewell whaling ground east of Greenland (Hamilton *et al.* 2007), northern Norway (Jacobsen *et al.* 2004), and the Azores (Hamilton *et al.* 2009). The September 1999 Norwegian sighting represents one of only two published sightings this century of a right whale in Norwegian waters, and the first since 1926. Together, these long-range matches indicate an extended range for at least some individuals and perhaps the existence of important habitat areas not presently well described. The few published records from the Gulf of Mexico (Moore and Clark 1963; Schmidly *et al.* 1972) represent either distributional anomalies, normal wanderings of occasional animals, or a more extensive historic range beyond the sole known calving and wintering ground in the waters of the southeastern United States. Whatever the case, the location of much of the population is unknown during the winter. Offshore (greater than 30 miles) surveys flown off the coast of northeastern Florida and southeastern Georgia from 1996 to 2001 had 3 sightings in 1996, 1 in 1997, 13 in 1998, 6 in 1999, 11 in 2000 and 6 in 2001 (within each year, some were repeat sightings of previously recorded individuals). Several of the years that offshore surveys were flown were some of the lowest count years for calves and for numbers of right whales in the Southeast recorded since comprehensive surveys began in the calving grounds. Therefore, the frequency with which right whales occur in offshore waters in the southeastern U.S. remains unclear.

Research results suggest the existence of six major habitats or congregation areas for western North Atlantic right whales: the coastal waters of the southeastern United States; the Great South Channel; Georges Bank/Gulf of Maine; Cape Cod and Massachusetts Bays; the Bay of Fundy; and the Scotian Shelf. However, movements within and between habitats are extensive. In 2000, one whale was photographed in Florida waters on 12 January, then again eleven days later (23 January) in Cape Cod Bay, less than a month later off Georgia (16 February), and back in Cape Cod Bay on 23 March, effectively making the round-trip migration to the Southeast and back at least twice during the winter season (Brown and Marx 2000). Results from satellite tags clearly indicate that sightings separated by perhaps two weeks should not necessarily be assumed to indicate a stationary or resident animal. Instead, telemetry data have shown rather lengthy and somewhat distant excursions, including into deep water off the continental shelf (Mate *et al.* 1997; Baumgartner and Mate 2005). Systematic surveys conducted off the coast of North Carolina during the winters of 2001 and 2002 sighted 8 calves, suggesting the calving grounds may extend as far north as Cape Fear. Four of the calves were not sighted by surveys conducted further south. One of the cows photographed was new to researchers, having effectively eluded identification over the period of its maturation (McLellan *et al.* 2004).

New England waters are an important feeding habitat for right whales, which feed in this area primarily on copepods (largely of the genera *Calanus* and *Pseudocalanus*). Research suggests that right whales must locate and exploit extremely dense patches of zooplankton to feed efficiently (Mayo and Marx 1990). These dense zooplankton patches are likely a primary characteristic of the spring, summer, and fall right whale habitats (Kenney *et al.* 1986, 1995). While feeding in the coastal waters off Massachusetts has been better studied than in other areas, right whale feeding has also been observed on the margins of Georges Bank, in the Great South Channel, in the Gulf of Maine, in the Bay of Fundy, and over the Scotian Shelf. The characteristics of acceptable prey distribution in these areas are beginning to emerge (Baumgartner *et al.* 2003; Baumgartner and Mate 2003). NMFS (National Marine Fisheries Service) and Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies aerial surveys during springs of 1999-2006 found right whales along the Northern Edge of Georges Bank, in the Great South Channel, in Georges Basin, and in various locations in the Gulf of Maine including Cashes Ledge, Platts Bank, and Wilkinson Basin. The consistency with which right whales occur in such locations is relatively high, but these studies also highlight the high interannual variability in right whale use of some habitats.

Genetic analyses based upon direct sequencing of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) have identified five mtDNA haplotypes in the western North Atlantic right whale (Malik *et al.* 1999). Schaeff *et al.* (1997) compared the genetic variability of North Atlantic and southern right whales (*E. australis*), and found the former to be significantly less diverse, a finding broadly replicated by Malik *et al.* (2000). The low diversity in North Atlantic right whales might be indicative of inbreeding, but no definitive conclusion can be reached using current data. Additional work comparing modern and historic genetic population structure, using DNA extracted from museum and archaeological specimens of baleen and bone, has suggested that the eastern and western North Atlantic populations were not genetically distinct (Rosenbaum *et al.* 1997; 2000). However, the virtual extirpation of the eastern stock and its lack of recovery in the last hundred years strongly suggests population subdivision over a protracted (but not evolutionary) timescale. Genetic studies concluded that the principal loss of genetic diversity occurred prior to the 18th century (Waldick *et al.* 2002). However, revised conclusions that nearly all the remains in the North American Basque whaling archaeological sites were bowhead whales and not right whales (Rastogi *et al.* 2004) contradict the previously held belief that Basque whaling during the 16th and 17th centuries was principally responsible for the loss of genetic diversity.

High-resolution (using 35 microsatellite loci) genetic profiling has been completed for 66% of all identified North Atlantic right whales through 2001. This work has improved our understanding of genetic variability, number of reproductively active individuals, reproductive fitness, parentage and relatedness of individuals (Frasier *et al.* 2007).

One emerging result of the genetic studies is the importance of obtaining biopsy samples from calves on the calving grounds. Only 60% of all known calves are seen with their mothers in summering areas, when their callosity patterns are stable enough to reliably make a photo-ID match later in life. The remaining 40% are not seen on a known summering ground. Because the calf's genetic profile is the only reliable way to establish parentage, if the calf is not sampled when associated with its mother early on, then it is not possible to link it with a calving event or to its mother, and information such as age and familial relationships is lost. From 1980 to 2001, there were 64 calves born that were not sighted later with their mothers and thus unavailable to provide age-specific mortality information (Frasier *et al.* 2007). An additional interpretation of paternity analyses is that the population size may be larger than was previously thought. Fathers for only 45% of known calves have been genetically determined. However, genetic profiles were available for 69% of all photo-identified males (Frasier 2005). The conclusion was that the majority of these calves must have different fathers that cannot be accounted for by the unsampled males and the population of males must be larger (Frasier 2005). This inference of additional animals that have never been captured photographically and/or genetically suggests the existence of habitats of potentially significant use that remain unknown.

POPULATION SIZE

The western North Atlantic minimum stock size is based on a census of individual whales identified using photo-identification techniques. A review of the photo-ID recapture database as it existed on 24 June 2009 indicated that 361 individually recognized whales in the catalog were known to be alive during 2005. This number represents a minimum population size. This count has no associated coefficient of variation.

Previous estimates using the same method with the added assumption that whales seen within the previous seven years were still alive have resulted in counts of 295 animals in 1992 (Knowlton *et al.* 1994) and 299 animals in 1998 (Kraus *et al.* 2001). An IWC workshop on status and trends of western North Atlantic right whales gave a minimum direct-count estimate of 263 right whales alive in 1996 and noted that the true population was unlikely to be substantially greater than this (Best *et al.* 2001).

Historical Abundance

An estimate of pre-exploitation population size is not available. Basque whalers were thought to have taken right whales during the 1500s in the Strait of Belle Isle region (Aguilar 1986), however, recent genetic analysis has shown that nearly all of the remains found in that area are, in fact, those of bowhead whales (Rastogi *et al.* 2004; Frasier *et al.* 2007). The stock of right whales may have already been substantially reduced by the time whaling was begun by colonists in the Plymouth area in the 1600s (Reeves *et al.* 2001; Reeves *et al.* 2007). A modest but persistent whaling effort along the coast of the eastern U.S. lasted three centuries, and the records include one report of 29 whales killed in Cape Cod Bay in a single day during January 1700. Based on incomplete historical whaling data, Reeves and Mitchell could conclude only that there were at least hundreds of right whales present in the western North Atlantic during the late 1600s. Reeves *et al.* (1992) plotted a series of population trajectories using historical data, assuming a present-day population size of 350 animals. The results suggested that there may have been at least 1,000 right whales in the population during the early to mid-1600s, with the greatest population decline occurring in the early 1700s. The authors cautioned, however, that the record of removals is incomplete, the results were preliminary, and refinements are required. Based on back calculations using the present population size and growth rate, the population may have numbered fewer than 100 individuals by 1935 when international protection for right whales came into effect (Hain 1975; Reeves *et al.* 1992; Kenney *et al.* 1995). However, little is known about the population dynamics of right whales in the intervening years.

Minimum Population Estimate

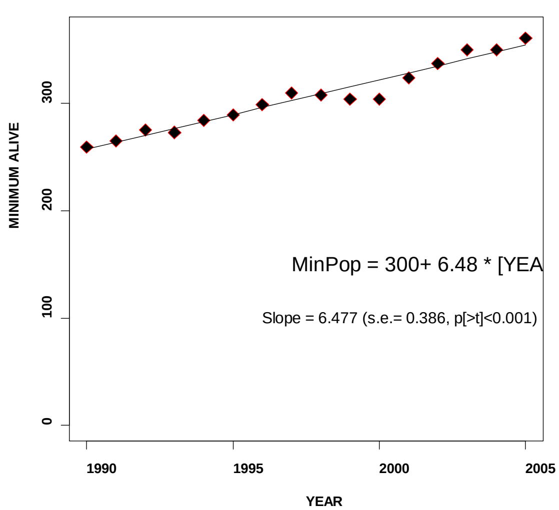
The western North Atlantic population size was estimated to be at least 361 individuals in 2005 based on a census of individual whales identified using photo-identification techniques. This value is a minimum and does not include animals that were alive prior to 2005, but not recorded in the individual sightings database as seen during from 1 December 2004 to 24 June 2009 (note that matching of photos taken during 2006-2009 was not complete at the time the data were received). It also does not include some calves known to be born during 2005, or any other individual whale seen during 2005 but not yet entered into the catalog.

Current Population Trend

The population growth rate reported for the period 1986-1992 by Knowlton *et al.* (1994) was 2.5% (CV=0.12), suggesting that the stock was showing signs of slow recovery. However, work by Caswell *et al.* (1999) suggested that crude survival probability declined from about 0.99 in the early 1980s to about 0.94 in the late 1990s. The decline was statistically significant. Additional work conducted in 1999 was reviewed by the IWC workshop on status and trends in this population (Best *et al.* 2001); the workshop concluded based on several analytical approaches that survival had indeed declined in the 1990s. Although capture heterogeneity could negatively bias survival estimates, the workshop concluded that this factor could not account for the entire observed decline, which appeared to be particularly marked in adult females. Another workshop was convened by NMFS in September 2002, and reached similar conclusions regarding the decline in the population (Clapham 2002).

An increase in mortality in 2004 and 2005 was cause for serious concern (Kraus *et al.* 2005). Calculations based on demographic data through 1999 (Fujiwara and Caswell 2001) indicated that this mortality rate increase would reduce population growth by approximately 10% per year (Kraus *et al.* 2005). Of those mortalities, six were adult females, three of which were carrying near-term fetuses. Furthermore, four of these females were just starting to bear calves, losing their complete lifetime reproduction potential.

Despite the preceding, examination of the minimum number alive population index calculated from the individual sightings database, as it existed on 24 June 2009, for the years 1990-2005 (Figure 1) suggests a positive trend in population size. These data reveal a significant increase in the number of catalogued whales alive during this period, but with significant variation due to apparent losses exceeding gains during 1998-99. Mean growth rate for the period was 2.1%.



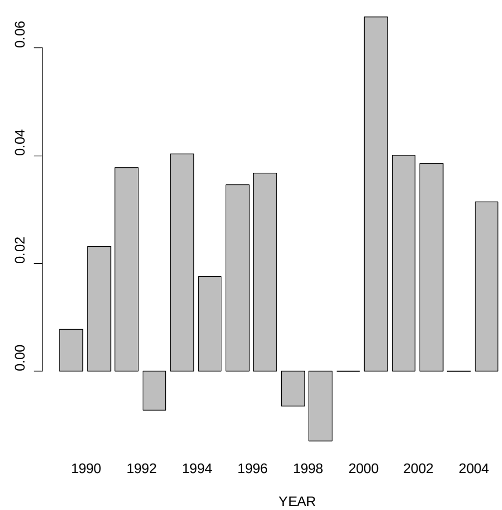


Figure 1. Minimum number alive (a) and crude annual growth rate (b) for cataloged North Atlantic right whales. Minimum number (N) of cataloged individuals known to be alive in any given year includes all whales known to be alive prior to that year and seen in that year or subsequently plus all whales newly cataloged that year. It does not include calves born that year or any other individuals not yet cataloged. Mean crude growth rate (dashed line) is

the exponentiated mean of $\log_e [(N_{t+1}-N_t)/N_t]$ *for each year (t).*

The minimum number alive may increase slightly in later years as analysis of the backlog of unmatched but high-quality photographs proceeds. For example, the minimum number alive for 2002 was calculated to be 313 from a 15 June 2006 data set and revised to 325 using the 30 May 2007 data set.

CURRENT AND MAXIMUM NET PRODUCTIVITY RATES

During 1980-1992, 145 calves were born to 65 identified cows. The number of calves born annually ranged from 5 to 17, with a mean of 11.2 (SE=0.90). The reproductively active female pool was static at approximately 51 individuals during 1987-1992. Mean calving interval, based on 86 records, was 3.67 years. There was an indication that calving intervals may have been increasing over time, although the trend was not statistically significant (P=0.083) (Knowlton *et al.* 1994).

Total reported calf production and calf mortalities from 1993 to 2009 are shown below in Table 1. The mean calf production for this seventeen year period was 17.2 (15.3-19.4; 95% C.I.). During the 2004 and 2005 calving seasons three adult females were found dead with near-term fetuses.

An updated analysis of calving intervals through the 1997/1998 season suggests that the mean calving interval increased since 1992 from 3.67 years to more than 5 years, a significant trend (Kraus *et al.* 2001). This conclusion was supported by modeling work reviewed by the IWC workshop on status and trends in this population (Best *et al.* 2001); the workshop agreed that calving intervals had indeed increased and further that the reproductive rate was approximately half that reported from studied populations of southern right whales, *E. australis*. A workshop on possible causes of reproductive failure was held in April 2000 (Reeves *et al.* 2001). Factors considered included contaminants, biotoxins, nutrition/food limitation, disease, and inbreeding problems. While no conclusions were reached, a research plan to further investigate this topic was developed. Analyses completed since that workshop found that in the most recent years, calving intervals were closer to 3 years (Kraus *et al.* 2007).

An analysis of the age structure of this population suggests that it contains a smaller proportion of juvenile whales than expected (Hamilton *et al.* 1998; Best *et al.* 2001), which may reflect lowered recruitment and/or high juvenile mortality. In addition, it is possible that the apparently low reproductive rate is due in part to an unstable age structure or to reproductive senescence on the part of some females. However, few data are available on either factor and senescence has not been documented for any baleen whale.

Table 1. North Atlantic right whale calf production and mortality, 1993-2009.

Year[a]	Reported calf production	Reported calf mortalities
1993	8	2
1994	9	0
1995	7	0
1996	22	3
1997	20	1
1998	6	1
1999	4	0
2000	1	0
2001	31	4
2002	21	2
2003	19	0
2004	17	1
2005	28	0
2006	19	2
2007	23	2
2008	23	2
2009	39	1

a. includes December of the previous year

POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL REMOVAL

Potential biological removal (PBR) is the product of minimum population size, one-half the maximum net productivity rate and a "recovery" factor for endangered, depleted, threatened stocks, or stocks of unknown status relative to OSP (MMPA Sec. 3. 16 U.S.C. 1362; Wade and Angliss 1997). The recovery factor for right whales is

0.10 because this species is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The minimum population size is 361 and the observed net productivity is 0.02. PBR for the Western Atlantic stock of North Atlantic Right whale is 0.7.

ANNUAL HUMAN-CAUSED SERIOUS INJURY AND MORTALITY

For the period 2004 through 2008, the minimum rate of annual human-caused mortality and serious injury to right whales averaged 2.8 per year (U.S. waters, 2.2; Canadian waters, 0.6). This is derived from two components: 1) incidental fishery entanglement records at 0.8 per year (U.S. waters, 0.6; Canadian waters, 0.2), and 2) ship strike records at 2.0 per year (U.S. waters, 1.6; Canadian waters, 0.4). Beginning with the 2001 Stock Assessment Report, Canadian records were incorporated into the mortality and serious injury rates of this report to reflect the effective range of this stock. It is also important to stress that serious injury determinations are made based upon the best available information; these determinations may change with the availability of new information (Cole *et al.* 2005). For the purposes of this report, discussion is primarily limited to those records considered confirmed human-caused mortalities or serious injuries. For more information on determinations for this period, see Glass *et al.* (2010).

Background

The details of a particular mortality or serious injury record often require a degree of interpretation. The assigned cause is based on the best judgment of the available data; additional information may result in revisions. When reviewing Table 2 below, several factors should be considered: 1) a ship strike or entanglement may occur at some distance from the reported location; 2) the mortality or injury may involve multiple factors; for example, whales that have been both ship struck and entangled are not uncommon; 3) the actual vessel or gear type/source is often uncertain; and 4) in entanglements, several types of gear may be involved.

The serious injury determinations are susceptible to revision. There are several records where a struck and injured whale was re-sighted later, apparently healthy, or where an entangled or partially disentangled whale was re-sighted later free of gear. The reverse may also be true: a whale initially appearing in good condition after being struck or entangled is later re-sighted and found to have been seriously injured by the event. Entanglements of juvenile whales are typically considered serious injuries because the constriction on the animal is likely to become increasingly lethal as the whale grows (Cole *et al.* 2005; Nelson *et al.* 2007).

A serious injury was defined in 50 CFR part 229.2 as an injury that is likely to lead to mortality. We therefore limited the serious injury designation to only those reports that had substantiated evidence that the injury, whether from entanglement or vessel collision, was likely to lead to the whale's death (Cole *et al.* 2005; Nelson *et al.* 2007; Glass *et al.* 2008; Glass *et al.* 2010). Determinations of serious injury were made on a case-by-case basis following recommendations from the workshop conducted in 1997 on differentiating serious and non-serious injuries (Angliss and DeMaster 1998). Injuries that impeded a whale's locomotion or feeding were not considered serious injuries unless they were likely to be fatal in the foreseeable future. There was no forecasting of how the entanglement or injury may increase the whale's susceptibility to further injury, namely from additional entanglements or vessel collisions. This conservative approach likely underestimates serious injury rates.

With these caveats, the total minimum detected annual average human-induced mortality and serious injury incurred by this stock (including fishery and non-fishery related causes) is 2.8 right whales per year (U.S. waters 2.2; Canadian waters, 0.6). As with entanglements, some injury or mortality due to ship strikes is almost certainly undetected, particularly in offshore waters. Decomposed and/or unexamined animals (e.g., carcasses reported but not retrieved or necropsied) represent lost data, some of which may relate to human impacts. For these reasons, the estimate of 2.8 right whales per year must be regarded as derived from minimum count (Glass *et al.* 2010).

Further, the small population size and low annual reproductive rate of right whales suggest that human sources of mortality may have a greater effect relative to population growth rates than for other whales. The principal factors believed to be retarding growth and recovery of the population are ship strikes and entanglement with fishing gear. Between 1970 and 1999, a total of 45 right whale mortalities was recorded (IWC [International Whaling Commission] 1999; Knowlton and Kraus 2001; Glass *et al.* 2009). Of these, 13 (28.9%) were neonates that were believed to have died from perinatal complications or other natural causes. Of the remainder, 16 (35.6%) resulted from ship strikes, 3 (6.7%) were related to entanglement in fishing gear (in two cases lobster gear, and one gillnet gear), and 13 (28.9%) were of unknown cause. At a minimum, therefore, 42.2% of the observed total for the period and 50% of the 32 non-calf deaths were attributable to human impacts (calves accounted for three deaths from ship strikes). Young animals, ages 0-4 years, are apparently the most impacted portion of the population (Kraus 1990).

Finally, entanglement or minor vessel collisions may not kill an animal directly, but may weaken or otherwise affect it so that it is more likely to become vulnerable to further injury. Such was apparently the case with the two-year-old right whale killed by a ship off Amelia Island, Florida in March 1991 after having carried gillnet gear wrapped around its tail region since the previous summer (Kenney and Kraus 1993). A similar fate befell right whale #2220, found dead on Cape Cod in 1996.

Fishery-Related Serious Injury and Mortality

Reports of mortality and serious injury relative to PBR as well as total human impacts are contained in records maintained by the New England Aquarium and the NMFS Northeast and Southeast Regional Offices (Table 2). From 2004 through 2008, 4 of 14 records of mortality or serious injury (including records from both USA and Canadian waters) involved entanglement or fishery interactions. For this time frame, the average reported mortality and serious injury to right whales due to fishery entanglement was 0.8 whales per year (U.S. waters, 0.6; Canadian waters, 0.2). Information from an entanglement event often does not include the detail necessary to assign the entanglements to a particular fishery or location.

Although disentanglement is either unsuccessful or not possible for the majority of cases, during the period 2004 through 2008, there were at least four documented cases of entanglements for which the intervention of disentanglement teams averted a likely serious-injury determination. On 6 December 2004, a one-year-old female, #3314, was sighted with line wrapped on both its head and tail which would likely have been fatal. Following more than three weeks of attempts, the constricting fishing gear was removed. On 3 December 2005, #3445—the 2004 calf of #2145—was first sighted off Brunswick, Georgia, with line across its back and around its right flipper. Over 300 feet of trailing line was removed. This whale was resighted on 12 June 2006, apparently gear-free. An adult female, #2029, first sighted entangled in the Great South Channel on 9 March 2007, may have avoided serious injury due to being partially disentangled on 18 September 2007 by researchers in the Bay of Fundy, Canada. On 8 December 2008, #3294 was successfully disentangled. Sometimes, even with disentanglement, an animal may die of injuries sustained from fishing gear. A female yearling right whale, #3107, was first sighted with gear wrapping its caudal peduncle on 6 July 2002 near Briar Island, Nova Scotia. Although the gear was removed on 1 September by the New England Aquarium disentanglement team, and the animal seen alive on an aerial survey on 1 October, its carcass washed ashore at Nantucket on 12 October, 2002 with deep entanglement injuries on the caudal peduncle.

In January 1997, NMFS changed the classification of the Gulf of Maine and U.S. mid-Atlantic lobster pot fisheries from Category III to Category I based on examination of stranding and entanglement records of large whales from 1990 to 1994 (62 FR 33, Jan. 2, 1997).

The only bycatch of a right whale observed by the Northeast Fisheries Observer Program was in the pelagic drift gillnet fishery in 1993. No mortalities or serious injuries have been documented in any of the other fisheries monitored by NMFS.

Entanglement records from 1990 through 2008 maintained by NMFS Northeast Regional Office (NMFS, unpublished data) included 47 confirmed right whale entanglements, including right whales in weirs, gillnets, and trailing line and buoys. Because whales often free themselves of gear following an entanglement event, scarring may be a better indicator of fisheries interaction than entanglement records. In an analysis of the scarification of right whales, 338 of 447 (75.6%) whales examined during 1980-2002 were scarred at least once by fishing gear (Knowlton *et al.* 2005). Further research using the North Atlantic Right Whale Catalogue has indicated that, annually, between 14% and 51% of right whales are involved in entanglements (Knowlton *et al.* 2005). Incidents of entanglements in groundfish gillnet gear, cod traps, and herring weirs in waters of Atlantic Canada and the U.S. east coast were summarized by Read (1994). In six records of right whales that were entangled in groundfish gillnet gear in the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of Maine between 1975 and 1990, the whales were either released or escaped on their own, although several whales were observed carrying net or line fragments. A right whale mother and calf were released alive from a herring weir in the Bay of Fundy in 1976.

For all areas, specific details of right whale entanglement in fishing gear are often lacking. When direct or indirect mortality occurs, some carcasses come ashore and are subsequently examined, or are reported as "floaters" at sea. The number of unreported and unexamined carcasses is unknown, but may be significant in the case of floaters. More information is needed about fisheries interactions and where they occur.

Other Mortality

Ship strikes are a major cause of mortality and injury to right whales (Kraus 1990; Knowlton and Kraus 2001). Records from 2004 through 2008 have been summarized in Table 2. For this time frame, the average reported mortality and serious injury to right whales due to ship strikes was 2.0 whales per year (U.S. waters, 1.6; Canadian waters, 0.4).

Table 2. Confirmed human-caused mortality and serious injury records of North Atlantic right whales, January 2004 through December 2008.						
Date[a]	Report Type[b]	Age, Sex, ID, Length	Location[a]	Assigned Cause: P=primary, S=secondary		Notes/Observations
				Ship strike	Entang./ Fsh inter	
02/07/04	mortality	Adult Female #1004 16.0m	Virginia Beach, VA	P		Severe subdermal bruising; complete fracture of rostrum and laceration of oral rete
09/06/04	mortality	Adult Female #2301 15m (est)	Roseway Basin, NS		P	Extensive constricting line on head and left flipper; found dead March 3, 2005 on Ship Shoal Island, VA; gear recovered consists of 10 fathoms of 3/8" & 7/16" rope
11/24/04	mortality	Adult Female #1909 14.9m	Ocean Sands, NC	P		Left fluke lobe severed and large bore blood vessels exposed
01/12/05	mortality	Adult Female #2143 13.1m	Cumberland Island, GA	P		Healed propeller wounds from strike as a calf re-opened as a result of pregnancy
03/10/05	serious injury	Adult[c] Female[c] #2425	Cumberland Island, GA	P		43 ft power yacht partially severed left fluke; last resighted 9/4/05 in extremely poor condition, not seen since
04/28/05	mortality	Adult Female #2617 14.7m	Monomoy Island, MA	P		Significant bruising and multiple vertebral fractures
01/10/06	mortality	Calf Male 5.4m w/out fluke	Jacksonville, FL	P		Propeller lacerations associated with hemorrhaging and edema; flukes completely severed
01/22/06	mortality	Calf Female[c] 5.6m	off Ponte Vedra Beach, FL		P	Significant pre-mortem lesions from entanglement in apparent monofilament netting; no gear present
03/11/06	serious injury	Yearling Male #3522	Off Cumberland Island, GA	P		11 propeller lacerations across dorsal surface; not resighted since
07/24/06	mortality	age unknown Female 9.6m	Campobello Island, NB	P		Propeller lacerations through blubber, into muscle and ribs
08/24/06	mortalit	Adult	Roseway	P		16 fractured vertebrae; dorsal blubber

	y	Female 14.7m	Basin, NS			bruise from head to genital region
12/30/06	mortality	Yearling Male #3508 12.6m	off Brunswick, GA	P		20 propeller lacerations along right side of head and back with associated hemorrhaging
03/31/07	mortality	Calf Male 7.7 m	Outer Banks, NC		P	Edema associated with flipper and dorsal & ventral thoracic musculature; epidermal abrasion indicated entangling body and flipper wraps; no gear recovered
02/03/08	serious injury	Adult Male #1980	Cape Hatteras, NC		P	Embedded wrap in rostrum; decline in health; no gear recovered; last resighted 04/16/2008

a. The date sighted and location provided in the table are not necessarily when or where the serious injury or mortality occurred; rather, this information indicates when and where the whale was first reported beached, entangled, or injured.
b. National guidelines for determining what constitutes a serious injury have not been finalized. Interim criteria as established by NERO/NMFS (Nelson et al. 2007) have been used here. Some assignments may change as new information becomes available and/or when national standards are established.
c. Additional information that was not included in previous reports.

STATUS OF STOCK

The size of this stock is considered to be extremely low relative to OSP in the U.S. Atlantic EEZ, and this species is listed as endangered under the ESA. The North Atlantic right whale is considered one of the most critically endangered populations of large whales in the world (Clapham *et al.* 1999). A Recovery Plan has been published for the North Atlantic right whale and is in effect (NMFS [National Marine Fisheries Service] 2005). NMFS is presently engaged in evaluating the need for critical habitat designation for the North Atlantic right whale. Under a prior listing as northern right whale, three critical habitats, Cape Cod Bay/Massachusetts Bay, Great South Channel, and the Southeastern U.S., were designated by NMFS (59 FR 28793, June 3, 1994). Two additional critical habitat areas in Canadian waters, Grand Manan Basin and Roseway Basin, were identified in Canada's final recovery strategy for the North Atlantic right whale (Brown *et al.* 2009). A National Marine Fisheries Service ESA status review in 1996 concluded that the western North Atlantic population remains endangered. This conclusion was reinforced by the International Whaling Commission (Best *et al.* 2001), which expressed grave concern regarding the status of this stock. Relative to populations of southern right whales, there are also concerns about growth rate, percentage of reproductive females, and calving intervals in this population. The total level of human-caused mortality and serious injury is unknown, but reported human-caused mortality and serious injury was a minimum of 3.0 right whales per year from 2004 through 2008. Given that PBR has been set to 0.7, no mortality or serious injury for this stock can be considered insignificant. This is a strategic stock because the average annual human-related mortality and serious injury exceeds PBR, and also because the North Atlantic right whale is an endangered species.

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