

North Atlantic right whale deaths

There are approximately 300 North Atlantic right whales alive today. Since February 2004, eight have died in U.S. waters. Six were mature females; three were pregnant with near-term calves. Every North Atlantic right whale death brings the species closer to extinction, but the death of females with near-term calves is particularly alarming.

A chronology of the deaths in the past year:

- February 3, 2004** A pregnant female, nick-named Stumpy, and her near-term calf were killed by a ship and found floating east of Virginia Beach, Virginia along their migratory corridor.
- February 7, 2004** A young calf was found dead of undetermined causes in the southeastern U.S. calving ground.
- November 17, 2004** A U.S. Naval vessel struck a pregnant female near the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. Her body and that of her near-term female calf were found on November 24 off the coast of Virginia.
- December 9, 2004** The body of a dead right whale was reported floating off the coast of Nantucket Island in Massachusetts. Bad weather prevented researchers from retrieving the body and no cause of death was determined.
- January 10, 2005** The body of a female right whale nick-named Bolo was seen floating off the coast Nantucket. Bad weather prevented researchers from retrieving her body and no cause of death could be determined, nor could it be determined whether this mother of six previous calves was pregnant.
- January 25, 2005** The body of a female and her near-term calf were found in the calving ground off the coast of Georgia. She was nick-named Lucky because she had survived a serious injury from a collision with a ship when she was younger. She was pregnant with her first calf and the strain of the pregnancy caused the scars from her previous injury to re-open, resulting in her death and that of her calf.
- March 4, 2005** The body of an adult right whale was found on an island off the coast of Virginia. The death apparently resulted from a serious injury resulting from the animal's entanglement in fishing gear.
- May 1, 2005** The body of a 48-foot female right whale was discovered on a beach off the coast of Massachusetts. The whale's injuries, which included broken vertebra, indicate it was likely struck by a ship.