



*World class scientists working to protect one of the world's most endangered species*

## North Atlantic Right Whales



*“As marine conservation experts, our job is to report what the science says about protecting the right whale population. With fewer than 550 whales remaining, this species is so critically endangered that funding for our right whale projects tops our list of the most urgent needs.”*

*– James A. Powell, PhD; Executive Director, Sea to Shore Alliance;  
Pew Fellow in Marine Conservation*

*Photo Credit: Wildlife Trust*

### Slalom and Her Calf

At 70 tons and 50 feet long, Slalom, a female North Atlantic right whale and her recently born calf, are spotted by S2S aerial survey teams off the coast of Georgia. From November to March, Slalom and other female right whales make a 1,000+ mile journey from the North Atlantic to give birth in waters off the southeastern seaboard. When her calf is about two months old, Slalom will make the return trip, guiding her calf to their feeding grounds in the North Atlantic.

Female right whales face multiple threats during their calving journey including strikes from ships and entanglement in fishing gear. With fewer than 550 members of the species remaining, Slalom and her calf are members of one of the most majestic and endangered species in the ocean today. S2S right whale experts are actively working on their behalf – providing the science to decision makers to ensure the species survival.

S2S vision is healthy, self sustaining populations of right whales with minimal threats from human caused mortality.

**USA:** Florida | Georgia | Alabama **Caribbean:** Cuba | Belize **Africa:** Gabon | Senegal

## The Plight of North Atlantic Right Whales



Photo Credit: Wildlife Trust

Named by whalers who identified them as the "right" whale to kill on a hunt, this formerly abundant species in the North Atlantic was heavily hunted in the 17th-19th centuries, bringing them dangerously close to extinction.

Right whales are believed to live at least 50 years, but there is much to learn about their lifespan. Most known North Atlantic right whale feeding, calving and breeding areas are found along the Eastern seaboard of the U.S. and Canada. Females generally give birth to their first calf when they are ten years of age and have a gestation period of 12 months.

These animals may be magnificent in size; however, the threats which continue to impact the species with extinction are even greater.

Ship collisions and fishing gear entanglements are the most common human-related causes of serious injuries and mortalities for these whales. Additional threats include habitat degradation, contaminants, climate change and noise from industrial activities along the coastline.

Recent population estimates based on field work conducted by numerous organizations, including Sea to Shore Alliance (S2S), show that fewer than 550 North Atlantic right whales remain in the ocean today.

## The S2S Team Takes Action in the Field to Protect an Endangered Species

S2S's world-renowned marine biologists care about the remaining population of North Atlantic right whales. The highly-specialized and dedicated S2S team employs the latest technology to collect the most robust scientific information possible.

During calving season, from November through March, S2S conducts daily aerial surveys to directly alert mariners to whales in the area to reduce the possibility of ship strikes and to spot entanglements in fishing gear in real time. Officials are able to detangle the whale in a timely manner, lowering animal mortality.

Regulatory agencies such as NOAA use the valuable data gathered by S2S to craft marine conservation policy for right whales.

## S2S Scientific Data Is Making a Difference

NOAA used S2S data to inform a significant legislative ruling that is protecting right whales and calves off the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina during calving season.

S2S data led to the decision to reduce ship speeds to 10 knots for all vessels 65 feet or longer along the Eastern seaboard to allow more time for both the slow moving whale and ship to avoid strikes.

Since the slow speed zones were put in place in 2008, there has been no documented ship strike mortality in the southeastern US waters.

S2S is poised to expand aerial surveys as well as increase education, outreach and awareness efforts in the southeastern US. The aim of the program is to ultimately eliminate all human-caused North Atlantic right whale mortality by providing the best available science about whales like Slalom and her calf to decision makers in marine conservation.



*To increase public awareness of the plight of this majestic mammal, S2S founded the **Right Whale Festival** in 2009. The Jacksonville-based annual event helped educate 7,000 attendees last year.*

## You Can Help The North Atlantic Right Whale

*The majestic North Atlantic right whale is critically endangered. Please join Sea to Shore Alliance in their efforts to help this imperiled species survive.*

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