



Right Whale Identification:

How are right whales studied?

Scientists look at the heads of right whales to tell them apart.

On top of their heads, right whales have big white patches of tough skin called **callosities** (pronounced (kuh-los-i-tees). Thousands of cyamids (whale lice) spend their lives living on these hard patches making patterns on the whales heads. From either the air or a boat, scientists can photograph an animal's head, then, analyze the white patterns and identify who the whale is.



We tell humans apart by the color of our hair, our facial features, skin color etc.



Right whales have callosities (rough patches) in similar places to where men have facial hair.

Scientists will also photograph scars on the animals body that could be used for identification purposes.

Identification photographs from research trips and other encounters are sent to the [Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life](#) based at the New England Aquarium, which manages a [catalog](#) of all the North Atlantic right whales. You can find a wealth of information about these whales there.

We hope that through this activity, you become familiar with the catalog and what you can learn about right whales.

ACTIVITY

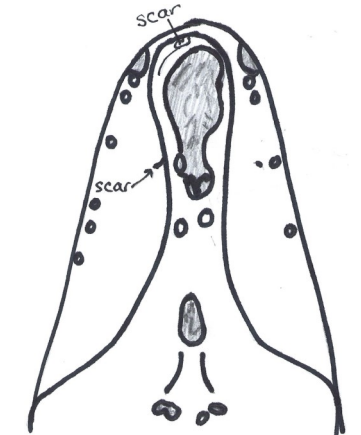
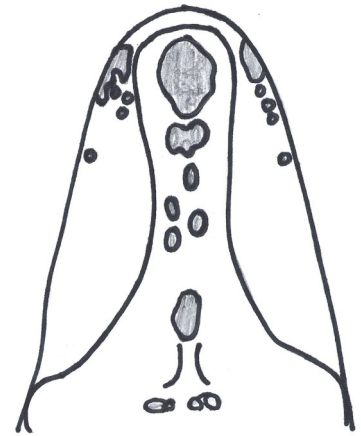
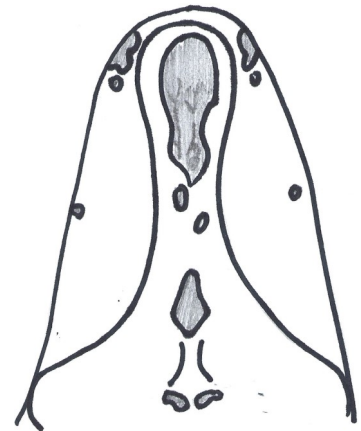
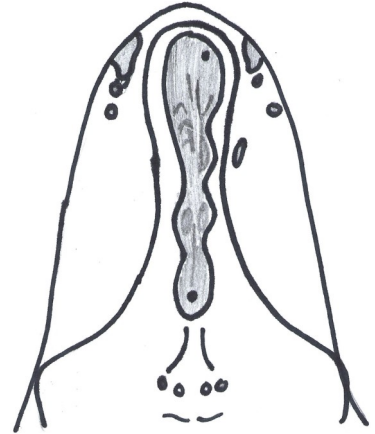
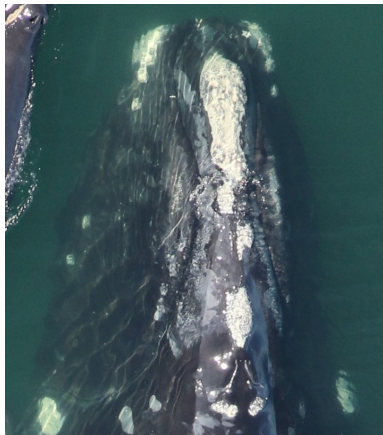
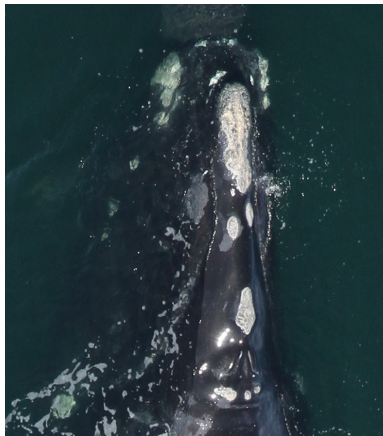
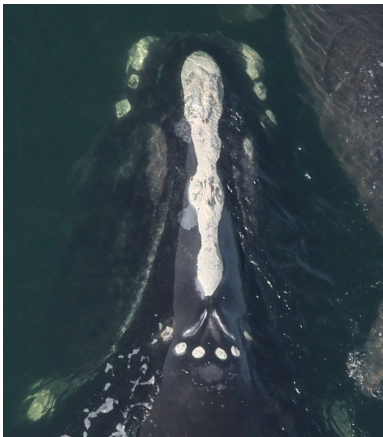
Directions: On the next page, we have 4 photographs of right whales taken from aerial surveys (from an airplane). There are also 4 field sketches of the right whales' heads. See if you can match the sketches from the scientists' field notes to the actual photos of the right whales! Draw lines between the matches either in your head or on the paper.



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Match the photographs to the field sketches

ALL images taken by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, under NOAA research permit #15488.





Extend the Learning

Who did you identify?

Let's look at the catalog to find out!

Directions

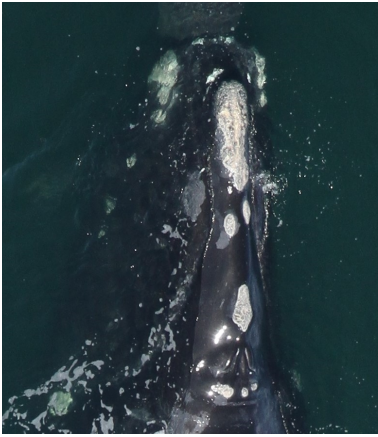
1. Go to <http://rwcatalog.neaq.org/#/findwhale> (Agree to the terms and conditions—you are using this for education purposes.)
2. We are going to find whales by [“search whales by entering matching features”](#)
3. Scroll up to the top of the page where it says WHALE NAME. To answer the following questions, scroll to the whale you are looking for within “whale name “and hit search. This is where you will find the information to answer the following questions.
4. When asked to find mother and father information, note the catalog number next to those fields and then put that in the space on the search page that says catalog number. (Make sure to set the “whale name” to ALL. You might need to look under “sightings” to see when the whale was first seen.
5. EXTRA. Take a minute to look at a pictures of the whale and see if you can identify it from different angles. Also look at the sightings. See how many years the whales have been sighted. We will look at that more closely in another lesson.



This is Bocce. Bocce is a female / male (circle one) that was born in _____. Bocce is _____ years old. Bocce's mother is named _____ and was born / 1st sighted (circle one) in _____. Bocce's father is named/numbered _____ and was born / 1st sighted (circle one) in _____.



This is Halo. Halo is a female / male (circle one) that was born in _____. Halo is _____ years old. Halo's mother is named _____ and was born / 1st sighted (circle one) in _____. Halo's father is named/numbered _____ and was born / 1st sighted / unknown (circle one) in _____.



This is Calvin. Calvin is a female / male (circle one) that was born in _____. Calvin is _____ years old. Calvin's mother is named _____ and was born / 1st sighted (circle one) in _____. Calvin's father is named/numbered _____ and was born / 1st sighted (circle one) in _____.



This is Mayport. Mayport is a female / male (circle one) that was born in _____. Halo is _____ years old. Mayport's mother is named _____ and was born / 1st sighted (circle one) in _____. Mayport's father is named/numbered _____ and was born / 1st sighted unknown (circle one) in _____.

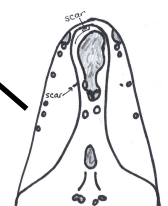
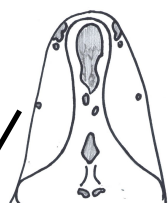
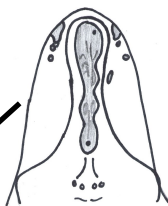
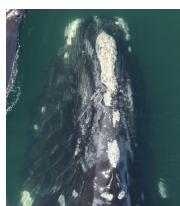
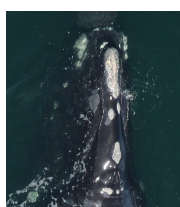
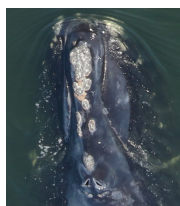
BONUS QUESTIONS:

Which of these whales is the oldest? _____. Look up how long right whales live. Are these whales considered young or old do you think?

How many calves has Calvin had? _____ (Hint, you can search by Calvin's catalog number under mother.)

Often, the whales are named after some sort of pattern in the callosities. With these whales, that is the case for Bocce and Halo. Can you figure out why they were given those names?

Answers



This is Bocce. Bocce is a **female** that was born in 2008. Bocce is 12 years old. Bocce's mother is named Naevus and was **born** in 1990. Bocce's father is Trident and was **1st sighted** (circle one) in 1981. (He died in 2010.)

This is Halo. Halo is a **female** that was born in 2005. Halo is 15 years old. Halo's mother is named Loligo and was **1st sighted** in 1974. Halo's father is **unknown**.

This is Calvin. Calvin is a **female** that was born in 1992 Calvin is 28 years old. Calvin's mother is named Delilah and was **1st sighted** (circle one) in 1981. Calvin's father is numbered 1048 and **1st sighted** in 1980.

This is Mayport. Mayport is a **female** that was born in 2010. Halo is 10 years old. Mayport's mother is named Grand Teton and was **1st sighted** (in 1981. Mayport's father is **unknown**.

BONUS QUESTIONS:

Which of these whales is the oldest? Calvin. Look up how long right whales live. Are these whale considered young or old do you think? Scientists estimate that right whales could like to be upwards of 70 years old. These whales are pretty young.

How many calves has Calvin had? 3 (Hint, you can search by Calvin's catalog number under mother.) She is the only one of these 4 that has had calves.

Often, the whales are named after some sort of pattern in the callosities. With these whales, that is the case for Bocce and Halo. Can you figure out why they were given those names? Bocce is named for the little islands in the middle of her head that look like bocce balls. Halo is named for the 4 small callosities behind the blowhole that are shaped like part of a halo.