

Our Rarest Large Whale



Callosities

These areas of extra thick skin form in unique patterns on the whale's head.



V-shaped Blow

The whale's two nostrils (blowholes) make a distinct spray.



Distinct Tail Fluke

Right whales have an all-black tail with smooth edges and a deep notch.



Paddle-like Flippers

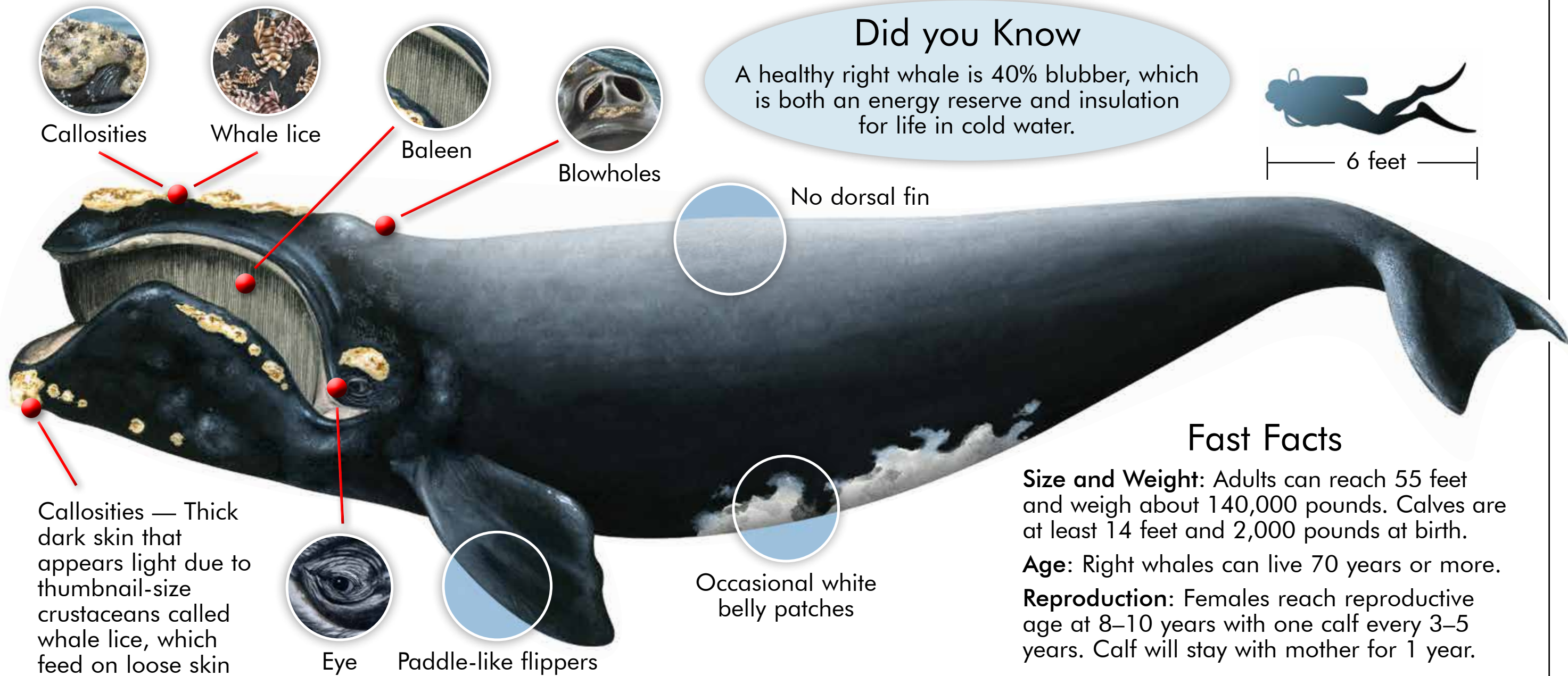
Flippers are all black, broad, and paddle shaped



No Dorsal Fin

Right whales have wide, smooth backs

Up close and personal with a very big animal



Did you Know

A healthy right whale is 40% blubber, which is both an energy reserve and insulation for life in cold water.

Fast Facts

Size and Weight: Adults can reach 55 feet and weigh about 140,000 pounds. Calves are at least 14 feet and 2,000 pounds at birth.

Age: Right whales can live 70 years or more.

Reproduction: Females reach reproductive age at 8–10 years with one calf every 3–5 years. Calf will stay with mother for 1 year.

An Urban Whale

North Atlantic right whales keep close to the coast. On their migrations between summer feeding grounds in Canada and winter calving areas off Georgia and Florida, the whales pass close to several large metropolitan areas with busy ports.



Nearly all of the few remaining North Atlantic right whales occur off of eastern North America. Two other right whale species occur in the Pacific Ocean and the Southern Hemisphere.



Threats and Conservation

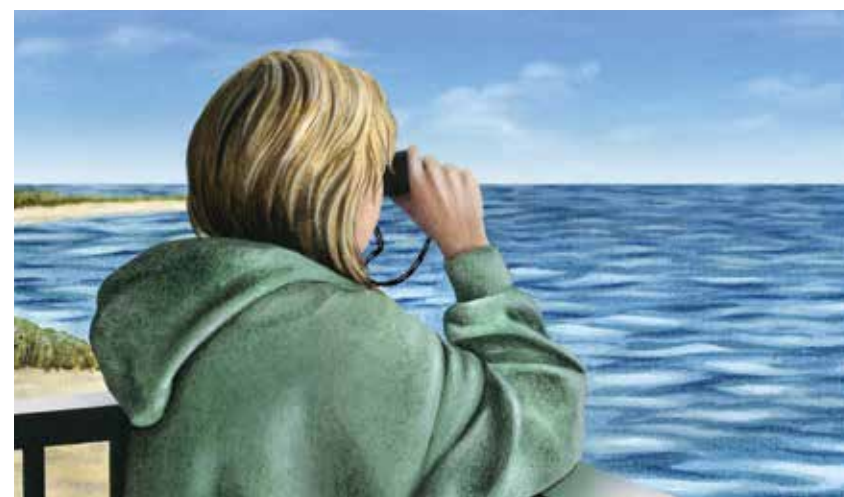
Entanglement and vessel strikes are the leading causes of death for North Atlantic right whales. Entanglement in rope and net from commercial fishing gear causes debilitating injuries, infection, and prolonged death. Modifications to fishing gear, area and seasonal fishery closures, and reducing the amount of fishing gear in the water, especially rope, can help reduce entanglement. Conservation efforts and regulations to reduce fatal



vessel strikes include routing of ships and reducing vessel speed in areas when and where whales are known to occur, as well as alerting mariners to the presence of whales. Visit NOAA Fisheries, www.nmfs.noaa.gov, for additional current information.

How to Help

An informed and vigilant public will go a long way toward saving the North Atlantic right whale from extinction. You can contribute by taking part in educational campaigns, reporting sightings, choosing sustainable seafood, and communicating support for regulations that protect whales from vessel strikes and fishing gear entanglements.



Right whales can be very difficult to see and may not move away from vessels.

Report Sightings

Florida to North Carolina:
877-WHALE-HELP

Virginia to Maine:
866-755-NOAA

Boaters to U.S. Coast Guard
on VHF Ch. 16

For Boaters

- **Stay Alert** — Post a lookout and know what whales look like at the surface from a distance.
- **Slow down** — 10 knots or slower in areas where right whales are known to occur.
- **Keep Your Distance** — Approaching whales or remaining within 500 yards of them is against the federal law.

NORTH ATLANTIC Right Whale *Eubalaena glacialis*

For hundreds of years, these were the "right" whales to hunt. They were slow, lived in coastal waters, and their blubber-rich bodies floated after they were killed. By the 20th century, the population of North Atlantic right whales may have numbered only in the dozens. Today, this unique marine mammal remains in a struggle to escape extinction.

Diet and Feeding

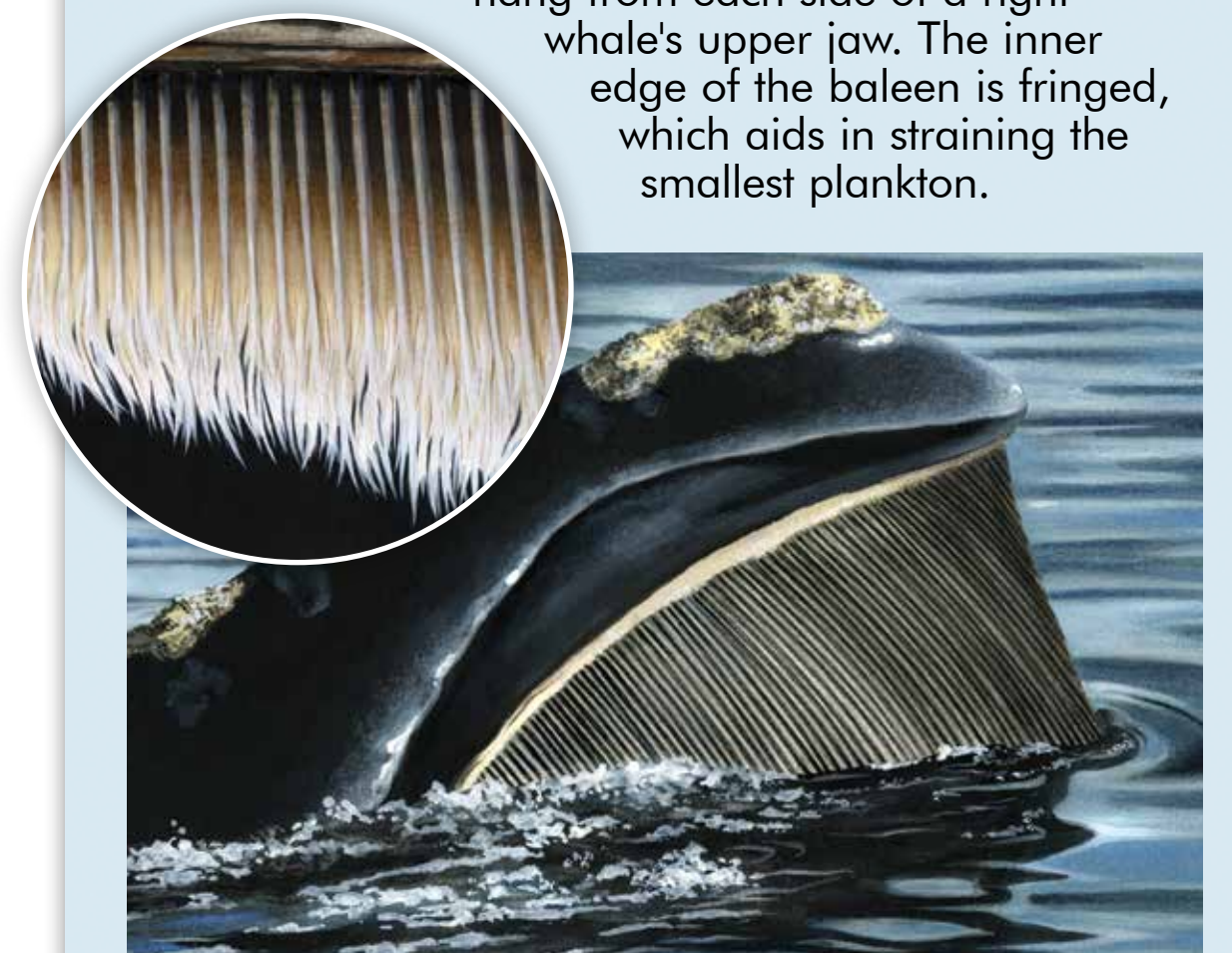
Right whales feed on swarms of copepods — tiny planktonic crustaceans the whales strain from the water using their baleen.



Water and copepods enter the whale's mouth through an opening in the front. The water flows out the sides of the mouth and plankton are caught in the finely fringed baleen. The masses of tiny captured prey are swallowed with help from a massive tongue. Right whales swallow about 4% of their body weight in copepods each day during their feeding season.

Copepods
← Actual size

Without teeth, right whales depend completely on their baleen to capture food. Baleen is made of keratin, the tough, flexible, fibrous protein that also forms hair, fingernails and horns. About 200 strips of baleen hang from each side of a right whale's upper jaw. The inner edge of the baleen is fringed, which aids in straining the smallest plankton.



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Poster Series No. 4