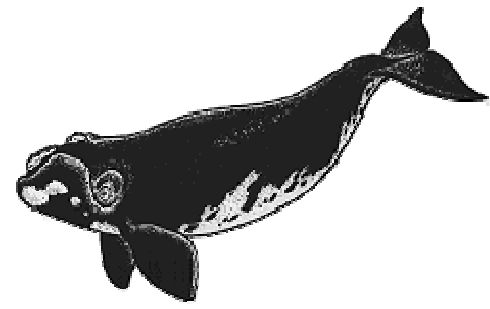


Southern Right Whale - Fact Sheet

Eubalaena australis



The Southern Right Whale is a baleen whale, one of three species classified as the Right Whale belonging to the genus *Eubalaena*.

Around 7,500 Southern Right Whales are spread throughout the southern part of the Southern Hemisphere.

Description

Like other right whales, Southern Right Whales are readily distinguished from other whales by the callosities on their heads, a broad back without a dorsal fin, and a long arching mouth that begins above the eye. The body of the whale is very dark grey or black, occasionally with some white patches on the belly. The right whale's callosities appear white, not due to skin pigmentation, but to large colonies of cyamids or whale lice.

Southern Right Whales are almost indistinguishable from the closely related Atlantic Northern Right Whale and the North Pacific Right Whale, with only some minor skull differences. They may have fewer callosities on their head and more on their lower lips than the northern species. The maximum size of an adult female is 18.5 m (61 feet) and approximately 130 tons

Behavior

One behavior unique to Southern Right Whales, known as *sailing* is that of using their elevated flukes to catch the wind. It appears to be a form of play.

Population and distribution

Southern Right Whales spend the summer months in the far Southern Ocean feeding, probably close to Antarctica. They migrate north in winter for breeding and can be seen around the coasts of Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Mozambique, New Zealand and South Africa. The total population is estimated to be between seven and eight thousand. Since hunting of the Southern Right Whale ceased, stocks are estimated to have grown by 7% a year. It appears that the South American, South African and Australasian groups intermix very little, if at all, because the fidelity of a mother to its feeding and calving habitats is very strong. The mother also passes these instincts to her calves.

Because the oceans are so large, it is very difficult to accurately gauge the size of a whale population. The estimate of 7,000 Southern Right Whales came about following an IWC workshop held in Cape Town in March 1998. Researchers used data about adult female populations from three surveys (one in each of Argentina, South Africa and Australia collected during the 1990s) and extrapolated to include unsurveyed areas, number of males and calves using available male:female and adult:calf ratios to give an estimated 1999 figure of 7,000 animals.

Whale watching

In Australia's winter and spring, Southern Right Whales can be seen from the Bunda Cliffs and Twin Rocks, both along the remote Great Australian Bight in South Australia.

(This information was taken from Wikipedia)

For the latest info on whales in Esperance: www.visitesperance.com