Naming Right Whales

Each year, we will select 15-20 whales to be named. Anyone can email phamiltn@neaq.org to request a whale to be named. Once we have a list of potential candidates, we go through and choose the ones that have distinctive enough traits to be likely to get reasonable names (right whales are particularly difficult to name because we use such a diverse set of features on each animal to match against). Once the final list has been compiled, the entire North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium receives an email with a link to a web site where potential names can be submitted. Anyone who is registered with the Consortium can submit names. You can also submit names on behalf of someone who is not registered.

When thinking of names, it is important to remember that recognizing whales in the field *is* the primary purpose for naming right whales. Real-time recognition of individuals allows researchers to determine, while at sea, whether we need a biopsy sample, if a whale has been satellite tagged previously, whether and when it was last seen entangled, etc. Therefore, the most useful names will be those that serve as a mnemonic device based on some physical feature that is stable and readily visible from a boat. It is researchers in the field that will most benefit from these names. Having said that, names also serve as a way for the general public to connect better with these animals and are extremely useful when an individual right whale is in the press. So, the aim is to have all names be both useful and tasteful.

Criteria

In general, names should

- Be based on any physical feature that is regularly visible from a boat (callosity, scars, body or head shape). Try to avoid belly-based names as those will be less useful. Because cyamid coverage can change and obvious patterns in the callosity can come and go, the outline of the callosity is more useful than topographical features in the center of the callosity.
- Be palatable to the public. Because entangled, injured, or dead right whales can receive quite a bit of press, think about seeing the name splashed across the newspaper when you think of ideas.
- Not be names of corporations
- Not be proper names unless that name/person relates to the markings (for example, we have two whales with especially long lip callosities that are named after well-known people who had distinctive mustaches).

Once the nomination period ends, voting on names begins. People/organizations who have submitted an average of 50 sightings or more over the previous 3 years are eligible to vote.

We use Ranked Choice Voting (RVC) for whale naming. Below is a brief explanation of how this system works. RCV allows for increased input on names from voters, even if their top choice name is not selected.

1. Voters will rank the names nominated for each whale by preference (1 being most preferred name).
2. If a name wins an outright majority of first-preference votes (i.e., 50 percent plus one), that name will enter the final voting confirmation phase.
3. If, on the other hand, none of the nominated names wins an outright majority of first-preference votes, the name with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated.
4. All first-preference votes for the failed name are eliminated, and the second choice preference for whale name are distributed to the remaining names

5. A new tally is conducted to determine whether any name has won an outright majority of the adjusted votes.
6. The process is repeated until a name wins a majority of votes cast.
7. Should the option “none of the submitted names” rank #1, we will do a simple runoff between that option and the top ranked name to confirm that people prefer the whale to remain unnamed.

Winning names are announced at the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium Annual Meeting.

Whales to name in 2022

More pictures can be found at the Catalog web site:
http://rwcatalog.neaq.org/

#1208: 41+, calving female.
looks similar to 1515, dip in rostrum

#1515: 37+, calving female (8 calves).

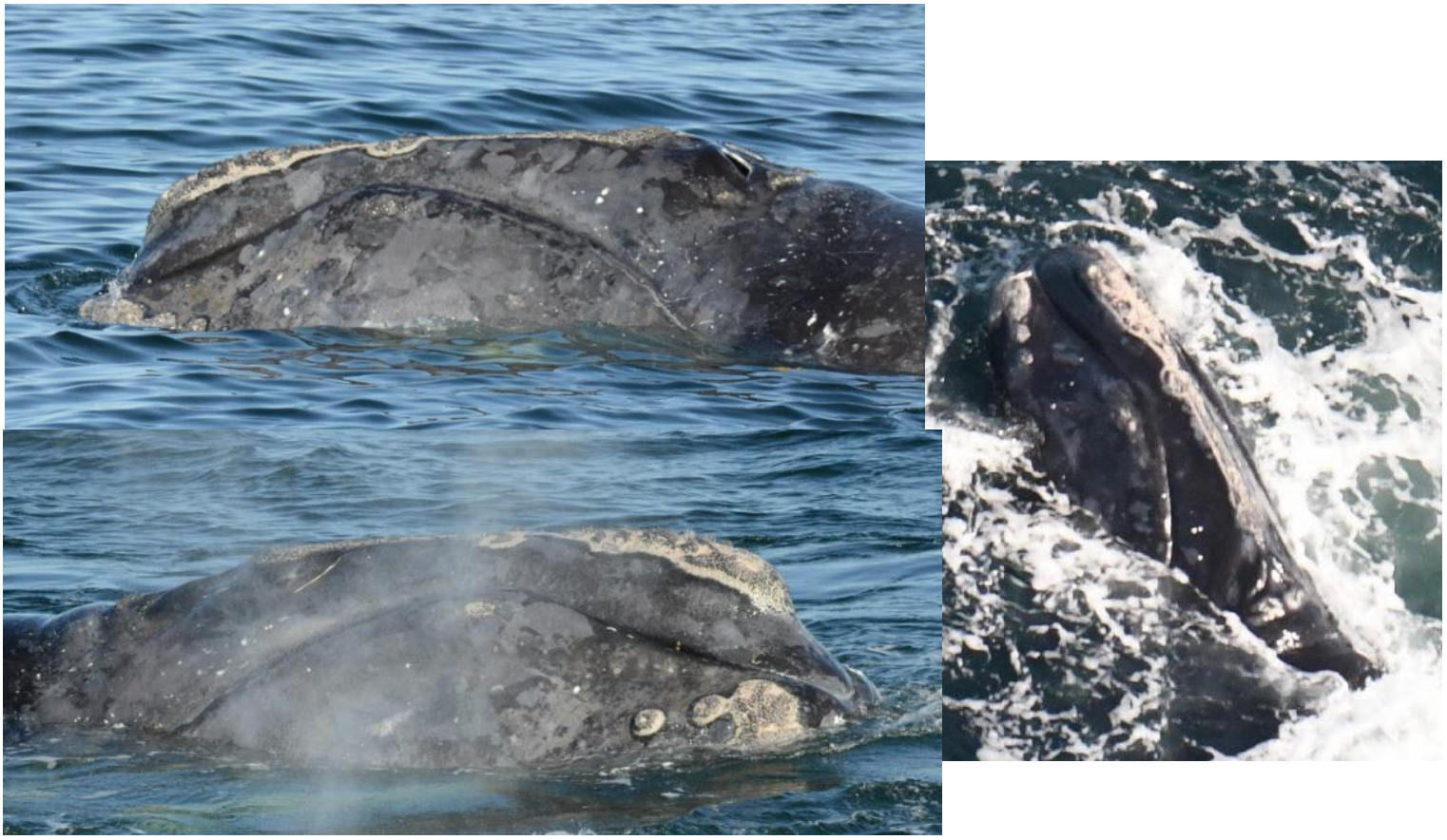
Tooth decay, diagonal islands off bonnet, very faint post blowhole callosities with scars behind them

#2541: 27yo male.

Pointy bonnet and coaming, widely offset islands

#2904: 23yo male.

Three dots on left head, line scar on the R of coaming, fat post blowhole callosities

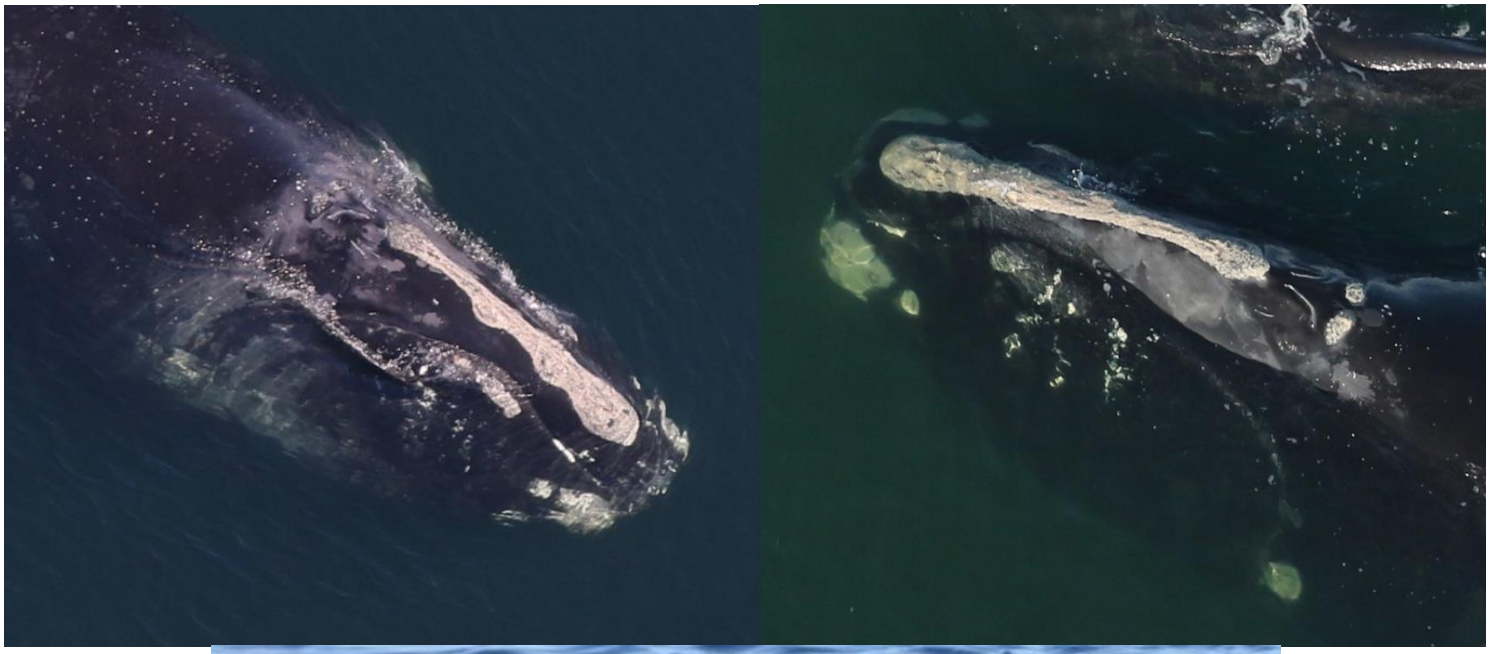


#3060: 23yo male.

Callosity: bonnet & coaming veer off in opposite directions. Ambiguous whether it is broken or continuous, Ped scars. Scar in front of bonnet.

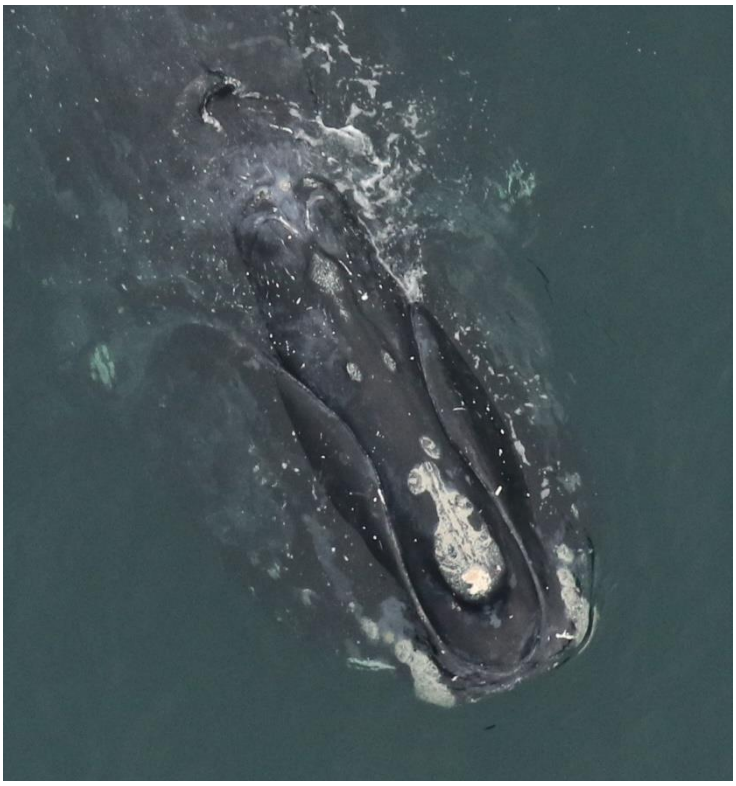
#3157: 21yo calving female.

Mandible scarring. Roman nose. Tooth decay. Generally low callosity



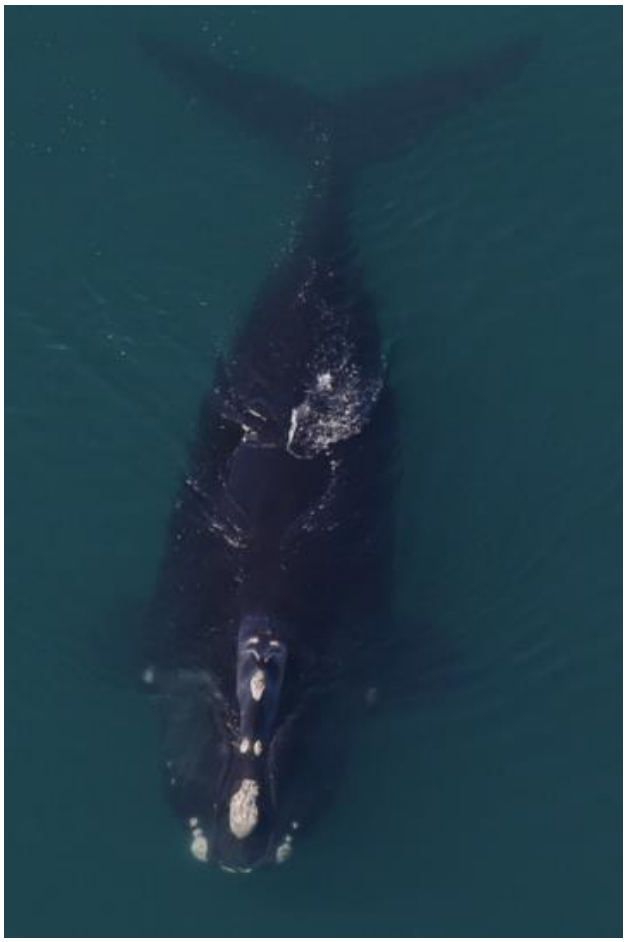
#3220: 20+, calving female.

Distinct headlights, white fluke tips. Only ever seen on the calving grounds every 10 years.



#3292: 20yo calving female.

Symmetrical islands, dip in rostrum, scar near front of bonnet.



#3390: 19+, calving female.

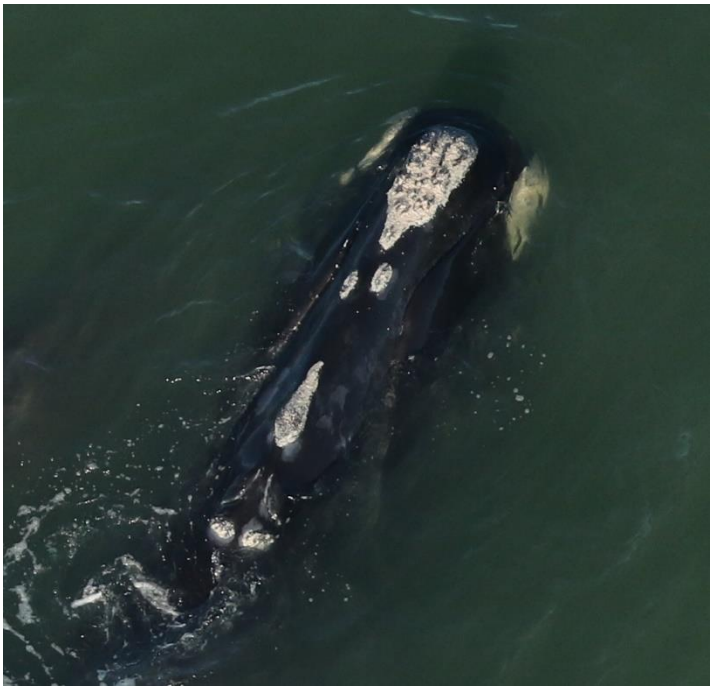
Broken coaming, fused island right. Ped/fluke scars.

#3414: 18yo male.

Callosity: distinctive bonnet shape & topography, tooth decay. Notch in left fluke.

#3430: 18yo calving female.

Unusual bonnet shape, upturned flukes

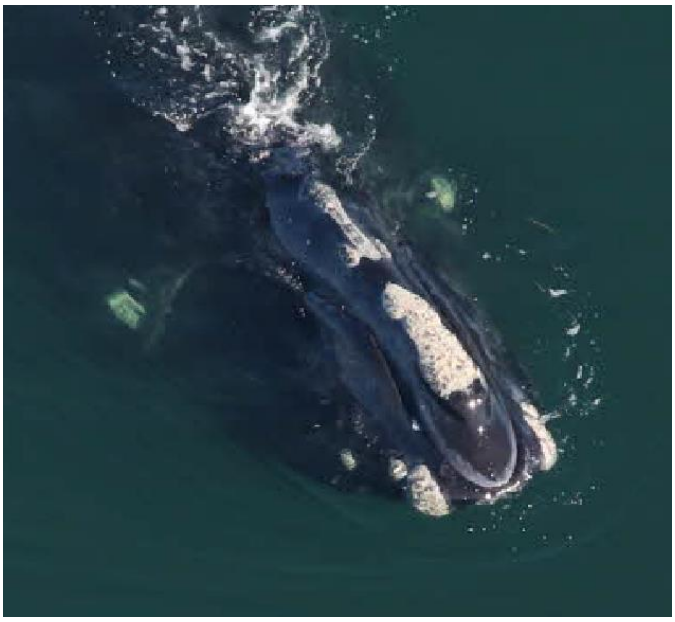


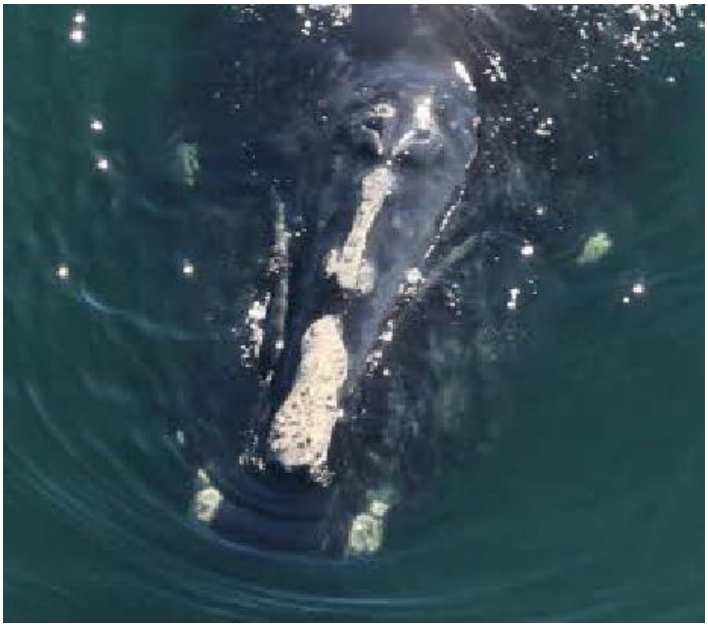
#3651: 16yo male.

Chunky callosity and lips, wrapping white pigment along mandibles, white line off the back of the coaming.

#3720: 15yo calving female.

Long coaming, tooth decay, lots of small white dots on body.



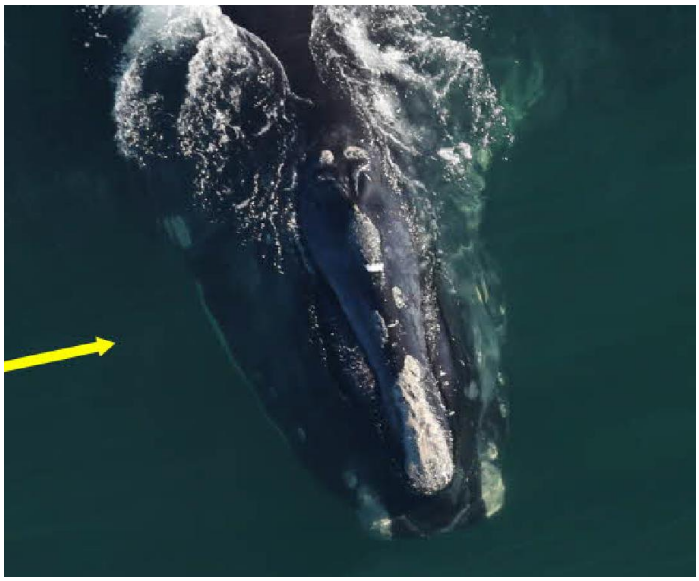


#3840: 14+, male.

Long dribble-y callosity, lots of peninsulas. Scar in bonnet, asymmetric lips One much larger than the other.

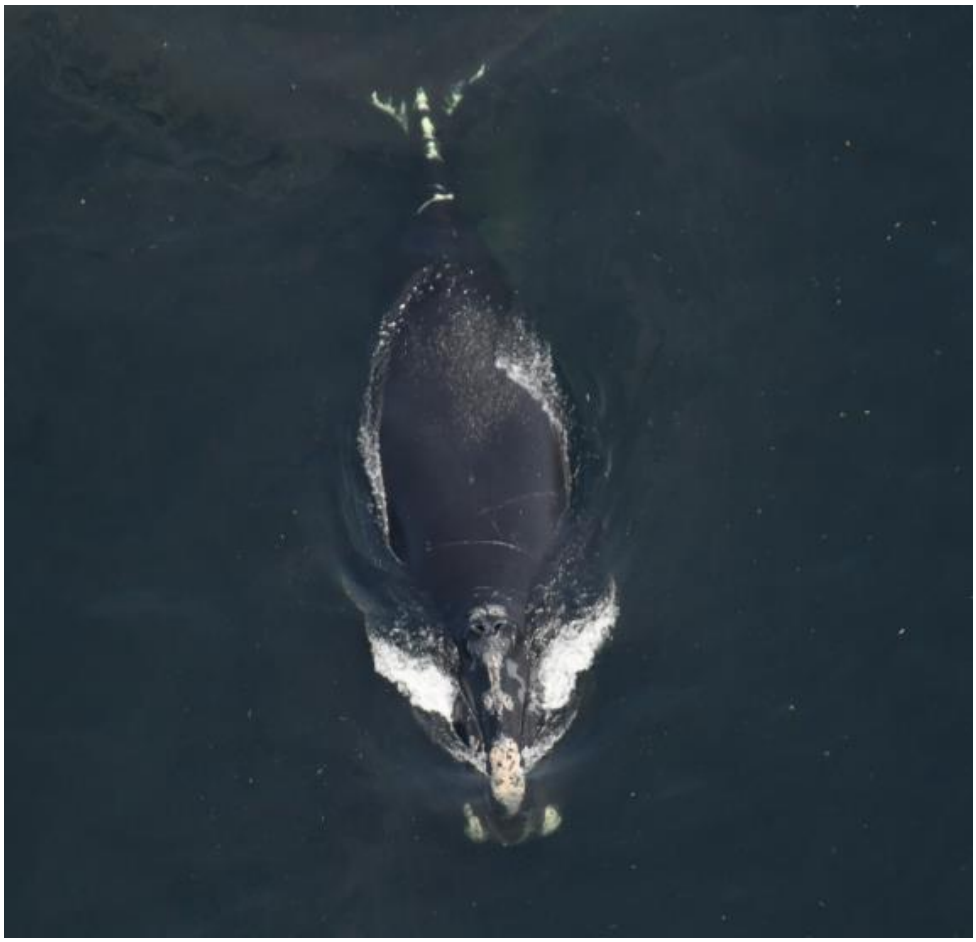
#3942: 13yo calving female.

Scar across coaming. Extensive ped scars, white wrapping around mandibles.



#4180: 12+, calving female.

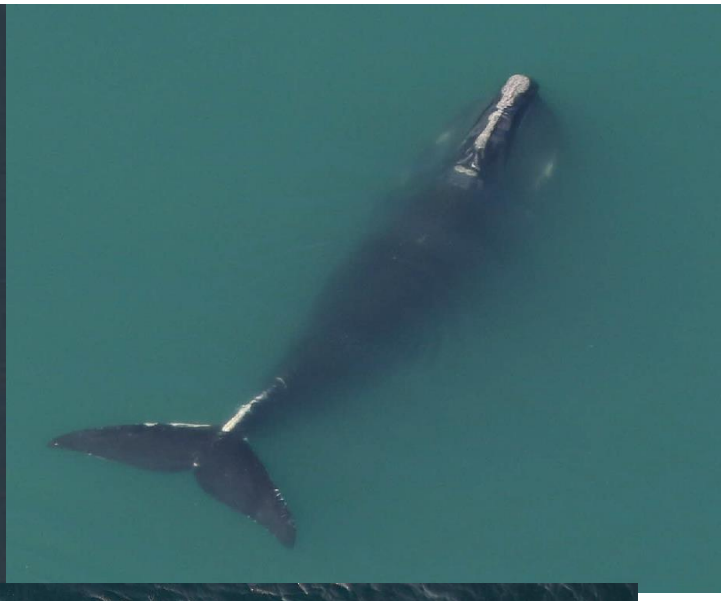
Shape of head/callosity. R lip scars. Ped scars and faint back scars.



#4523: 7yo male.

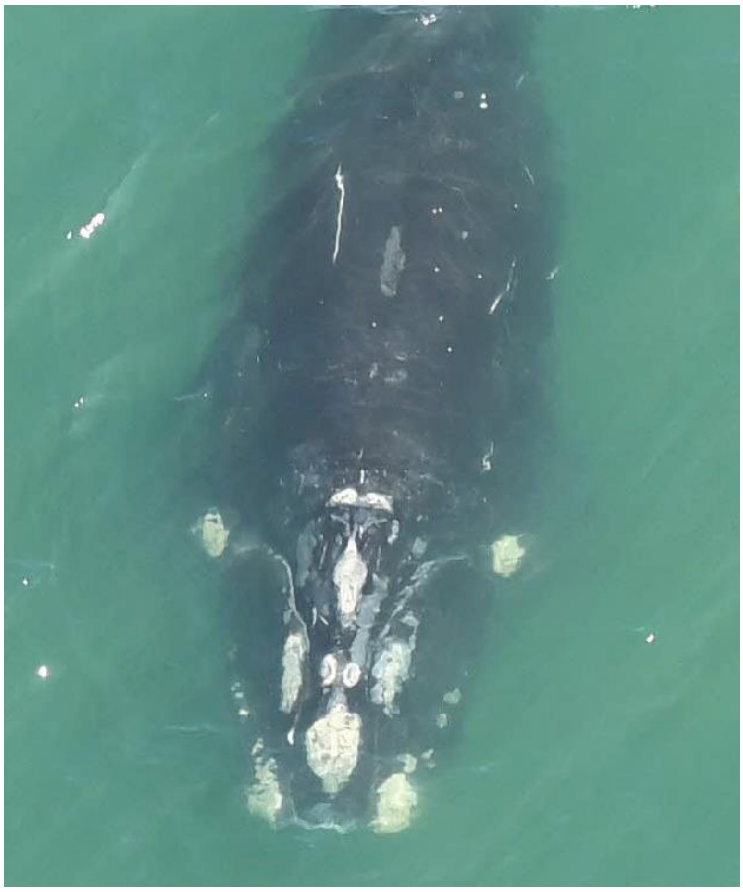
Shape of bonnet/islands. Four post-blow callosities. Several whales with a similar callosity pattern.

#4615: 6yo male.
Head scars, distinctive bonnet left, blow hole scar, ped scars.
(Entangled at last sighting.)



#4640: 6yo female.

Callosity: islands are sometimes fused to bonnet. Scar on right head. Tall/pointed coaming. Part of 2016 calf switch.



#4711: 5yo male.

Distinctive fused islands by bonnet. Faint island right, 3-4 small post blowhole callosities