Naming Right Whales

Each year, we will select 15-20 whales to be named. Anyone can email awarren@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 2023

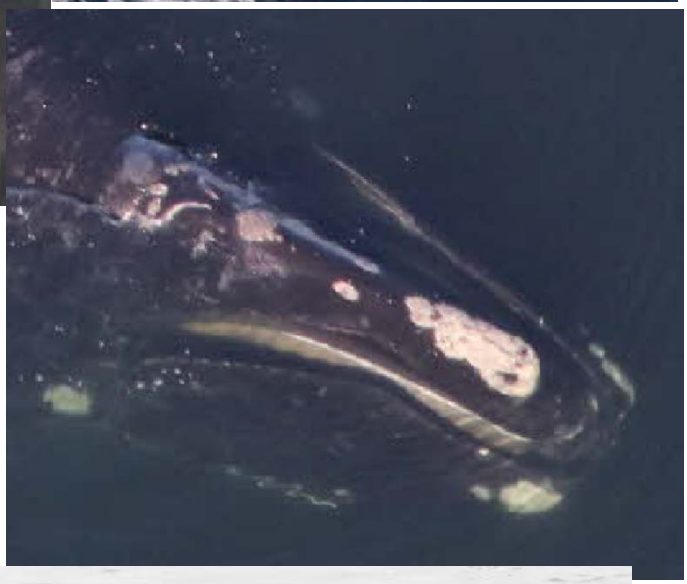
More pictures can be found at the Catalog web site:
http://rwcatalog.neaq.org/

#1042: 43+ male.

Unique callosity, notch scar on dorsal flukes.

#1711: 36yo, calving female.

Scars on head, headlights, bonnet shape, 3-4 post-blows, scars on left flank and ped.

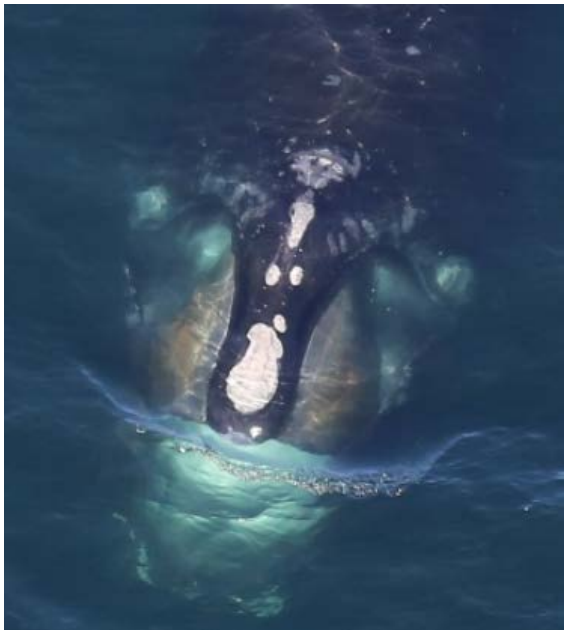


#2910: 24+ male.

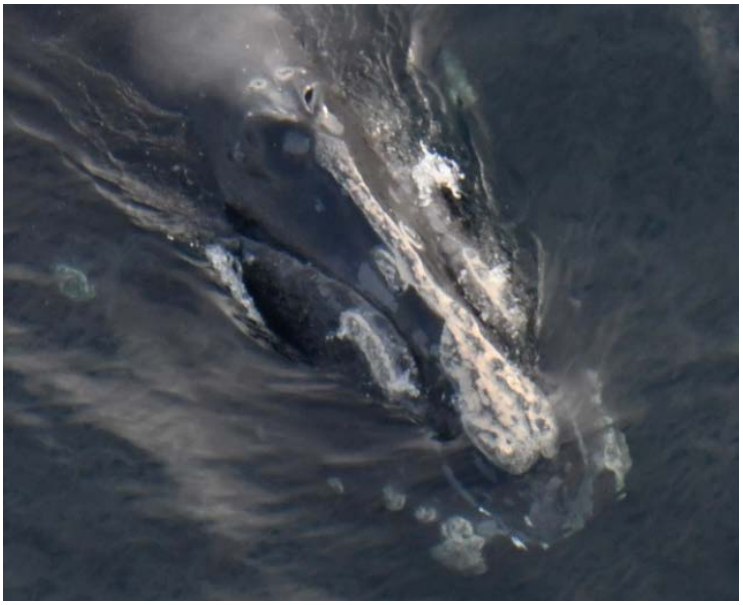
Scarring in right side of bonnet, callosity can sometimes appear broken, lip scar, ped/fluke scarring.

#3130: 22yo calving female.

Scar at front of rostrum, orientation of 3 islands similar to other whales (1209, 4042), 3 post-blows.



#3191: 23+ male.
Double peninsula right, tooth decay, lips, callosity seems to have a slight curve to it.



#3333: 20yo male.

Scar in callosity, lots of scarring around head, lips, blow holes, ped and flukes. Distinctive scar on trailing edge of fluke.

#3693: 17+, calving female.

Continuous with island and lots of peninsulas.

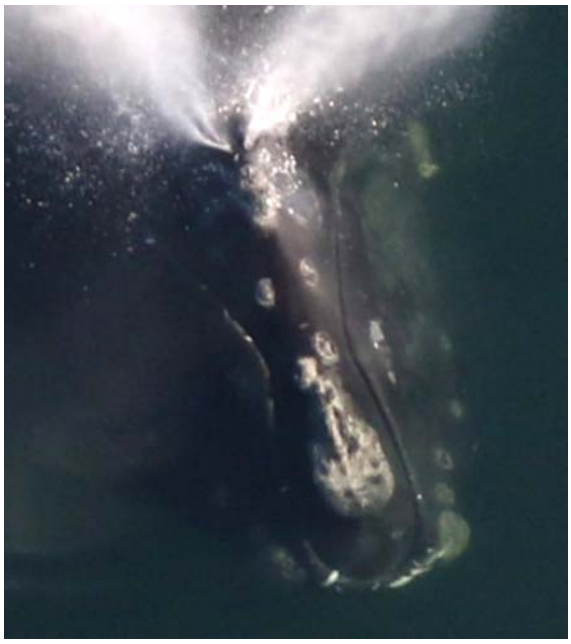
#3917: 14yo female.
Scarring on head, lips, ped, fluke.

#3946: 14yo female.

Scarring in bonnet and on chin. Scars on left blow hole.

#4042: 13yo male.

Orientation of 3 islands similar to other whales (1209 & 3130), currently entangled – this may change appearance of existing ped scars.



#4129: 12yo male.

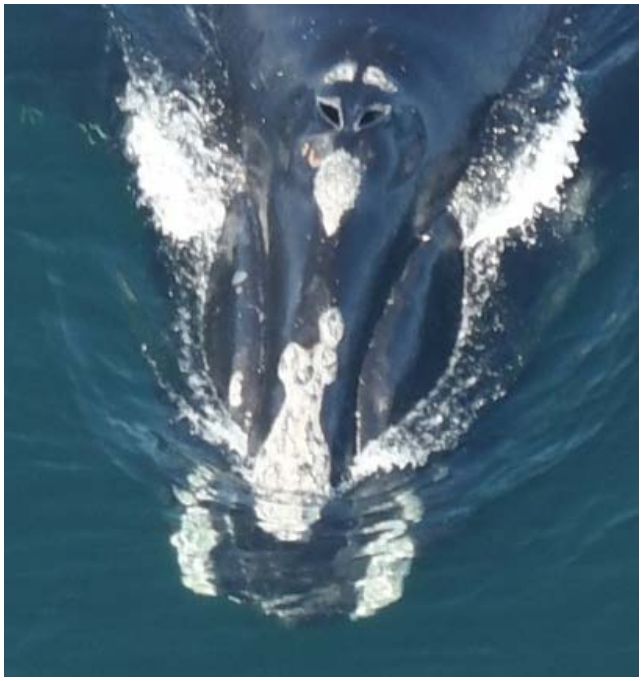
Unique callosity, scars on left lip, lip callosity on right side only, right fluke droops.

#4220: 11yo male.

Unique bonnet with attached islands, 4 post-blows, right flank scar

#4310: 10yo female.

Unique callosity, islands typically connected to bonnet.



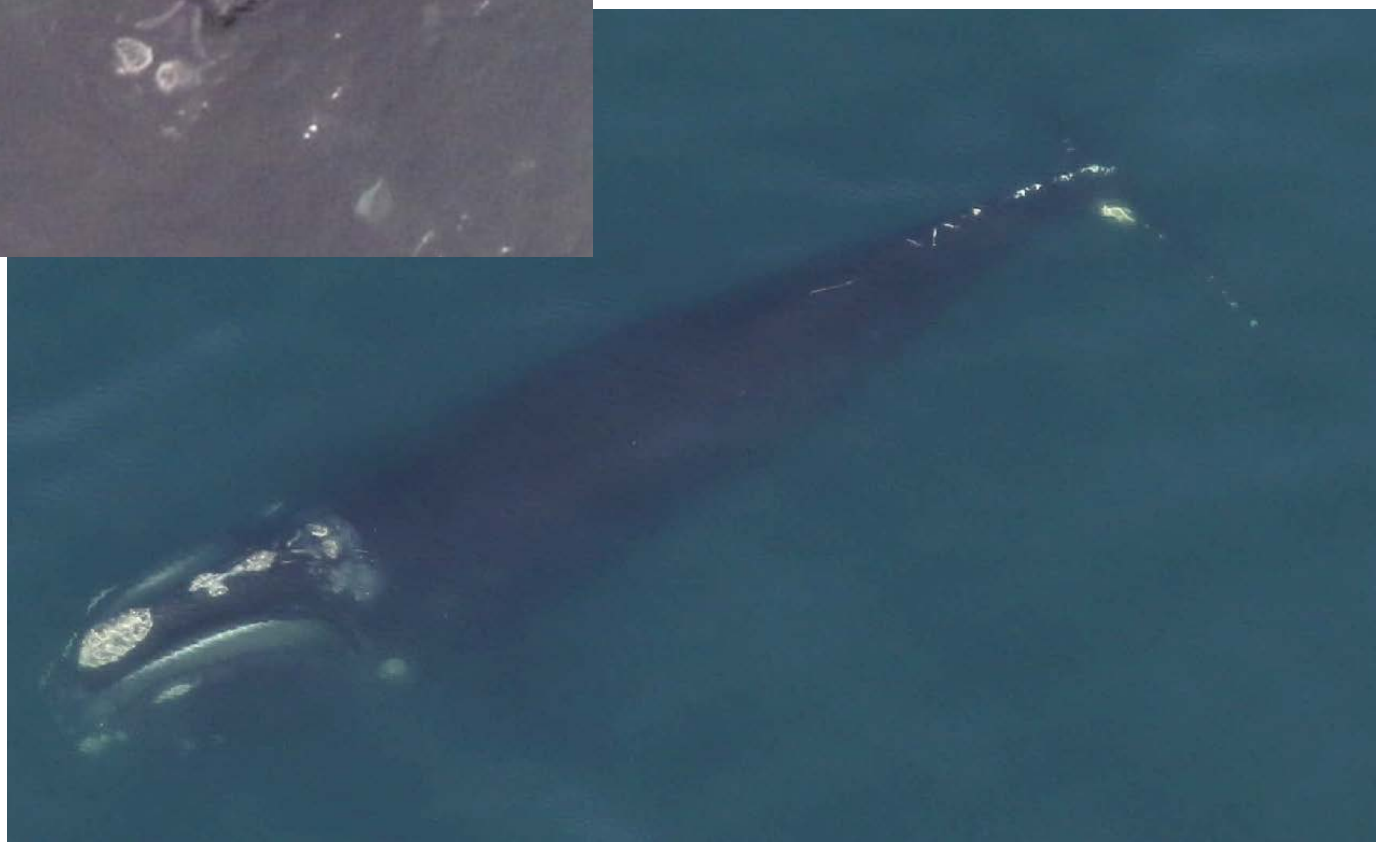
#4539: 8yo male.

Scarring across coaming and blow holes, dip in rostrum, generally low topography, lip callosity only on right side.

#4546: 8yo female.

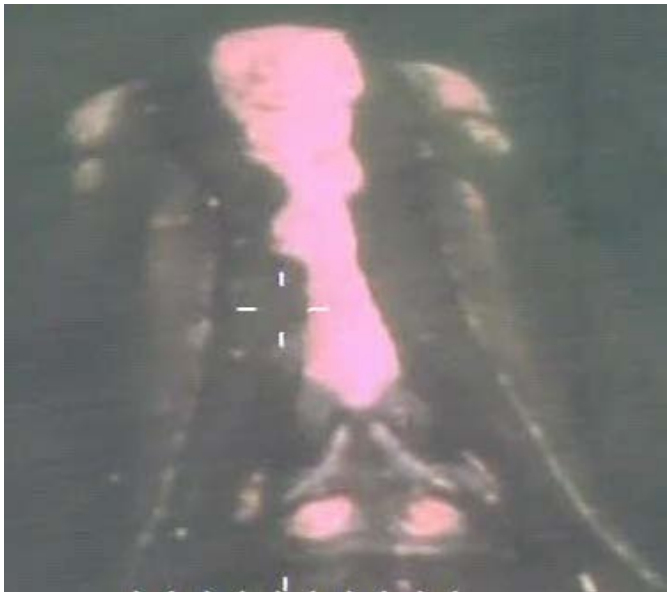
Distinctive callosity, islands sometimes fused, left lip scar.

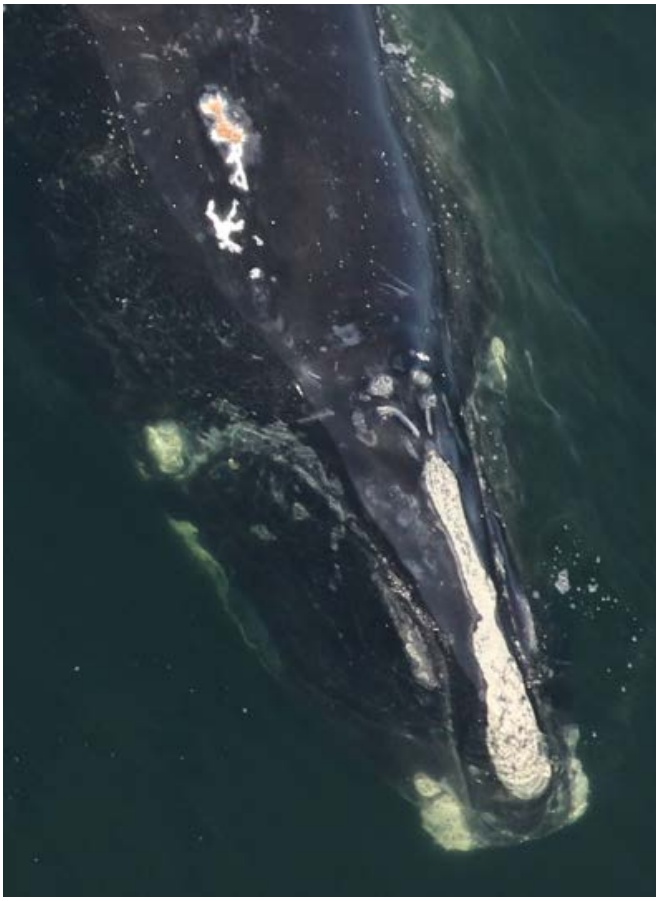
#4633: 7yo, female.
Distinctive bulgy/peaky bonnet.



#4980: 4yo unknown sex.

Lesions on back





#5001: 3yo unknown sex.

Scars on right flank, symmetrical peninsulas, white chin.

#5046: 3yo male.

Bulky continuous callosity and lips, scar at front of rostrum.

#5120: 2yo female.

Callosity may shift between LPC, islands, and continuous. Currently entangled, unsure how ped scars will settle.