



MAMMALS

RIGHT WHALE

ABOUT

The Right Whale - *Eubalaena glacialis* (northern) or *australis* (southern) - is a baleen whale (one that has overlapping plates hanging from the upper jaw) with a bow-shaped lower jaw and a head so big it measures up to a quarter of its entire body length. This whale is hairier than most, with up to 300 hairs on the tip of the lower jaw and 100 on the upper jaw. They also have a series of horny growths behind their 2 blowholes, on the chin, above the eyes, on the lower lip, and on the rostrum (the beak-like upper jaw) - called callosities. Northern Right Whale females grow to about 50 feet (15.2 meters) long, and males are slightly smaller at 49 feet (15 meters) long. They weigh in at 120,000 pounds (54,000 kg). Southern females and males are larger by one or two feet. Their skin is usually black to dark grey with white and/or brown patches. Calves are blue to grey in coloring. Right Whales have no dorsal fin or throat grooves and have large flippers. It is thought these whales may live for over 60 years.

DID YOU KNOW?

This species of whale is rich in blubber, which is why whalers considered them the “right” whale to hunt – thus their name. They were easy to catch, being relatively slow swimmers, and they floated after being killed. Like all baleen whales, they are seasonal feeders that filter feed plankton and tiny crustaceans. They swim slowly with their mouths open, constantly eating. Right Whales live in temperate and cool seas in both hemispheres, at the surface of the ocean. The female gestates for twelve months and the calf is born tail first, near the surface of the water - instinctively swimming to the surface within ten seconds to take its first breath, helped along by its mother’s flippers. Within thirty minutes of birth the baby can swim. Newborn Right Whales are 16 to 19 feet (4.8-6 meters) long. Calves nurse for a year, and when weaned are roughly 28 feet long. Northern Right Whales are near extinction due to hunting and are endangered. It is estimated that there are only 500-1,000 northern Right Whales alive. The southern Right Whale is more abundant (approx. 3,000), but also vulnerable to extinction and considered endangered.

For more detailed information visit www.enchantedlearning.com.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

What does a mother whale use to help her newborn get to the surface for its first breath?

- a) Flippers
- b) Tail
- c) Nose
- d) Upper jaw

Answer is A.

