



# Fall 2003

## Right Whale Volunteer News

Julie Albert, Program Coordinator

# Right Whale Calving Season Begins!

### Report Sightings to MRC: 1-888-97-WHALE

MRC is looking forward to another above-average calving season for the fourth year in a row! With only about 325 right whales remaining in the North Atlantic, it is imperative these whales are protected from their number one killer – collisions with ships. During their migration from New England to the southeast coast, pregnant mothers transect several busy shipping lanes. Combined with no obvious dorsal fin and their low-lying nature, they are at risk for injury or death, and possibly extinction. Help us protect the North Atlantic right whales while they are in our waters so they may return safely to the Northeast in the spring with their new calves. Calving season officially starts December 1 and continues to March 31 every year. However, keep in mind the weather will play a role in their arrival and departure. Right whales have been spotted in the Southeast as early as mid-Nov. and as late as mid-April. We rely on volunteers to report sightings. It may mean life

or death for a whale. With only about 325 North Atlantic right whales left in the world, the population cannot afford to lose a single individual, especially a female or a calf. Please report whale sightings immediately to **1-888-97-WHALE (1-888-979-4253)**, even if you are not sure it is a right whale. How can you tell? The five characteristics listed below will help you positively identify a right whale:

- ◆ large white bumps on the head called callosities
- ◆ black, paddle-shaped, short, stubby flippers
- ◆ black, triangular tail
- ◆ **no** dorsal fin on its back
- ◆ V-shaped blow from blowhole when it exhales

### Protocol for Reporting Whale Sightings

Please report whale sightings to **1-888-97-WHALE** immediately. Try to call while you are still watching the whale. If you are unable to do so, please have the following information ready when you call:

- ◆ your location
- ◆ your contact information
- ◆ total number of whales
- ◆ whether a calf is present
- ◆ direction of movement



Right whale calf with callosities on its head. Photo Credit: Owen Nichols/CCS

If you leave a message on the hotline, please stay near your phone so we can reach you. All we need is a few brief minutes to collect information from you before you head back outside to watch the whales!

### Whale Program Gets Additional Staff

Julie Albert welcomes **Lynna Kauckeck** and **Karita Negandhi** to the program this year. Lynna will be manning the office helping us stay organized and educate the public. She spent time with right whales in the Bay of Fundy last summer. Karita is

a part-time work-study student who will be helping with the project. Julie looks forward to working with both young ladies throughout the 2004 season and greatly appreciates their help!

### MRC's Contact Information

To report a whale sighting, please call the hotline number immediately (**1-888-97-WHALE**). For any other questions or comments, please contact MRC's office at 270 Paint Street, Rockledge, Florida 32955; (321) 504-4500; or [council@mrcirl.org](mailto:council@mrcirl.org). You can also access MRC's website at [www.mrcirl.org](http://www.mrcirl.org).

Remember, it is illegal to be within 1500 feet (500 yards) of a North Atlantic right whale, even if the whale approaches you. If a right whale is within 1500 feet of shore, people are not even supposed to be in the water. In this instance, you are to leave the area at a slow, safe speed. The best place to observe right whales is from the beach or your balcony. If you observe anyone harassing right whales, please report it to the sighting hotline at 1-888-97-WHALE.