

## Volunteer Reports Southernmost Sighting

Last spring MRC was trying to confirm a whale sighting reported by **David Logan**. He described a right whale playing with his boat off Juno Beach on January 25th. Through his persistence and generosity, he donated photos of the whale taken by **BOATPIX.com, Inc.** The photo pictured below not only confirms it is a right whale, but may be used for individual identification. The whale's identity is currently unknown but the New England Aquarium staff is confident it was a 2001-2002 calf. To our knowledge, it is the southernmost sighting of a right whale for the 2002-2003 calving season. Documentation of right whales in the northeast over the summer will help identify the animal. MRC will keep you updated! Thanks again, Mr. Logan!



Photo courtesy BOATPIX.com, Inc. 2003

## Update on 2002-2003 Calving Season

from New England Aquarium, *Right Whale News*, Vol. 10, No. 3

The official calf count for the 2003 calving season is nineteen, according to Amy Knowlton at the New England Aquarium. One calf was photographed in the Bay of Fundy during the summer that scientists did not see here in the calving grounds last winter. Of the nineteen mothers, five of them were first-time mothers. Also, of the four mothers who lost their calves in 2001, two returned to calve again in 2003. This was a welcome surprise, considering the average time between births is now more than five years. About 29 other individuals were spotted in the southeast, making a total of approximately 67 right whales that visited us last year! There are no new entanglements to report.

We almost made it through a whole year without a mortality. Almost. The first week of October a dead female right whale was spotted in the Bay of Fundy. It is estimated the animal had been dead one to two weeks before it was towed ashore and underwent a necropsy (an animal autopsy). The necropsy showed severe bruising characteristic of taking place before death. The whale had a broken lower jawbone and a massive fracture in her skull. The death of right whale #2150, a young mother, was undoubtedly caused by a ship strike. She was first spotted in 1991 and gave birth to her first and only calf in 2001. Unfortunately, this came at a time when the shipping lanes in the Bay were shifted to avoid such instances.

Funding for this newsletter was generously donated by the Brevard Zoo.

## Volunteers Aid in Reporting of Injured Whale

Information and photos courtesy of Jim Hain

A severely injured right whale was reported to MRC's hotline and photographed off New Smyrna Beach on March 6, 2003. The whale was heavily scarred and had serious abrasions and marks from what is thought to be a recent entanglement. The injuries included the head region, peduncle (tail base), and flukes. The whale had numerous orange cyamids (whale lice) and was judged to be in poor condition. In June, the New England Aquarium confirmed the identification as #3170, first seen as a calf in Florida in 2001, and seen in September 2002 in the Bay of Fundy. This record and important documentation of an injured whale is attributed to the reporting and response of the volunteer sighting network. These photos to the right show the distinct characteristics and appearance of an injured whale to aid in monitoring and reporting. It also reminds us that, along with the monitoring of healthy whales, we also need to be on the lookout for injured whales.

Photos from top: head showing areas of skin abraded away; middle: large wound on tail base in front of flukes showing whale lice; bottom: rear section of back showing scars from fishing line or rope (whale facing left).

