

NOAA Fisheries and Partners Helping Marine Animals in Distress

Recent Success Stories; Previously Entangled Right Whales Give Birth



2013: Right Whale "Equator" and Calf off Cumberland Island

Right whale #3294, "Equator," and her calf offshore of Cumberland Island, GA on January 21, 2013. Equator is named for the white scar across her back, which she got from being entangled in fishing gear in 2008. Photo by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission., taken under NOAA permit #15488

While NOAA is well known for weather and oceanographic studies, you may not know that a branch of NOAA is also working diligently to help protect and rescue marine animals in distress. Whether this is a cold-stunned sea turtle; a lone sick harbor seal stranded on a beach; a mother and calf right whale sighted in the cold northern waters; or an entangled marine animal; NOAA Fisheries and our partners are braving the elements and working long hours to help these animals and learn more about how to manage and conserve species in an ever-changing world.

Just this past week, NOAA Fisheries and partners from: Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies (PCCS), Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, and the New England Aquarium responded to assess and learn more about a mother and calf North Atlantic right whale named Wart that were observed in the chilly waters of Cape Cod Bay. Wart was successfully disentangled by a PCCS rescue team in 2010 but hadn't been seen since until she was observed in Mid-January with a new calf off Plymouth, MA. This was mixed news, there was cause for celebration that Wart had survived her entanglement and was healthy enough to have her 8th known calf, but also concern over their health of being so far north this early in the year when water temperatures are still so cold. Researchers are monitoring their condition as well as taking numerous samples from the water around them to ensure what food source they have and why they might be here so early in the year.



Wart and her calf earlier this week in Cape Cod Bay. Photo credit: Allison Henry, NOAA under Provincetown Center Coastal Studies, NOAA permit #14063

Another success story of NOAA Fisheries and our partners helping an animal in distress comes from the southeast US. Researchers from the GA Department of Natural Resources, FL Fish and Wildlife Commission, PCCS and NOAA Fisheries responded to an entangled North Atlantic right whale in 2008. This animal, named Equator, was successfully disentangled just days after it was first observed. This year Equator was observed again in the southeast US with her first known calf! This is great news for the right whale population that is estimated to be less than 400 animals and shows that all of our hard work responding to these animals is paying off.

Ultimately, we are striving to eliminate or minimize the human associated risks to these marine animals in their environment while managing healthy vibrant fisheries for our Nation, it is great to know that when these marine animals need help, there are numerous groups and individuals that are dedicated and trained to help them.

Protecting right whales

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/mm/rightwhales/RightWhalesSouth.htm>

Education and Outreach

<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/OutreachandEducation.htm>

Right whale sightings

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/protected_resources/right_whale/