

last of the right whales



A film by Nadine Pequeneza
Canada, 92 minutes
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Logline

North Atlantic right whales are dying faster than they can reproduce. With less than 400 remaining and only 90 breeding females, they could be extinct in 20 years unless we act now.

Short Synopsis

These gentle giants no longer die of natural causes. Instead, they are run over by ships or suffer lethal injuries from fishing gear. Over the past decade they've been dying at a rate of 24 per year. This staggering death toll is fueling a movement to save the first great whale to face extinction. **Last of the Right Whales** is the story of a disparate group of people - a wildlife photographer, a marine biologist, a whale rescuer, and a crab fisher - united in their cause to save the North Atlantic right whale. By joining forces these formidable allies are determined to stop the world's first great whale extinction. The film combines the 4K cinematography of a blue-chip nature film with the character-driven, vérité storytelling of a high-stakes drama. With unprecedented access to film the migration of the North Atlantic right whale from their calving ground off the coast of Florida to their new feeding area in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, this feature documentary brings a message of hope about the most at-risk, great whale on the planet.

Long Synopsis

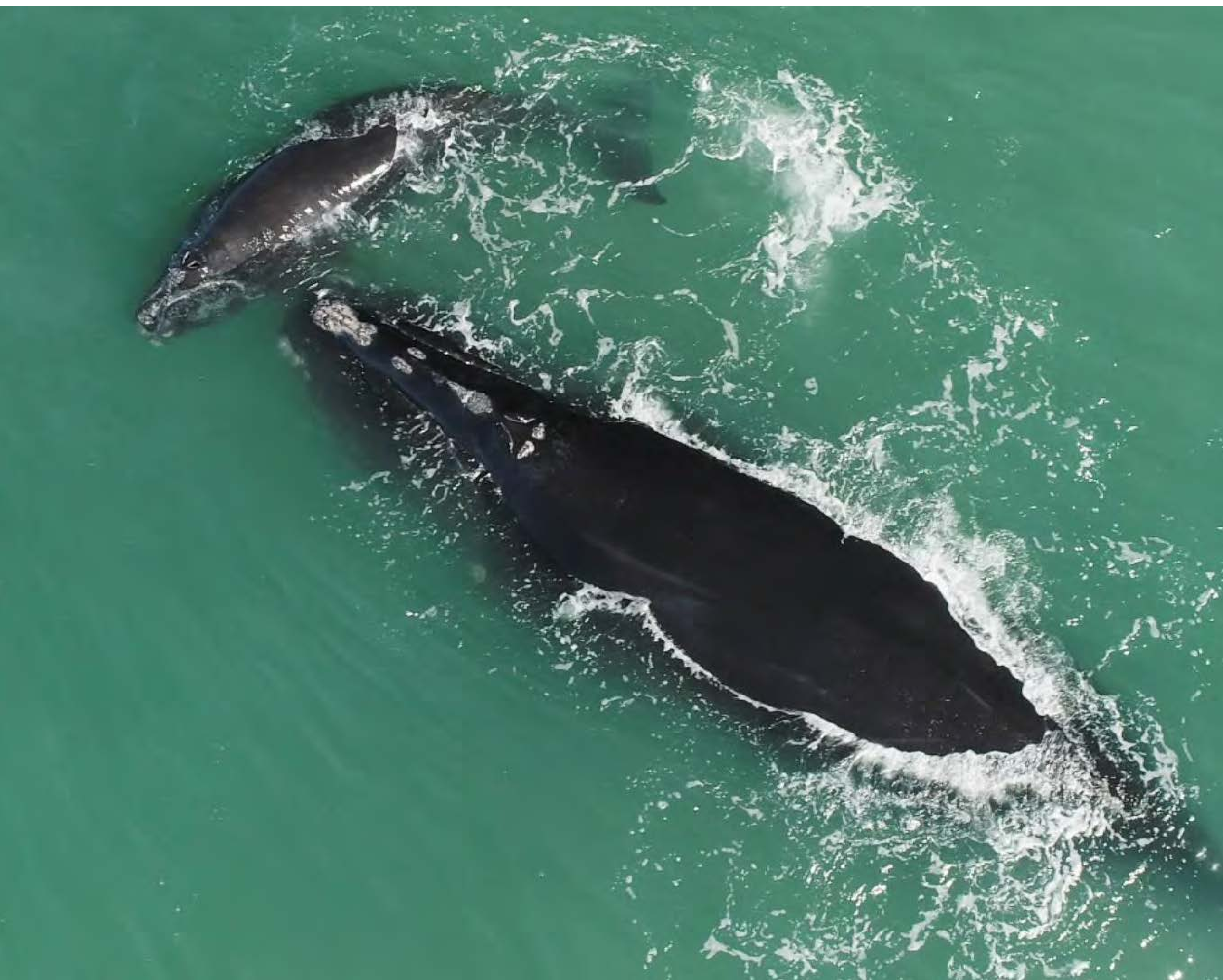
North Atlantic right whales have roamed the world's oceans for nearly 12 million years and returned from the brink of extinction twice before. Now once again these magnificent great whales are facing the end. **Last of the Right Whales** follows the North Atlantic right whale's 1,600-kilometre migration as observed through the eyes of scientists tracking its long journey of survival in a rapidly changing world. In each critical habitat – coastal Florida, Cape Cod Bay and the Gulf of St. Lawrence – scientists joined by fishers, photographers and rescuers are on a quest to discover what these great whales need to reproduce, nourish and travel in hazardous waters.

With the right whale as the film's central character, the movie combines stunning aerial and underwater cinematography with character-driven, vérité storytelling. Because North Atlantic right whales are critically endangered, it is illegal to approach within 100 m or 500 yd in Canada and the U.S. respectively without a Federal permit. The right whale images captured in **Last of the Right Whales** are unparalleled. Filming alongside researchers, permitted to approach within metres of these incredible 60-ton whales, gives viewers an unrivaled look at a rarely seen animal, the second largest on earth.

The North Atlantic right whale is the most studied whale in the world with nearly all of the remaining individuals identified, catalogued and tracked but despite decades of research, many mysteries remain. The same adaptability that has saved right whales from extinction makes them difficult to know and protect. Now climate change is forcing North Atlantic right whales further north in search of food, putting them on a collision course with deadly ships and fishing gear. Researchers are in a race against time to discover what North Atlantic right whales need to survive and what we can do to protect them.



[click here for high res images](#)



NARW #3560 aka Snow Cone

Over the course of two years the film documents the life of NARW #3560 and her calf, born in December 2020. Their story demonstrates not only the strong mother-calf bond between right whales, but also the emotional connection humans can have to these animals. The pair delighted onlookers as they ventured into the Gulf of Mexico, a place where right whales seldom go. Eventually they resumed the traditional migratory path north to feed, but 3560's calf was struck and killed off the New Jersey shore by a recreational boater. Six months after losing her calf, 3560 was sighted in Cape Cod Bay entangled, and became the focus of multiple rescue attempts. In the course of filming researchers named 3560 Snow Cone, after the callosity pattern on her head. When we last filmed Snow Cone she was still entangled in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Her case remains open for rescue teams.



'There are whales dying all over the world from entanglement in fishing gear and being hit by boats because we haven't yet found a way to co-exist.'

Nick Hawkins Wildlife Photographer & Cinematographer

On Canada's east coast wildlife photographer Nick Hawkins is on a quest to capture 4K imagery of the right whale – above and below water. Fifteen metres long and weighing 60,000 kilograms, due to protection measures photographers have only ever captured a tiny part of this whale – a fin, a tail, the top of a head. Many conservationists believe lack of imagery is the biggest obstacle to saving the right whale. With special permission from Canada's Fisheries and Oceans, Hawkins will be in the Gulf of St. Lawrence where climate change has forced the whales to migrate in search of food, putting them in the path of deadly ships and fishing gear.

Nick Hawkins is the only wildlife photographer/cinematographer with a Federal permit to capture underwater images of the North Atlantic right whale. A biologist by training and a former whale watching guide, he is on a quest to create powerful images that can help save the species. Hawkins has worked producing print and on-line stories for National Geographic, Canadian Geographic, BBC Wildlife Magazine and Canadian Wildlife Magazine. Some of Hawkins' NARW film work is currently displayed at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto in a new exhibit, Great Whales: Up Close and Personal.



'I have never seen an animal react so violently. The tail was thrashing; it could have touched its head with its own tail. It was angry and it was struggling to get out of those ropes.'

Dr. Moira Brown Lead Scientist, Canadian Whale Institute

Moira Brown has been studying North Atlantic right whales for over 30 years in both Canadian and U.S. waters. In 2015, when right whales were first observed in large numbers in the Gulf of St. Lawrence (GSL) she and other scientists moved their annual surveys to the region. Able to identify individual whales by the patches of roughened skin on their head; researchers discovered that the whales coming to the GSL had left traditional feeding areas in the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of Maine. During filming in July 2021, Brown was leading the whale observation team when they came upon a recently entangled whale. As one of only five government-recognized experts in large whale disentanglement in Canada, she took charge of the situation but in all her years she had never seen a case like this.

Moira Brown is Canada's leading North Atlantic right whale scientist, providing scientific and conservation advice to marine industries and government. As senior scientist with the Canadian Whale Institute on Campobello Island, New Brunswick, she studies the population biology and demographics of North Atlantic right whales. Brown's conservation work focuses on the human-related threats faced by right whales in Canadian waters. She was instrumental, working with industry and government, in developing conservation measures that substantially reduced the risk of vessel strikes in the Bay of Fundy and in the waters south of Nova Scotia.



NARW #4615

The entanglement case documented in **Last of the Right Whales** which Moira Brown responded to is that of NARW #4615. The first entangled right whale to be sighted in Canadian waters since 2019, the case made international headlines. A 5-year-old male 4615 was spotted near Miscou Island at the mouth of the Baie de Chaleur in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. When the Campobello Whale Rescue Team set out in search of him days later, government aerial footage showed him still entangled and his tail stock badly injured.

Born during the 2016 calving season, 4615 is the second youngest of four known calves born to Harmony (NARW #3115). He was the first calf to be born that season about 10 nautical miles off Jekyll Island, GA. Interestingly, he was raised by a whale that was not his biological mother, after two moms apparently swapped calves before heading north!

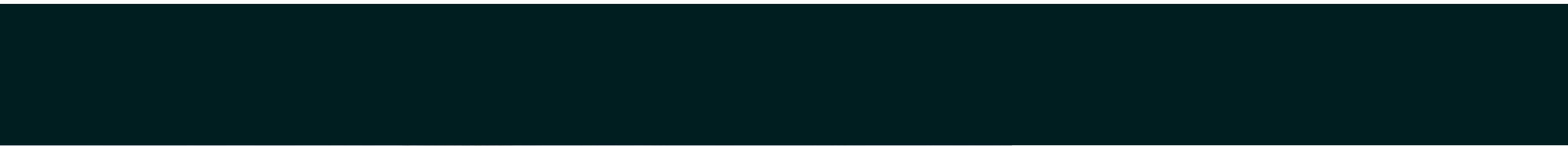


'The right whales are very much a metaphor for the sea and their decline tells us what is happening to this ocean.'

Dr. Charles 'Stormy' Mayo Ecologist, Center for Coastal Studies

Charles "Stormy" Mayo, the Director of the Right Whale Ecology Program at the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown, has been studying right whale feeding behaviour for more than three decades. His first understanding of right whales came from his father, who was both a fisherman and whaler. A keen observer of marine life, he passed on his knowledge of whales to his son. Now Mayo uses this information to protect right whales. From February to April he conducts aerial and boat surveys over Cape Cod Bay where right whales forage plankton in search of their preferred food, a tiny crustacean called a copepod. Plankton is responsible for nearly half of the earth's oxygen. Since the right whale's recent decline, the number of whales coming to the Bay has more than doubled, making Mayo fear their life source and ours - plankton - may be failing offshore.

Charles 'Stormy' Mayo is a Senior Scientist and Chair of the Department of Ecology at the Center for Coastal Studies, and is one of the three founders of the Center for Coastal Studies. His technical work ranges from complex computer modeling of foraging movements of whales to the development of new techniques for documenting whale behaviour and zooplankton distribution. Mayo comes from a fishing family lineage, but he is also known around the world for his pioneering efforts to develop methods to rescue entangled whales at sea.

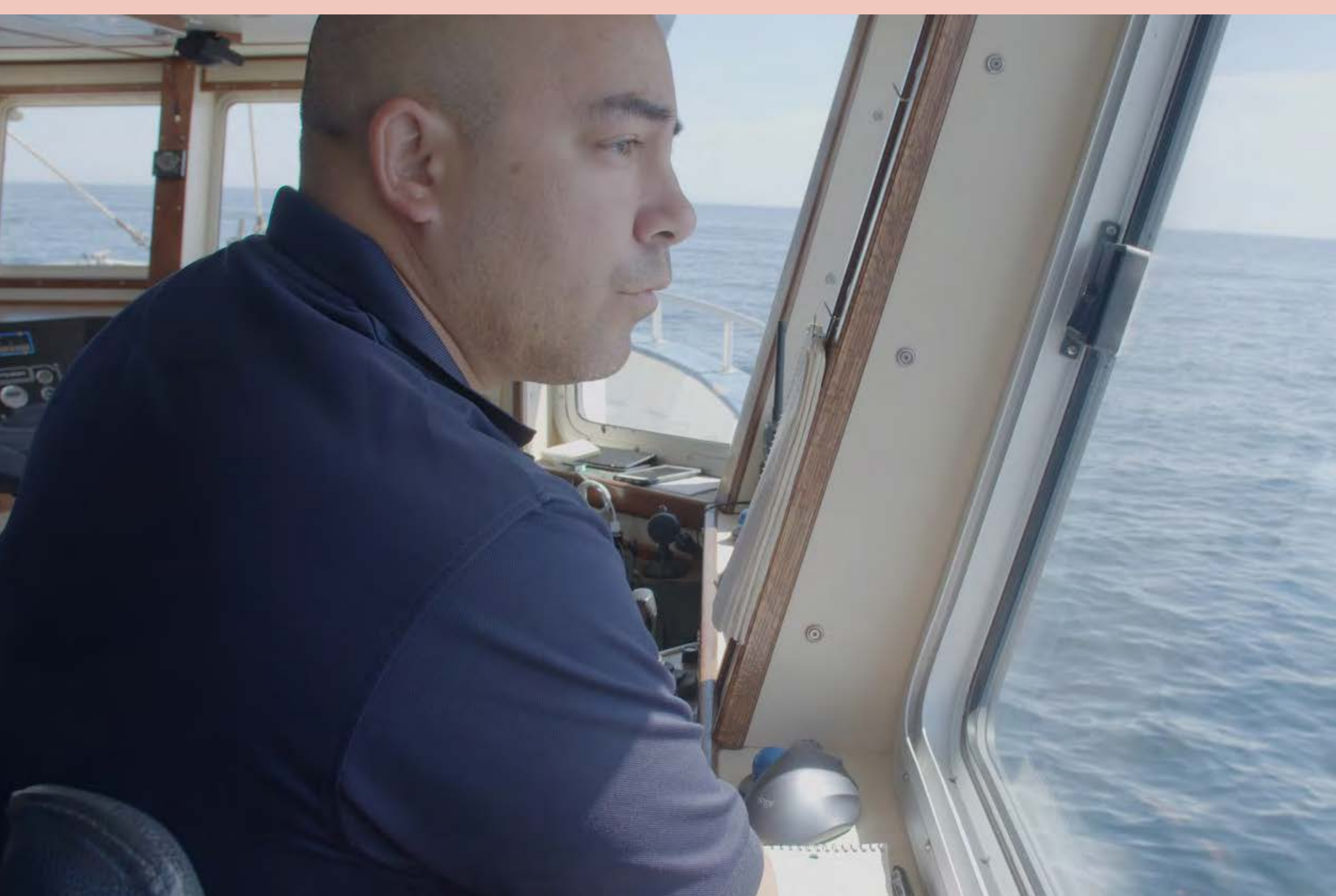


‘When I first got into this, I thought I’m going to work with government agencies and we’re going to get this done. And I guess I’m a slow learner but after 30 years it’s dawned on me that governments can’t do this on their own, it’s going to take everybody.’

Barb Zoodsma NOAA North Atlantic Right Whale Recovery

Barb Zoodsma coordinates NOAA’s right whale recovery program in the Southeast U.S., working with government agencies and NGOs to locate and identify mother-calf pairs during the calving season. Using aerial and vessel surveys, she works closely with State biologists in Georgia and Florida and others to document mother-calf pairs. The information they collect is added to the Right Whale Catalogue; a record of NARW sightings dating back to the 1930s. The calving area from Cape Fear, North Carolina to Cape Canaveral, Florida is one of the most protected right whale habitats, with extensive seasonal fishing closures and speed restrictions for vessels over 65 ft. Over the past decade calving rates have been in overall decline; with zero calves born in 2018.

As NOAA’s North Atlantic right whale recovery coordinator for the past 20 years, Zoodsma has coordinated or advised on most right whale recovery activities in the Southeast U.S. from aerial and vessel surveys, to biopsy sampling and responses to large whale injuries, entanglements, and mortalities. She and her team at NOAA are responsible for putting in place necessary management measures for the protection of right whales while they are in the Southeast U.S. paying particular attention to moms and calves. Prior to joining NOAA Zoodsma served in a similar position with the state of Georgia for 10 years.



'Once you have a vertical line and a whale in the same area, there's a risk. We have a responsibility to do less damage to that species.'

Martin Noël Crab Fisher, New Brunswick

In the Gulf of St. Lawrence, snow crab fisher Martin Noël is conducting the first real-world test of ropeless fishing technology in the North Atlantic. Fishing gear entanglement is the leading cause of right whale injury and mortality, 85 percent of the population has been entangled at least once. Noël is also one of four fishermen from Shippagan, New Brunswick to form a whale rescue team in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Disentangling whales is a dangerous activity; in 2017 fisherman Joe Howlett with the Campobello Whale Rescue Team died trying to free an entangled whale. Noël's commitment to saving the right whale recasts the fisher's role in the saga of the right whale.

Noël is a third generation fisher from Shippagan, New Brunswick on the tip of Canada's Acadian Peninsula, and President of the Association of Professional Acadian Crab Fishermen. Since 2018, following 12 right whale deaths in Canadian waters, annual seasonal closure to fishing areas in the Gulf of St. Lawrence has impacted Canada's snow crab fishing communities. Ropeless technology remains a controversial solution amongst fishers although it has been used commercially in Australia since 2012.



'We are in the thick of whales, but we don't really have a good sense of what they are eating. The copepod biomass here seems really, really low.'

Dr. Kimberley Davies Oceanographer, University of New Brunswick

Since 2015 right whales have been returning regularly to the Gulf of St. Lawrence and scientists are trying to discover why. Davies suspects the Gulf is a hotspot for calanus, the tiny, energy-rich crustacean that right whales feed on, but the GSL is a large area with many oceanographic features. Davies' goal is to discover where the calanus is aggregating and if these patches have the required density for the whales to survive. So far the evidence to explain the right whales' continued return to the GSL and the Shediac Valley in particular has eluded them. On the July 2021 research trip with Moira Brown a breakthrough finding makes Davies think they may have found the answer.

Kimberley Davies is an Associate Professor of Biological Oceanography and leads the Davies Lab at the University of New Brunswick. She was born and raised on Vancouver Island in British Columbia where she was inspired at an early age by the wonders of the sea. She began her career as an Honors student studying ocean acidification in hydrothermal vent systems, which inspired an interest in oceanography. For her PhD, she studied the oceanographic processes in foraging habitat of North Atlantic right whales. As a Liber Ero Fellow, she began a glider research program in 2014, studying the application of autonomous vehicles for exploring the ocean to find whale habitats.

Director Statement

“It is within our power to save the North Atlantic right whale. Since the unusual mortality event of 2017, the North Atlantic right whale has been making international headlines. Having returned from the brink of extinction twice before, this is our chance to put in place lasting protections for this species and their habitat.”

— Nadine Pequeneza, Director and Producer

It was the multiple deaths in 2017, what scientists called an unusual mortality event, that grabbed my attention. When I started researching this film, I had never heard of a North Atlantic right whale let alone so many dying, seemingly inexplicably, all at once. When I learned it was us that was unintentionally killing them and that we could change our behaviour to prevent their death, I had to tell this story.

The North Atlantic right whale has survived the threat of extinction more than once, both times with our help; when we banned whaling in the 1930s and more recently when we moved shipping lanes, slowed ocean traffic and closed fishing zones to allow room for the right whale migration. Now with a rapidly warming planet and shifting migration patterns threatening their survival, we have a third chance to save this great whale from extinction.

Right whales are magnificent, fascinating creatures; there are still many things we don't know about them. It's only by learning as much as humanly possible about these animals that we can live in harmony with them. By sharing this film with audiences, we can engage people to help protect these great whales and their habitat so that the few remaining can bring this critically endangered species back from the brink of extinction.

Featuring breathtaking cinematography of this rarely seen, 60-ton great whale, **Last of the Right Whales** will resonate with audiences long after the final frame fades to black. We've partnered with key wildlife conservation groups to help reach the film's core audience but the story of the last right whales will attract an audience far beyond the conservation crowd, people only need to see what is happening to them and our ocean.



Impact Campaign

A year-long impact campaign has been developed to run alongside the release of **Last of the Right Whales**, inspiring audiences to take action to help protect the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale.

Working closely with NGO partners and advisors Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF), International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Canadian Whale Institute, Sierra Club Canada Foundation, Oceans North, and the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life at the New England Aquarium, the impact team has identified three key campaign goals - Reducing Vessel Strikes, Reducing Gear Entanglement and Raising Awareness.

In addition to festivals and theatrical screenings, the campaign includes a coastal tour that will follow the migration of the whales along the eastern seaboard, with community and campus screenings across Canada and the U.S. These special screening events will feature expert panels with scientists, fishers, mariners, industry stakeholders, policymakers and the filmmakers.

"While many people have probably heard of the plight that North Atlantic Right Whales and fish harvesters are facing, most do not really understand how serious this situation is. It's difficult because it does not directly affect the average person and they may never have even seen a live right whale. This documentary solves that issue. It gets to the heart of the problem and quickly draws its viewers into the desperate need for a solution. The footage of the whales, the stories of the people involved, and images of people reacting to the whales both with joy and sorrow, is particularly powerful. It's a great story and emotively drives home the truth that we cannot assume we do not affect (or harm) the world around us."

Sean Brilliant, PhD, Senior Conservation Biologist, Marine Programs, Canadian Wildlife Federation

*"From arresting first shot to final frame, **Last of the Right Whales** captures the urgent effort to save our planet's most endangered great whale. Told in stunning footage and gripping narrative, this is a story of human activities killing a marine species and valiant scientists, campaigners, fishermen and mariners rushing to save them before it's too late. A film that inspires, summons the viewer to action and somehow 'midst a sea of troubles manages to sound a note of hope. Don't miss it."*

Patrick Ramage, Senior Advisor, IFAW

*"**Last of the Right Whales** unfolds the heart-wrenching story of the critically endangered North Atlantic right whales with captivating footage of the whales interwoven with the efforts of lobster and snow crab fishers, scientists, conservations and shippers, in their work to protect the whales without jeopardizing the livelihoods on which so many depend. If they have any say, these are not going to be the last of the right whales."*

Sebastian Teunissen, Executive Director, Canadian Whale Institute

"The story of these whales and their babies will break your heart - but their ability to inspire wonder and action to save them will help mend it again. This beautiful film takes us on a journey with the whales and shows how the fate of the North Atlantic right whale rests in the hands of all of us. Sierra Club Canada Foundation has fought for the survival of these whales for decades, and this film gives me new hope that we will be able to protect the remaining 360 right whales and their ocean home. "

Gretchen Fitzgerald, National Programs Director, Sierra Club Canada Foundation

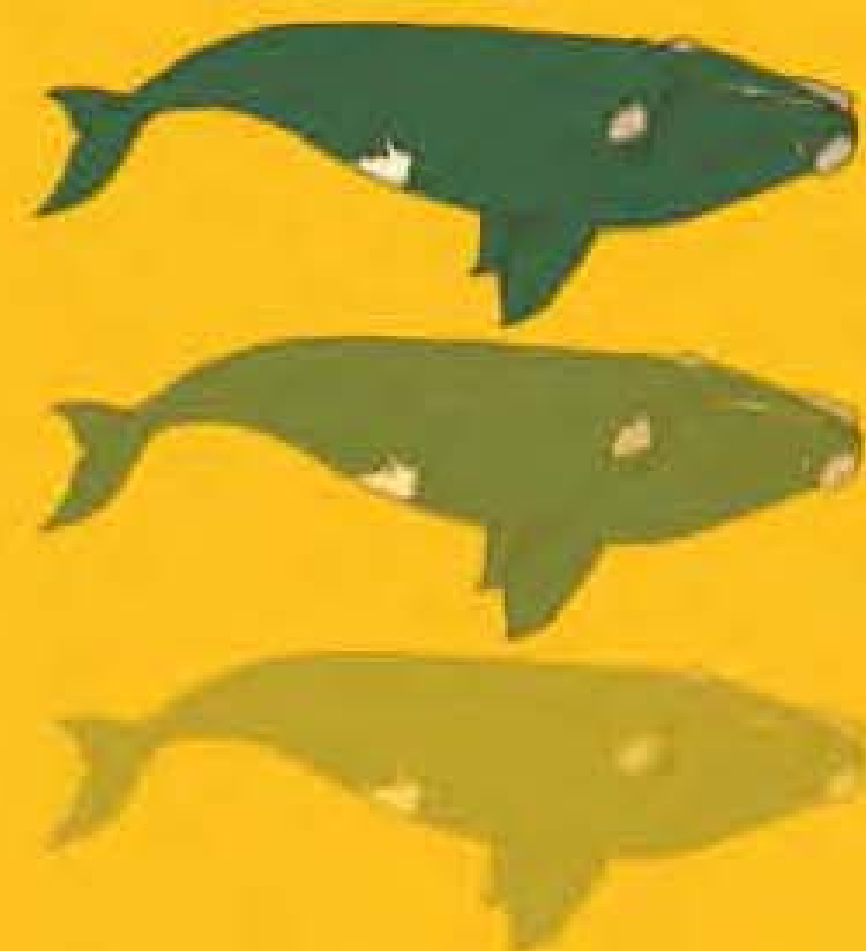
NARW by the Numbers

NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES

BY THE NUMBERS (IN 2021)

360

Approximate number of North Atlantic right whales left in the ocean. The population has declined by over 25% since 2010.



18

Number of (known) calves born over the 2020-2021 season. Only 22 births were observed during the previous four calving seasons combined.

6-10 YEARS

The lengthened reproductive calving interval (up from every 3-5 years) for breeding females, which researchers believe is due to increased stress from entanglements and food resource shortages.



34



Number of North Atlantic right whales that have died since 2017. 19 have been confirmed to be due to vessel strikes and/or fishing gear entanglement.

90

Approximate number of current reproductive North Atlantic right whale females.

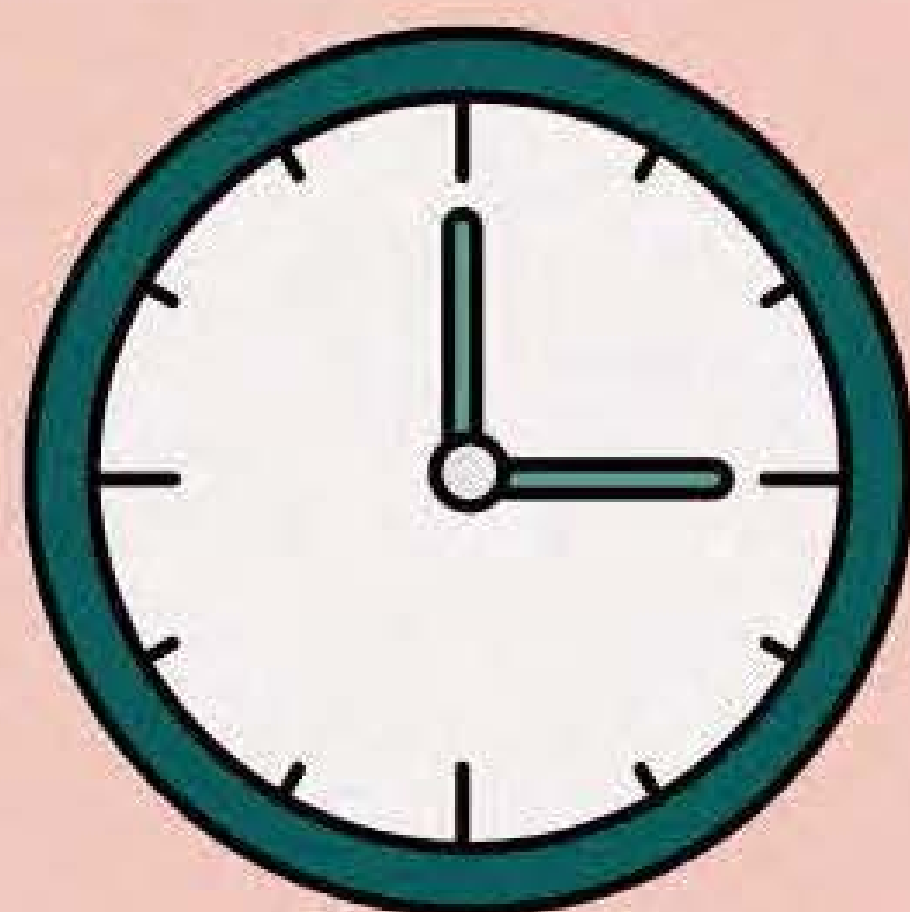
1600+ KMS

Distance the whales travel each season from their calving grounds near Florida to where they feed and mate in the shipping lanes of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.



85%

Percentage of North Atlantic right whales who have been entangled in fishing gear at least once in their lifetime.



20 YEARS

Amount of time it could take for the species to become functionally extinct if nothing is done.

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Sources: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-life-distress/2017-2021-north-atlantic-right-whale-unusual-mortality-event>
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/north-atlantic-right-whale>
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/these-whales-will-be-extinct-in-25-years-scientists-say-unless-we-act-now-to-save-them/>
<https://www.andersoncaboatcenterforoceanlife.org/blog/meet-the-newest-north-atlantic-right-whale-mother-and-calf-pairs/>

About the Filmmakers



Nadine Pequeneza

Producer/Director, Executive Producer

Nadine Pequeneza is an award-winning Producer/Director specializing in character-driven films that offer unique access to stories about a wide range of topics from criminal justice, to global finance, to wildlife conservation. With more than 15 years international experience her work has garnered worldwide recognition, including; a Canadian Screen Award for Best Writing in a Documentary Program, nine CSA and Gemini nominations, Gold and Silver Hugos from the Chicago International Film Festival and a Silver Gavel Award honourable mention from the American Bar Association. Nadine's films have screened at festivals around the world from Toronto, to Milan, to Auckland, to Sichuan, China. Through her company HitPlay Productions Nadine produces, directs and writes feature documentaries: *The Invisible Heart*, *Next of Kin*, *Road to Mercy*, *15 to Life: Kenneth's Story* and *Inside Disaster: Haiti*. HitPlay's broadcast and funding partners include: CBC, SRC/RDI, PBS, ARTE, SWR, TVO, Knowledge Network, Canal D, Telefilm, Ontario Creates, NFB, Rogers Documentary Fund and the Bell Fund. Nadine is immediate past Chair of the Documentary Organization of Canada and a graduate of the Fledgling Foundation's inaugural engagement lab 2014-15.

Her most recent work LOTRW is a story with far reaching implications about the endangered North Atlantic right whales. What we do to save this great whale species now, will impact the survival of many other marine mammals and ultimately the biodiversity of species and health of our oceans.



Joanne P. Jackson

Executive Producer

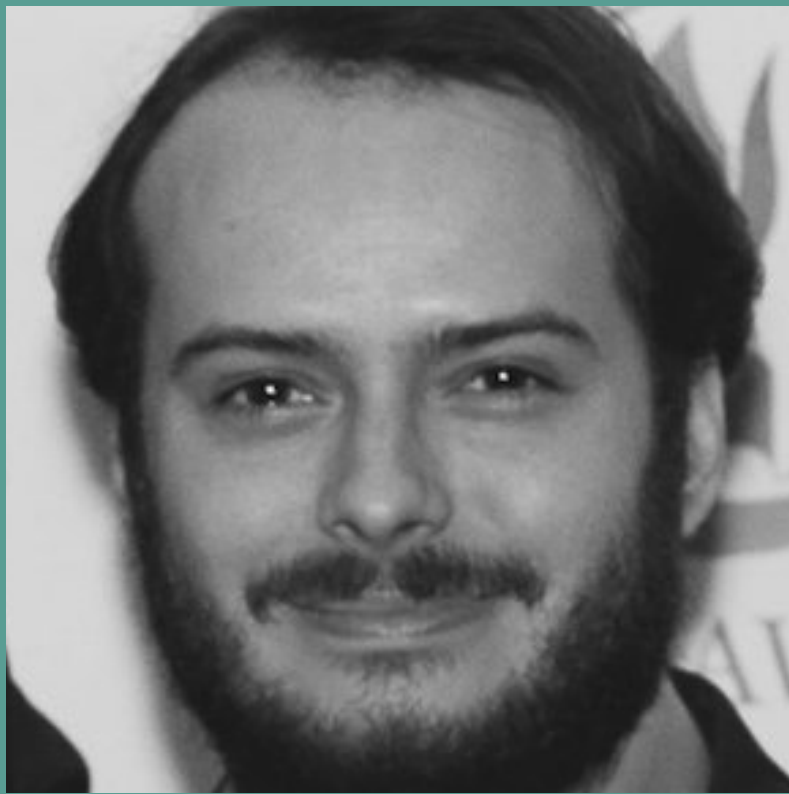
Joanne Jackson is an award-winning documentary and television producer who has been the driving force behind many compelling, thought-provoking programs over the last 20 years. She owns Long Haul Big Hearts Productions and was the lead producer/co-owner for award-winning feature documentaries *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* (2018) and *The Messenger* (2015). Jackson has led the outreach and marketing campaigns for every production she produced or managed. She has also worked as an in-house producer and as a production executive for three networks (YTV, WTN and Discovery). *The Messenger* won 14 international awards, including Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival Best Conservation program, The Pariscience 'Grand Buffon' Award and The 'Best of Fest' at the International Wildlife Film Festival. KinoLorber released *The Messenger* in 130 US theaters; and Jackson self-distributed the film in Canada. *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes* has been released in theatres in the US and Europe by Zeitgeist Films/KinoLorber, after a successful Canadian theatrical run with KinoSmith.



Sholeh Fabbri

Impact Producer

Sholeh Fabbri has been producing award-winning content for two decades and has received three Canadian Screen Award nominations. For over seven years, as the Executive Producer of Entertainment Tonight Canada, Sholeh built the ET Canada brand by employing innovative growth strategies, producing engaging content, and developing integrated campaigns for broadcast and online. Her award-winning special *Canada Together: In Concert* showcased superstars including Shania Twain, Lady A and Christopher Plummer to raise over \$300,000 at the start of the Covid-19 shutdowns. In 2021, Sholeh launched Good Measure Productions, focusing her talents at the intersection of film production and impact. Sholeh was recently named to the Artists for Peace and Justice Board of Directors, a non-profit organization that supports access to education for impoverished youth in Haiti to create a pathway to meaningful employment and a sustainable future.



James Yates

Editor

James Yates is a documentary editor from Toronto, Ontario. His first feature as an editor was *All Governments Lie: Truth Deception and the Spirit of I.F. Stone*, which was executive produced by Oliver Stone and premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. He cut two documentaries which premiered at the HotDocs Film Festival in 2019: *The Corporate Coup d'État*, a follow-up to *All Governments Lie*, and *Toxic Beauty*, which examines the potentially harmful chemicals hiding in everyday personal care products. His most recent project as editor, *Better Living Through Chemistry*, explores the life and work of psychedelic pioneer Sasha Shulgin.



Deanna H. Choi

Composer

Deanna H. Choi (she/her) composes music for films & television, and designs sonic environments for live performance and installations. Formerly a researcher in music cognition, she applies scientific findings into her composition and sound design. In 2021 she served as one of the Slight Music Residents for the Canadian Film Centre. She teaches sound design at the National Theatre School of Canada and York University. She won the 2020 Pauline McGibbon Award, and was nominated for the Louis Applebaum Composer's Award and a Robert Merritt Award. She is a proud member of ADC/IATSE, the SCGC, and SOCAN.



About HitPlay Productions

At HitPlay Productions we are passionate about telling stories that challenge people to see the world and themselves differently. We believe that sharing our stories whether in film, on television, or through interactive media has the power to change lives. Because great filmmaking is a collaborative process, our strength is our team. We work with award-winning producers, directors, cinematographers and editors to create critically acclaimed projects that inspire, captivate, and entertain audiences. Our work has been screened at film festivals around the world from Toronto, to Milan, to Auckland and Sichuan, China. HitPlay collaborates with foundations and non-profits to develop film engagement campaigns that promote social and environmental justice. Past campaigns have worked with outreach partners on a wide range of issues, including; criminal justice reform, impact investing and wildlife conservation.

Distribution

About Off The Fence

Off the Fence is a leading non-fiction content company of global scale and reach, producing and distributing exceptional factual programming. Owned by ZDF Enterprises since 2019, and established in 1994, Off the Fence is a 360 factual content company. OTF develops, finances, produces and co-produces international non-fiction programs across a range of genres including, Natural History, Science, Travel & Adventure, Lifestyle, History, People & Culture, Crime and Feature Docs.

About IndieCan Entertainment

INDIECAN ENTERTAINMENT focuses on independent, low-budget films. As a distributor, Avi Federgreen follows the same principle that earned him his reputation as a filmmaker; bringing Canadians films they want to watch. Aside from the traditional distribution route, IndieCan leans heavily on digital delivery. IndieCan helps films find more opportunities with audiences through TV, Netflix, iTunes, websites, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. IndieCan's vision is to not only support indie production but to encourage the viewing of quality indie films by North American audiences. Indiecanent.com

Last of the Right Whales is produced by HitPlay Productions with the participation of Telefilm Canada, in association with CBC and SWR/ARTE and with the participation of Ontario Creates, Rogers Documentary Fund, Canada Media Fund, the Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit and the Ontario Media Development Corporation Film and Television Tax Credit.

Infographics

THE NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE

5 things you might not know

01 Common Name

The North Atlantic right whale's proximity to shore and their thick blubber, which causes them to float after death, led to them being referred to as the "right whale" to hunt. Their scientific name, *Eubalaena glacialis*.

04 Food Source

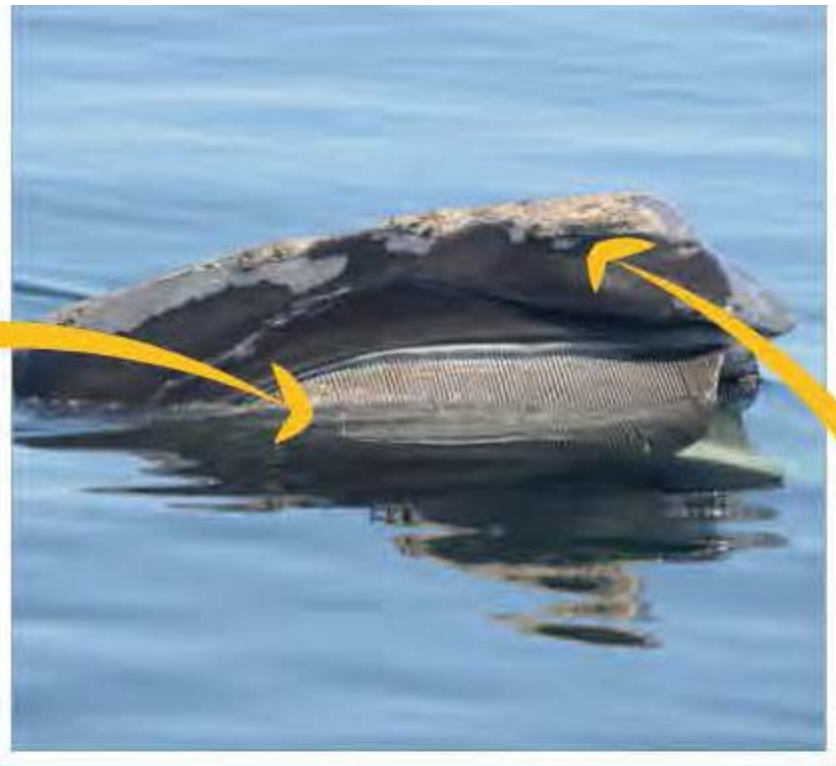
They only eat microscopic zooplankton like copepods and krill larvae. Scientists have found North Atlantic right whales can eat between 1,000 to 2,500 kilograms of food every day.

02 Classification

North Atlantic right whales are **baleen** whales. Instead of teeth, they use long keratin "baleen" plates, which contain dense, hair-like fringes on the inner edge, to trap and filter their food.

05 Size

Their head can measure up to a quarter of their total body length! North Atlantic right whales can grow up to 18 metres for females and 12.9 metres for males, and they can weigh up to 70,000 kilograms!



03 Features

They are the only whales to have rough, white patches on their heads known as **callosities**. These are inhabited by tiny amphipods called cyamids—known as whale lice! Like a fingerprint to humans, they are unique to each whale.

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WHALE TAILS

3 interesting facts about the North Atlantic right whale's tail:



01 The Basics

Its tail, also called its flukes or caudal fins, is wide and up to 40% of its length (usually 6 m wide from one tip to the other!). Their tails are almost the same size as those of a Blue Whale, even though the Blue Whale is almost twice as large.

02 Lobtailing

'Lobtailing' is when a whale lifts its fluke out of the water and brings it down onto the surface of the water hard and fast with a loud slap. Scientists have hypothesized it may be used as a non-vocal form of communication by both calves and adults.

03 Differences

Unlike other whales, like Humpbacks, North Atlantic right whales (NARW) have no distinctive markings on their tails. So scientists often rely on the unique pattern of NARW callosities (the white markings on their heads) to identify individual whales.

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THE NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE

5 more things you might not know

01 Age

Believed to have a natural lifespan of 70 years, due to increased threats, females are now only living to around 45 and males around 65. Ear wax can be used to estimate their age after death.

04 Predators

Sharks and Orcas are right whale predators and target vulnerable calves. Scientists believe that mother right whales remain in shallow waters, especially during calving season, to reduce the danger.

02 Habits

As mammals, they need to breathe oxygen and generally surface every 6 to 8 mins but can dive for up to an hour. NARW can dive as deep as 200m but usually remain in the top 150m, where their food is plentiful.

05 Common Name

Known as the North Atlantic right whale in English; in French, they are referred to as *baleine noire*—black whale.



03 Feeding

NARW are filter feeders so to eat they swim with their mouths wide open through copepod-filled waters. Their prey, the size of couscous, is filtered through their baleen like a sieve. When they do this at the surface it's called skim feeding.

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