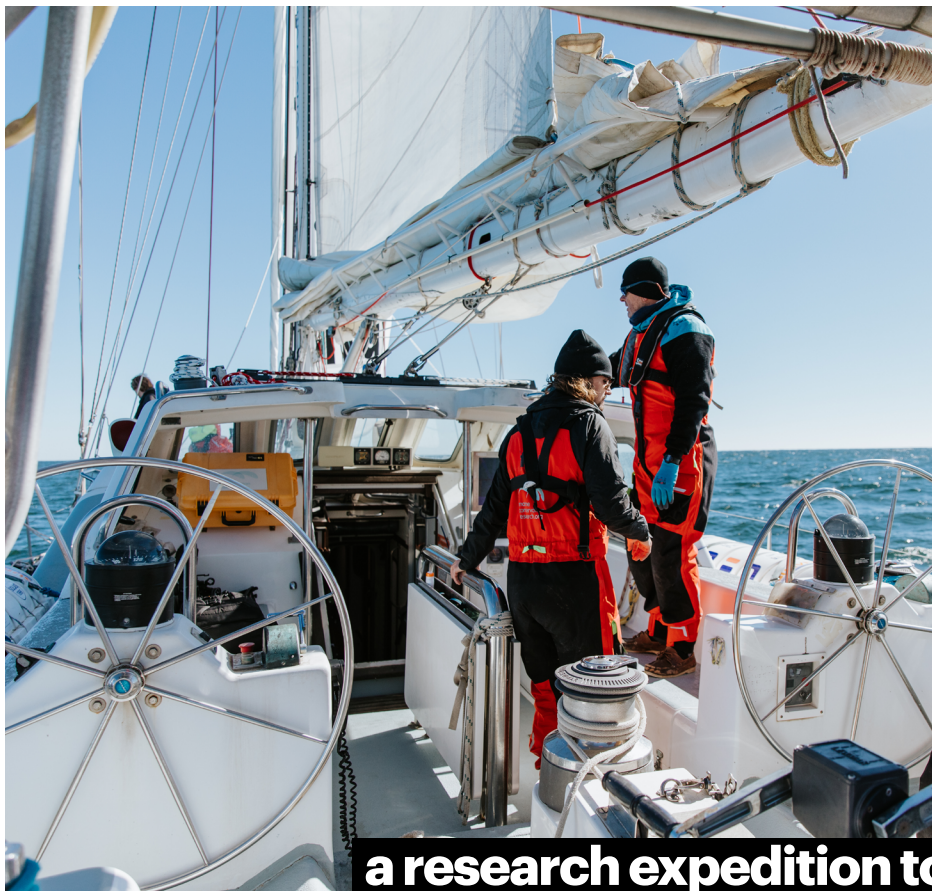


# Song of the Whale



**a research expedition to  
save the last of the North  
Atlantic right whales.**

**ifaw**  
—

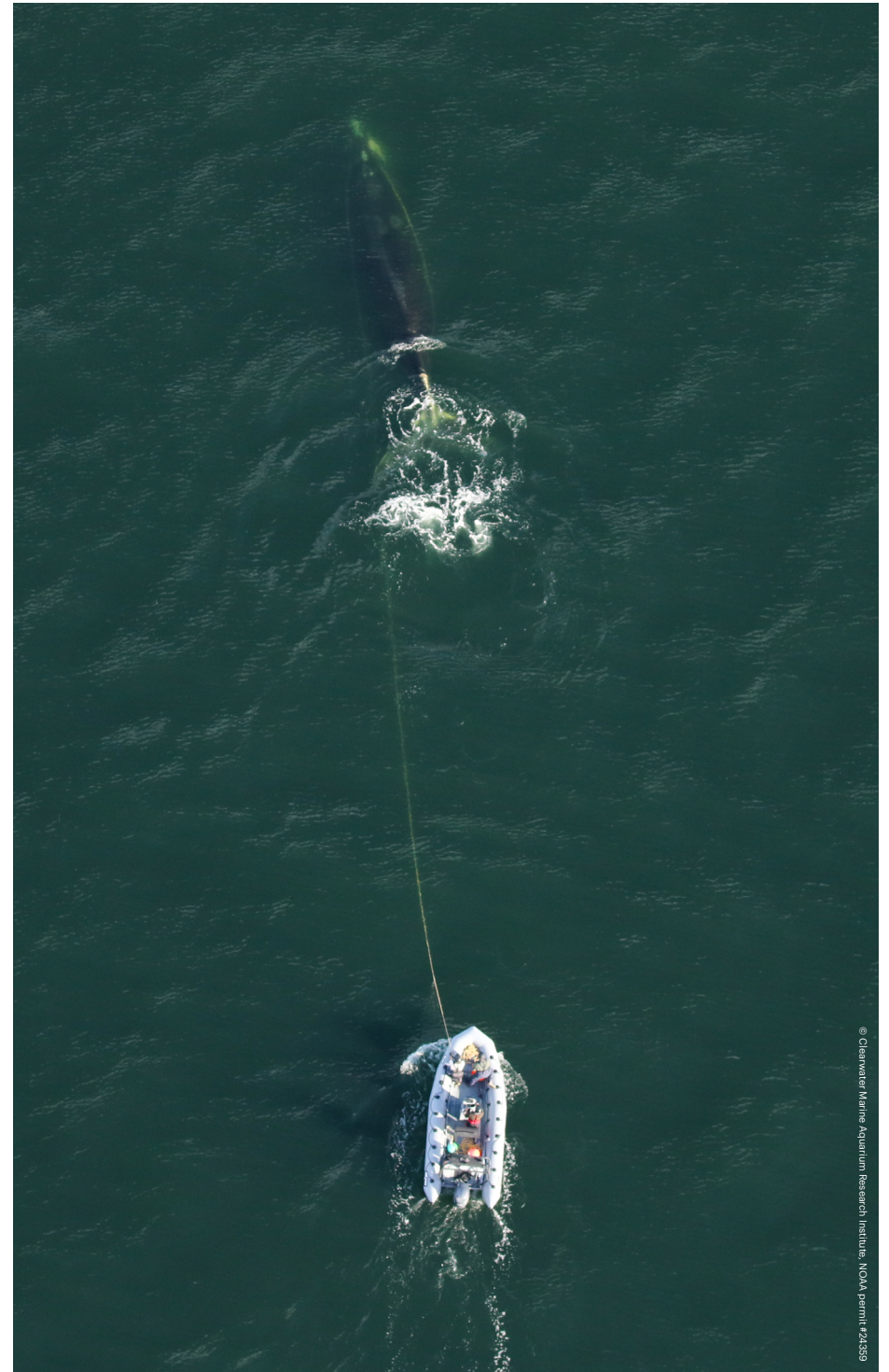
# North Atlantic right whales need our help

North Atlantic right whales are on the brink of extinction. With fewer than 340 remaining, every calf born and every individual whale is vital to the survival of the entire species.

Whether due to climate or other impacts, evidence shows whale migration patterns are changing. North Atlantic right whales are now seen—and tragically killed—as they attempt to survive in areas heavily used by fishing and shipping industries.

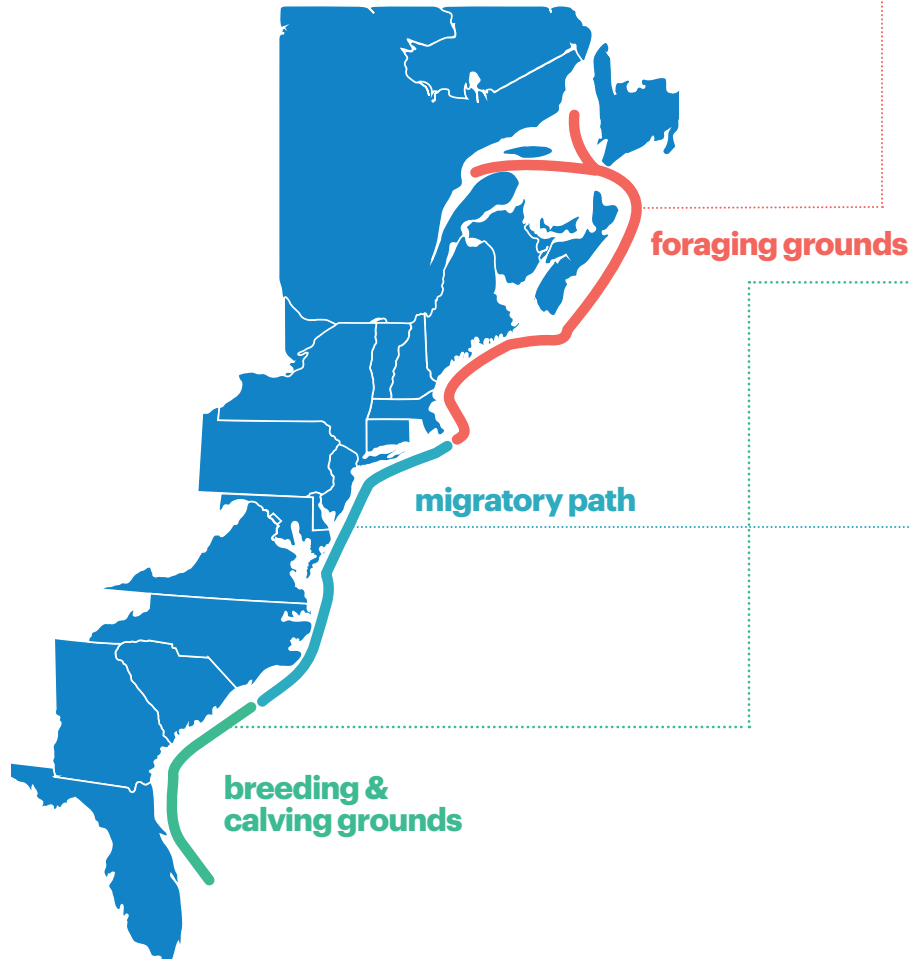
That's why IFAW commissioned the *Song of the Whale* research vessel to study North Atlantic right whales as they make their dangerous journey through busy shipping corridors and popular fishing grounds during this year's migration. From January through August 2023, *Song of the Whale* is following the migratory path of right whale mothers and their calves along the eastern coast of the United States, starting in Florida.

As we refine our understanding of their changing habitat use, we can advocate for more effective policies, management measures, and technologies to help the species survive.



# what is threatening North Atlantic right whales?

Threats North Atlantic right whales face in their critical habitats along the eastern coast of the U.S. and Canada, and IFAW's solutions.



## threat

Entanglements in vertical fishing lines from lobster and crab traps as well as gillnets cause chronic stress and physical pain, leading to decreased reproduction rates and often death. 85% of right whales show signs of entanglement.

## solution

Reduce the amount of vertical fishing lines in critical habitats through seasonal closures and use of on-demand fishing gear, both of which require additional support from state and federal government.

## threat

High levels of ocean noise pollution from shipping, oil and gas exploration, naval sonar training, and offshore development increase stress on right whales and other marine species and make it difficult for them to communicate, feed, breed, and survive.

## solution

Reduce shipping speed, optimize ship design, implement seasonal closures to development, and advocate for additional mitigation measures such as bubble curtains during drilling to significantly decrease ocean noise pollution.

## threat

The risk of vessel strike spans the entire migratory range but is of particular concern in the calving grounds off the southeastern U.S. coastline. North Atlantic right whales are notoriously slow swimmers, putting them at increased risk of fatal vessel strikes.

## solution

Increase boater awareness using tools like IFAW's Whale Alert mobile app and implement seasonal speed restrictions of 10 knots or less for vessels of all sizes in critical habitats to help protect whales from horrific injuries and death.



# North Atlantic right whales by the numbers

**27**

They live in coastal waters, mostly within 27 nautical miles of shore.

**340**

Fewer than 340 individuals remain.

**100**

Fewer than 100 are reproductive females.

**10**

Over the past five years, scientists have recorded an average of 10 calves born each year.



**17-20**

Between 17 and 20 calves need to be born each year and survive to adulthood to avoid extinction.

**95+**

Between 2017 and 2022, 95+ whales were reported as killed or seriously injured.

**1/3**

We believe only about a third of their deaths are actually documented.

# how will research conducted on Song of the Whale help?

The research team on board is collaborating with leading U.S. right whale researchers, providing round-the-clock surveying capacity to collect data on where the whales are and their vocalizations, health, habitat use, and threats, including underwater noise, vessel strikes, and entanglement risk.

The team and collaborators will also document human actions near the mothers and calves—for example, the speeds and noise produced by vessels that operate in the areas.

This research will help us understand how and where to reduce the life-threatening risks these whales face every day, so we can help pull them back from the brink of extinction.



# what makes this vessel different?

*Song of the Whale* is a special piece of innovation that is part of IFAW's rich history of exploring and protecting the ocean and its marine mammals.

The sailboat was purposefully crafted with a host of features to reduce noise pollution, including vibration-dampening engine mounts, a five-bladed propeller similar to that of a stealth submarine, and state-of-the-art exhaust systems. It is one of the most quiet, non-invasive research vessels in the world, so we can study whales up close without disturbing them.



The boat and crew can operate in inclement weather conditions, so it is a unique platform to monitor and study whales at challenging times of year and in locations usually surveyed only by air. It is also able to monitor whales at night and into areas that have thus far been difficult to reach.

Moving from research to direct protection, *Song of the Whale* can also deploy to port entrances and shipping channels to “babysit” mothers and their calves, helping to protect them from being struck, until they move on to less dangerous areas.

# 7 fast facts about Song of the Whale

- 1 It's a 70-foot sailboat and floating research station.
- 2 It was commissioned by IFAW in 2002 to replace the original *Song of the Whale*, built in 1987.
- 3 The vessel is quiet and non-invasive, with features to reduce noise pollution including vibration-dampening engine mounts, a five-bladed propeller similar to that of a stealth submarine, and state-of-the-art exhaust systems.
- 4 It can monitor whales in inclement weather, at night, and in difficult-to-reach areas.
- 5 It can deploy to port entrances and shipping channels to “babysit” mothers and their calves, protecting them from getting struck in these dangerous areas.
- 6 It has visited 25+ countries to study marine mammals, raise awareness, and conduct outreach to local communities.
- 7 It was granted to Marine Conservation Research International in 2014 to maximize its capabilities.

# follow the journey of Song of the Whale



International Headquarters  
1400 16th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
United States of America

+1 (202) 536-1900  
info@ifaw.org

International Operations Center  
290 Summer Street  
Yarmouth Port, MA 02675  
United States of America

+1 (508) 744-2000  
info@ifaw.org

IFAW has offices located in:  
Australia, Belgium, Canada,  
China, France, Germany, Kenya,  
Malawi, Morocco, Netherlands,  
South Africa, United Arab Emirates,  
United Kingdom, United States,  
Zambia, Zimbabwe.

▶ **learn more at [ifaw.org/sotw](https://ifaw.org/sotw)**