

Sixth Right Whale Calf Seen off Flagler Beach

By Dinah Voyles Pulver February 12, 2019

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The sixth calf born this season, with her mother, Catalog No. Eg3370. This is the mother's second known calf. Photo by Marineland Right Whale Project/ Ralph Bundy, under NOAA/NMFS permit No. 20626

"We are inching forward," wrote Jim Hain, senior scientist and project coordinator for the Right Whale Project. The six calves make the 2019 calving season the best since 2016, when 14 calves were born. Last year no calves were reported.

The excitement started early Tuesday morning for Marineland's Right Whale Project, when one of the critically endangered animals the team monitors was seen right offshore, with a calf that proved to be the sixth calf of the 2018-19 season.

On Tuesday morning, a neighbor of team member Linda Grissom alerted her that she could see a whale moving slowly south in southern Flagler County around 9 a.m., Hain reported. The Marine Resources Council right whale hotline coordinator, Julie Albert, relayed the call and just about 10 minutes later, a team leader with Marineland's network, Stephanie York, was able to confirm that it was a mother-calf right whale pair.

With brisk winds and many whitecaps in the Atlantic, Ralph Bundy of Ormond-by-the-Sea, an FAA-certified drone pilot, was able to capture photos of the mom with her calf off North Peninsula State Park in northern Volusia County, Hain said. The photos were sent to Katie Jackson, a wildlife biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Using the white patches on the whale's head, known as callosities, Jackson was able to confirm the mother's identity. She was whale No. 3370 and it was her second calf. She was first spotted this season on New Year's Day, with another whale, known as Boomerang, No. 2503. At the time whale researchers said they hoped the whales were pregnant. Since then, both whales have delivered calves.

The low calving rate for the past two seasons added to grave concerns researchers have for the future of right whales in the North Atlantic. They estimate only 411 whales remain. Scientists say the whales face major threats from ship strikes and commercial fishing, including snow crab and lobster gear. Female whales migrate from the waters off Nova Scotia and Maine in the winter to give birth off the Florida and Georgia coasts.

Right whale calving season 2018-2019



Whale facts

- Weigh up to 70 tons
- Reach lengths up to 50 feet
- 15-foot long calves weigh up to 2 tons
- White "callosity" patterns on head and chin
- V-shaped blow



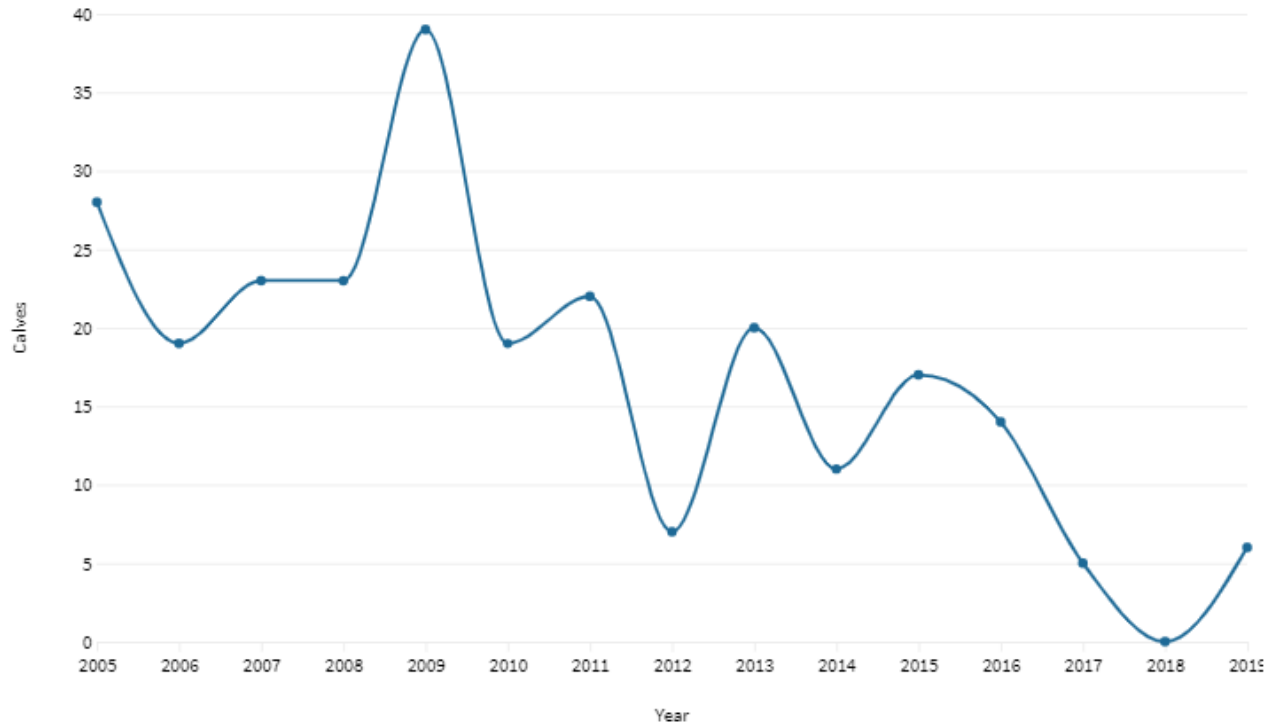
● Right whale calves
2014: 11

Whale ID	First seen with this calf	Previous calf born	Sighting location
No. 2791	December 28	2008-2009	St. Johns River Entrance
No. 3317	January 13	2015-2016	Ponte Vedra Beach
No. 1204	January 17	2012-2013	Amelia Island
No. 2503	January 25	2014-2015	Jekyll Island
No. 4180	February 5	First known calf	Sebastian Inlet
No. 3370	February 12	2008-2009	Volusia/Flagler county

To report a whale sighting, call 888-979-4253 (97-WHALE). To report a dead or injured whale, call 877-942-5343 (877-WHALE-HELP).

North Atlantic Right Whale calves

2005 - 2019



Source: Anderson Cabot Center for Marine Life, New England Aquarium • As of January 12, 2019

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/news/20190212/6th-right-whale-calf-seen-off-flagler-beach>