



**NATIONAL
WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**

Whales & Offshore Wind Energy

Responsibly developed offshore wind energy is a critical renewable energy opportunity to address the challenges whales face from climate change.

Meet the North Atlantic right whale!



Credit: NOAA Fisheries

Meet Cashew and her new calf! Cashew is a 23-year-old North Atlantic right whale named for the cashew-shaped pattern on top of her head. Cashew has had three calves, the most recent of which was spotted off the coast of northern Florida in early 2025. Her first calf, Scorpion, was born in 2008 and is seen regularly, but her second calf was not seen past its birth year. Centuries of overhunting by the whaling industry brought North Atlantic right whales like Cashew to the brink of extinction in the early 1890s. Today, they are one of the most endangered whale species in the world, with less than 390 remaining.

The Biggest Threats to Whales Today

Climate Change impacts reproductive success with warming oceans causing whales to shift migration patterns, likely to follow prey as location and availability change. Changes in birthing cycles indicate that females are struggling to find enough food to support pregnancy.

According to the New England Aquarium, more than 86% of right whales have faced **Entanglement** at least once, and some whales having been entangled in fishing gear as many as nine times. Scientists believe that chronic entanglement is one reason female right whales are having fewer calves.

Vessel Strikes from fast-moving large ships are almost always lethal to whales, but small vessels can also seriously injure or kill marine life. The faster a vessel is moving when collisions occur, the more likely the whale will experience serious injury or death.

Human activity from shipping, boating, construction, and oil exploration has increased **Ocean Noise**, increasing whales' stress, interrupting normal behavior, making it harder to communicate, and reducing the ability to detect dangers.

How Does Offshore Wind Development Interact With Whales?

Offshore wind development, construction, and operations in the United States has not been shown to impact the population of or create significant negative impacts on whales, including the North Atlantic right whale. This is thanks to extensive collaboration between environmental organizations, scientists, government agencies, and developers to avoid, minimize, mitigate (*reduce*), and monitor potential risks to across all phases of a project. These proven strategies are informed by more than three decades of global offshore wind experience.

Learn more on the next page about key strategies to reduce risks to whales and other species!

