



FACT	PROOF
North Atlantic right whales are critically endangered.	North Atlantic right whales ( <i>Eubalaena glacialis</i> ) are a critically endangered <u>unique species</u> with fewer than 400 alive today.
Fishing gear entanglement is the biggest threat to North Atlantic right whales.	Entanglement in fishing gear is the <u>leading cause of death</u> and <u>serious injury</u> to right whales. Nearly <u>90 percent of right whales have been entangled</u> at least once; some as many as nine times.
Right whales are consistently documented in Maine waters.	Right whales have been detected <u>every month of the year</u> in waters where Maine lobstermen fish. <u>Increased survey efforts</u> have found large, persistent groups of right whales off Maine's coast.
Maine's lobster fleet gear poses an outsized risk to right whales in the Gulf of Maine.	Maine's lobster fishery has the <u>greatest density of unattended vertical fishing rope</u> in U.S. waters.
Maine lobster gear killed an endangered North Atlantic right whale.	Three-year old female right whale <u>#5120 died in 2024</u> after a two-year entanglement in Maine lobster gear.
Unmarked or unrecovered fishing gear obscures culpability.	Over <u>1800 right whale entanglements</u> have been documented since 1980, and the origin of the rope remains <u>unknown</u> in most cases.
Right whale entanglement deaths are mostly unobserved.	Studies estimate humans observe only <u>36% of right whale deaths</u> . Entanglements cause malnutrition and <u>poor body condition</u> ; whales sink after death and are not documented.  <i>Example:</i> Right whale #3346 Kingfisher was <u>severely entangled</u> in Maine lobster gear in 2004. He carried rope <u>around his right flipper</u> for 11 years, <u>has not been seen</u> since 2015, and is presumed dead — but is not counted as a whale killed due to entanglement.
State-specific gear marking shows Maine's whale problem.	<u>Purple marks on Maine gear</u> have only been required since 2020. Prior to that, New England trap fisheries, <u>including Maine</u> , used red-marked rope. Right whales have been <u>killed by red-marked rope</u> , but these are not traceable to a specific New England state.
Rope from Maine gear regularly entangles other large whale species.	Since 2020, <u>130 large whales</u> , including humpback and minke whales, have been seen with entanglements. In <u>42% of these cases</u> whales were entangled in purple-marked rope from Maine.
Fishermen should demand access to tools that prevent whale entanglements.	Lower breaking strength rope (a.k.a. <u>weak rope</u> ), <u>weak links</u> , and <u>on-demand fishing</u> minimize whale entanglements. Maine has a <u>gear lending program</u> for fishermen to <u>test alternative gear</u> for compensation.