





NOAA FISHERIES

Southeast U.S. Marine Mammal and Sea Turtle Viewing Guidelines



Follow these guidelines to prevent harassment and injury to marine mammals or sea turtles in the wild:

1. The minimum recommended viewing distances are:

Dolphins = 50 yards (1/2 the length of a football field)

Whales = 100 yards (the length of a football field)

Breaching whales may put people and/or vessels in danger.

North Atlantic right whales = 500 yards

Federal law prohibits approaching or remaining within 500 yards of North Atlantic right whales.

Seals = 50 yards

Keep pets on a leash and away from seals for their safety.

Sea turtles = 50 yards

2. **Never feed or attempt to feed marine mammals or sea turtles – it's prohibited by Federal law and it kills.**

For more information visit: www.dontfeedwilddolphins.org

3. **Do not swim with, ride, pet, touch, or attempt to interact with marine mammals or sea turtles in the wild.**

Remain a respectful distance!



Stay alert and use caution!

4. **Limit your viewing time to 30 minutes or less.**

Prolonged exposure to one or more vessels increases the likelihood that marine mammals and sea turtles will be disturbed.

5. **Avoid approaching the animals when another vessel is near.**

When several vessels are in an area, communication between vessels will help ensure that you do not cause the animals to be disturbed by corralling.

6. **Never pursue or follow marine wildlife.**

Any vessel movement should be from the recommended distance and slightly parallel to or from the rear of the animal. If you need to move around marine wildlife, do so from behind; never approach head-on.

Pursuit of sea turtles, and pursuit, torment, or annoyance of marine mammals that has the potential to disturb or disrupt natural behaviors is prohibited by Federal law.

SMARTPHONE APP: (for iPhone & Android devices)

Download **SEE & ID Dolphins & Whales** for tips on how to view marine mammals in the wild and a species ID guide of marine mammals in the Southeast U.S.



7. **If approached by a marine mammal or sea turtle, put your vessel's engine in neutral; allow the animal to pass and move away slowly.**

Be aware that these animals may surface in unpredictable locations.

8. **Marine mammals and sea turtles should not be encircled or trapped between vessels, or a vessel and the shore.**

Never attempt to herd, chase, or separate groups of marine mammals or females from their young. Always leave animals an "escape route."

9. **Avoid excessive vessel speed or sudden changes in speed or direction, and do not operate or maneuver a vessel in a way that may change the animal's behaviors.**

Specifically, do not intentionally direct your vessel or accelerate toward a marine mammal with the intent of creating a pressure wake allowing them to bow or wake-ride. Vessel strikes can cause fatal injuries to marine mammals and sea turtles.

Travel in a predictable manner!

https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/dam-migration/noaa_southeast_marinemammal_seaturtle_viewingguidelines_brochure_2014_508.pdf



Limit viewing time!

10. **Avoid excessive noise.**

Marine mammals have sensitive hearing and many species communicate by vocalizing underwater. Underwater sound produced by revving a vessel's engine and banging on a vessel to solicit the animal's attention has the potential to disturb them.

11. **Slowly leave the area if marine mammals show signs of disturbance.**

These include strongly exhaling, tail-slapping, breaching, repeated avoidance behaviors, erratic changes in speed or direction, increased aerial behaviors, or lengthy periods underwater.

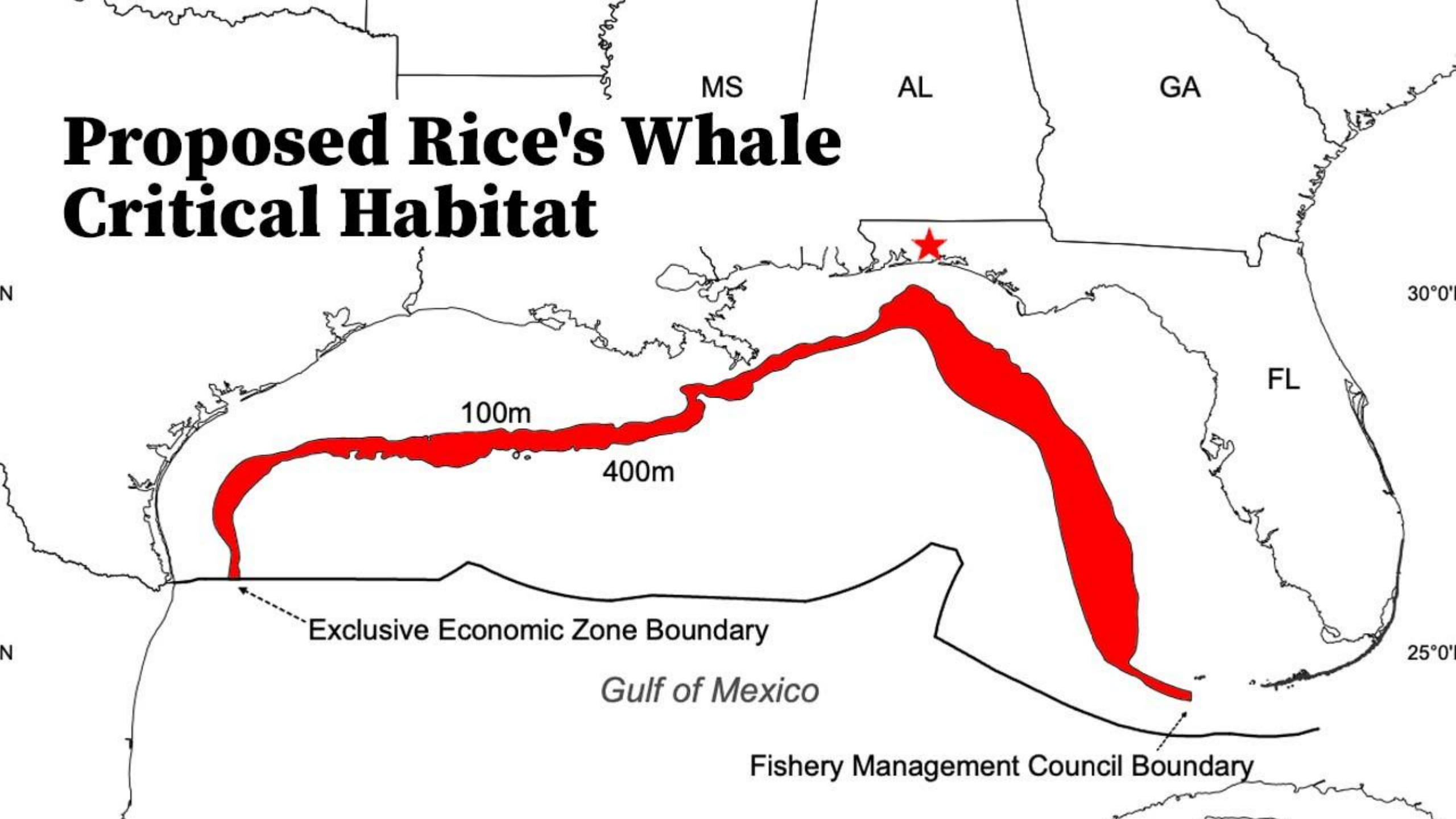
12. **Report dead, injured or entangled dolphins, whales or sea turtles in the Southeast U.S. to: 1-877-WHALE HELP (1-877-942-5343).**

SMARTPHONE APP: (for iPhone & Android devices)

Download **Dolphin & Whale 911** to learn how to help stranded marine mammals and to connect to the nearest stranding response organization.



Proposed Rice's Whale Critical Habitat



NEWS

Dead whale in Tampa Bay was hit by ship

The Associated Press
Published 2:41 p.m. ET Oct. 6, 2009



A crane drags the carcass of a nearly 42-foot dead Bryde's Whale from the surf onto the beach Monday, Oct. 5, 2009 near Fort Desoto Park, Fla. Scientists still do not know why the whale died and will have to take tissue samples to find the cause of death. Sarasota Herald-Tribune

The 41-foot-whale found floating in the Port of Tampa last weekend was killed by a ship out in the Gulf of Mexico.

That was the word Tuesday from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which performed a necropsy.

NOAA's Blair Mase said the wounds on the female Bryde's whale indicate that it was killed by a ship and carried into port, draped across the freighter's bow. He said it was "a clear-cut case of a ship strike."

The animal was found floating in Tampa Bay Sunday morning. It was towed to Fort DeSoto Park in St. Petersburg, where it was buried Monday.



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Guidelines for boaters:

Going slow may give you time to react. Whales can be extremely hard to spot.

Post a lookout! Watch for black objects, whitewater, and splashes. Avoid boating in the dark, when visibility is poor, or in rough seas.

Check for signage at your local boat ramp or marina as a reminder of what to look for and how to identify and report whale sightings.

If a whale is spotted, slow down, operate at slow speed or put your engine in neutral if possible. Assess the scene and slowly leave the area while keeping watch. Never pursue or follow a whale and keep at least 500 yards from right whales (it's the law).

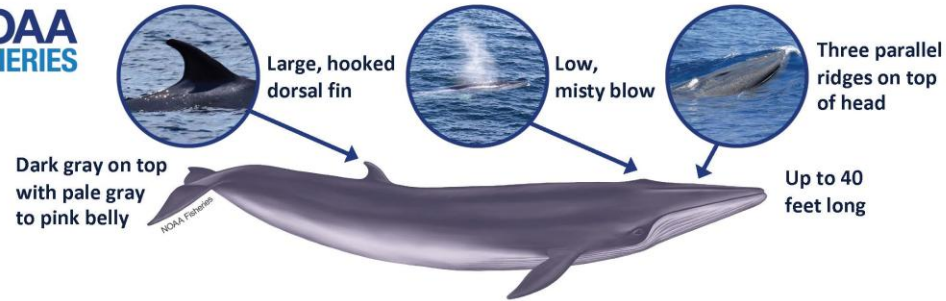
Report whale sightings to the proper authorities.

Report whale collisions as well as dead and entangled whales to the U.S. Coast Guard on marine VHF Ch. 16 or NOAA hotline at 877-WHALE-HELP (942-5343).



NOAA
FISHERIES

Have You Seen a Rice's Whale?



About Rice's whales

Rice's whales are the only resident baleen whale in the Gulf of America. **Fewer than 100** of these highly endangered whales remain. Rice's whales are often near the surface where they are vulnerable to vessel strikes. **You can help us conserve these endangered whales by reporting sightings and using caution when transiting through their habitat.**

More info:



If you think you see a Rice's whale*



- ▶ **Slow down!** Other whales could be nearby
- ▶ **Give it space!** Stay at least 100 yards away
- ▶ **Take photos/video** from a safe distance
- ▶ **Report the sighting**, even if the whale's identification is uncertain

Every sighting you report helps us learn more about these endangered whales!

*These are voluntary recommendations that are in addition to BOEM and BSEE oil & gas permitting requirements.

TO REPORT A RICE'S WHALE

Please report all Rice's whale sightings to: **(877) WHALE HELP/(877) 942-5343** (preferred) or **rices.whale@noaa.gov**

When reporting, please include the date, time, location (coordinates, if possible), water depth, number of whales, photos/video, and your contact information.**

**We may reach out for additional information. Your personal information will be protected.



Keep an eye out!
Examples of how Rice's whales may look on the water:



