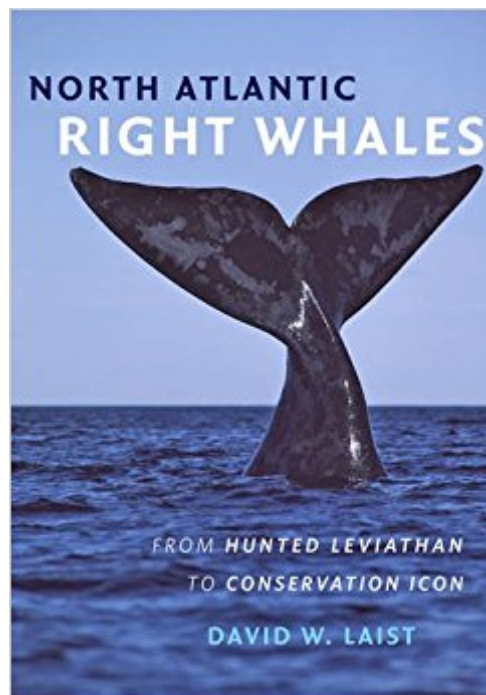




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North Atlantic Right Whales: From Hunted Leviathan To Conservation Icon



Synopsis

In the cold waters of the unforgiving North Atlantic Ocean, some of the heartiest humans of medieval days ventured out in search of whales. Through the centuries, people on both sides of the Atlantic became increasingly dependent on whale oil and other cetacean products. To meet this growing demand, whaling became ever more sophisticated and intense, leading to the collapse of what was once a seemingly inexhaustible supply of large cetaceans. Central to the whale's subsequent struggle for existence has been one species--the North Atlantic right whale.

Conservationist David W. Laist now provides the first complete history of the North Atlantic right whale, from its earliest encounters with humans to its close brush with extinction, to its currently precarious yet hopeful status as a conservation icon. Favored by whalers because of their high yields of oil and superior baleen, these giants became known as "the right whale to hunt," and their numbers dwindled to a mere 100 individuals worldwide. Their dire status encouraged the adoption of a ban on hunting and a treaty that formed the International Whaling Commission. Recovery of the species, however, has proven elusive. Ship strikes and entanglement in commercial fishing gear have hampered herculean efforts to restore the population. Today, only about 500 right whales live along the US and Canadian Atlantic coasts--an improvement from the early twentieth century, but still a far cry from the thousands that once graced Atlantic waters. Laist's masterpiece features an incredible collection of photographs and artwork that give life to the fascinating history that unfolds in its pages. The result is a single volume that offers a comprehensive understanding of North Atlantic right whales, the role they played in the many cultures that hunted them, and our modern attempts to help them recover.

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Customer Reviews

"David Laist's fascinating book about North Atlantic right whales takes us from the early days of whaling to current conservation issues. A Thoroughly researched and extremely well-written, his book will appeal equally to academics, conservationists, and whale-watchers." (James G. Mead, Curator Emeritus of Marine Mammals, Smithsonian Institution) "Although the text is written for a technical audience, the lucid and fluid narrative is combined with sufficient engaging descriptions to make this work accessible to all audiences. Statistics about whale populations and whaling are present, but unlike many books on whaling that overwhelm readers with extensive tables, quantitative information is placed judiciously in the narrative to illustrate specific points. The figures are well-rendered and useful. Recommended." (Choice)

Scientist David W. Laist is a senior policy and program analyst for the US Marine Mammal Commission.

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