

Right Whale Sighting Unusual for Kodiak Island Waters

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One of the photos used by scientists to identify a Right Whale visiting Uganik Bay in December. Scientist Kate Wynne says the smooth back and rostrum (upper jaw, on the right) are distinctive enough to make a positive identification. She says photos of whales are always welcome. They can be sent to her e-mail.

Jennifer Canfield/KMXT

Last month

Beth and Amy Pingree were taking photos of humpback whales near their home in Uganik Bay. They're part of a whale observation and sighting network that reports back to the Fishery Industrial Technology Center. They noticed something unusual. It wasn't a humpback. They sent pictures and detailed descriptions to Kate Wynne who is a marine mammal specialist at FITC. Wynne identified it as an endangered right whale. Just to be sure she sent the photos and details to colleagues in Seattle. They confirmed Wynne's identification.

Wynne says

the creatures, which can grow to 60 feet long and live up to 100 years, were named right whales because commercial whalers in the 1800's considered them the 'right' whale to hunt. They were often sighted close to shore, were known to be friendly- sometimes coming right up to the boats- and their corpses would float. All of this made them very easy prey.

KMXT's

Jennifer Canfield spoke with Wynne, who says this sighting is very unusual for several reasons.