

Whale songs are heard for the first time around New York City waters

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For the first time in waters surrounding New York City, the beckoning calls of endangered fin, humpback and North Atlantic right whales have been recorded, according to experts from the Bioacoustics Research Program at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

"This is an exciting time for New Yorkers. Just think, just miles from the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, Carnegie Hall and Times Square, the great whales are singing," says Chris Clark, the Director of the Bioacoustics Research Program at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "These are some of the largest and rarest animals on this planet trying to make a living just a few miles from New York's shores. It just goes to show us that there are many important and wonderful discoveries to be made about the living world right here, right in our back yards."

"With data generated by acoustic monitoring, we can better understand New York's role in the life history of these endangered whales and make more informed conservation decisions," says James Gilmore, chief of the DEC's Bureau of Marine Resources. "This is especially important for the survival of right whales."

The recorders were placed about 13 miles from the New York Harbor entrance and off the shores of Fire Island. Information about the seasonal presence of whales will help New York state policymakers develop management plans to protect them. Knowing the whales' travel

paths will help ship traffic managers avoid whale collisions in New York waters. Further, the study will characterize New York waters' acoustic environment and examine whether underwater noises, including shipping, affect the whales.

Acoustic monitoring was initiated in spring 2008 – between March and June – in order to record the right whales' northward migration from their calving ground off the Florida eastern coast to their feeding grounds off Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Acoustic monitoring has begun for the whales' southern migration in the fall, back to the calving areas. The study will continue through February 2009 and is expected to reveal which species occur in New York waters throughout the winter months.

Source: Cornell University

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