

## Humpback Whale

**Range:** The western North Atlantic stock summers in the waters of New England. The North Pacific summer range includes coastal and inland waters from California to Alaska.

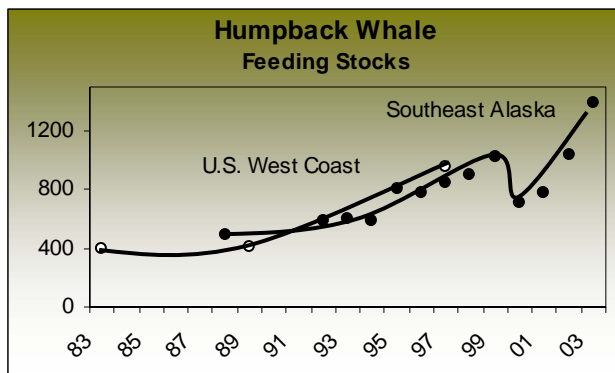
**Endangered species listing:** 1970

**Federal recovery plans:** 1991

**Status since listing:** Increased



Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) populations were greatly depleted by commercial whaling in the 19th and first half of the 20th century. American whalers alone killed between 14,164 and 18,212 humpbacks between 1805 and 1909. Its recovery began with the prohibition of whaling in the North Atlantic in 1955 and in the North Pacific in 1965. Since then, both populations have been slowly increasing. In 1992, it was estimated that the North Pacific population numbered between 6,000 and 8,000, up from an estimated 1,200 in 1966. In the U.S. Atlantic, there is evidence humpbacks in the Gulf of Maine have increased as well. Approximately 900 whales feed in these waters during the summer. Humpback whales are still threatened by ship strikes and entanglement in fishing gear. In 1995, a marine mammal disentanglement program was established. In 1996, an “Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team” was formed to reduce incidental mortality and injury of whales in offshore fisheries. Two years later a similar team was established for Eastern North Pacific populations.



**Northeast Highlight:** The Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies (PCCS) coordinates a coast-wide network to rescue whales that become entangled in fishing gear. First Responders quickly get to the site, monitor and standby the animal until the primary rescue team arrives, or if possible, frees the animal themselves. The Disentanglement Network's first response teams are

located at strategic sites along the east coast of the United States and Canadian Maritimes. The network includes Cetacean research organizations, Universities, government agencies, and individual fishermen and their associations, such as the Atlantic Fish Spotters Association. In 2004 two humpbacks were disentangled off Cape Cod and one off Newport, Rhode Island. Although PCCS's long-term goal is to find ways to keep whales from becoming entangled, the whale rescue team provides a necessary, emergency service for the interim.