

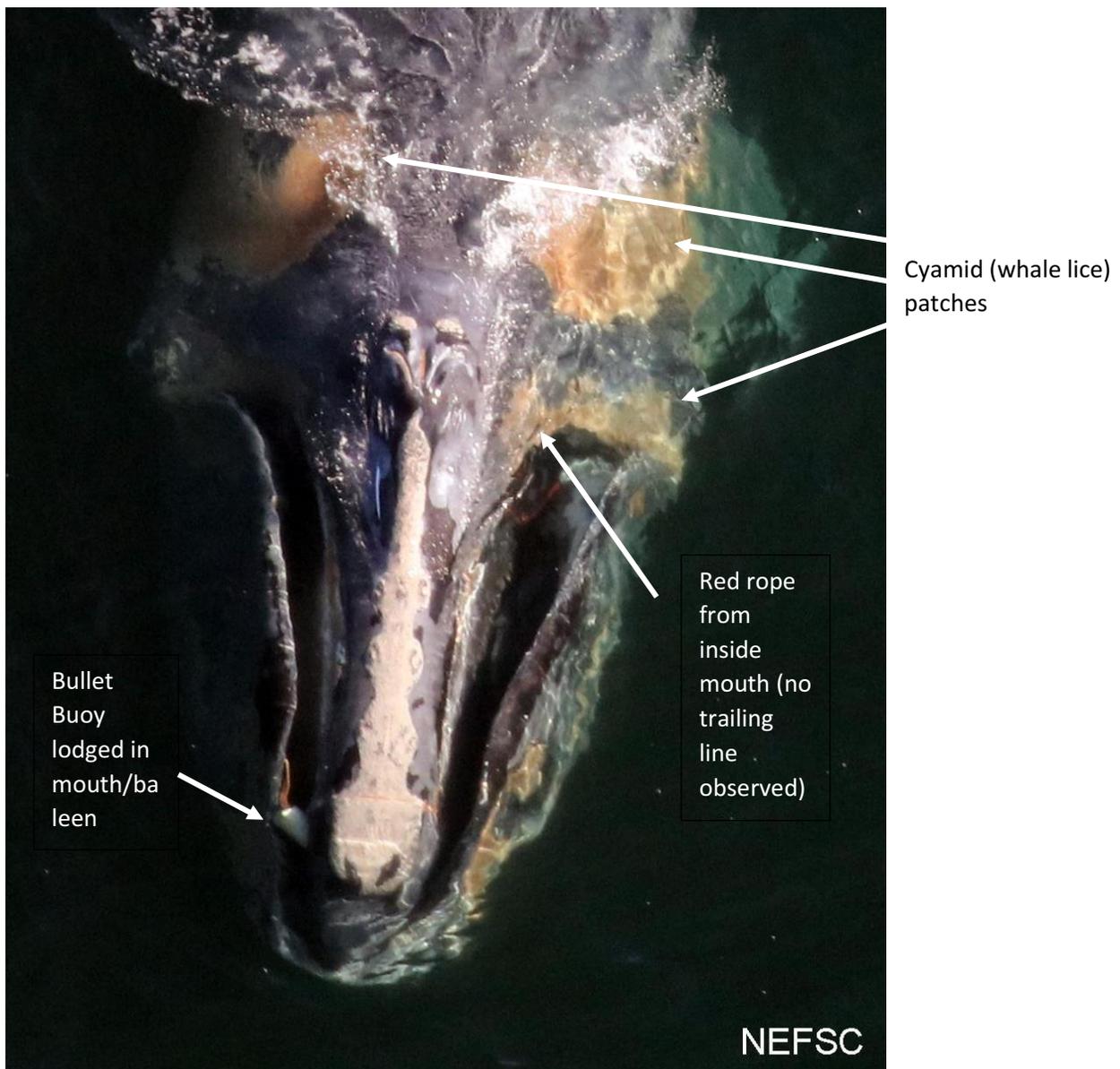
Case Report: North Atlantic Right Whale #3180 ("Dragon")

First Observed: 2/24/20, 12:07

Position: 40.68367, -69.59267 (~45 miles SE of Nantucket Island)

The animal was observed by the NEFSC team traveling slowly at the surface with an aggregation of other right whales. The mouth was ajar, but the whale did not appear to be feeding. The animal is emaciated with a heavy load of whale lice, indicating a long time weakened condition.

Upon review of the photos, a white bullet buoy can be seen in far forward in the mouth, presumably keeping the mouth from fully closing. A red rope is also observed in the left gape.



Given the distance offshore, a response by an entanglement response team would require a weather window of at least 2 good days – one to bring the response vessels into the vicinity and another to work with the animal. Given the large aggregation of right whales in the area, there is a significant risk of using a vessel at high speeds (including one from the US Coast Guard) to get to the entangled animal without striking another whale, so the transit would need to be cautious and careful.

This entanglement configuration is also extremely challenging. The gear is lodged in the mouth or baleen, but from the aerial images there does not appear to be any trailing line (which is typically used by the response team to approach the animal closely and tire it somewhat). If there are external wraps around the bonnet (not able to be seen in the photographs but possibly there), use of a flying cutter (blades on an arrowhead) might be able to release that wrap, but the gear could remain in the baleen.