Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

Photo: NOAA Fisheries permit #605-1904

Stellwagen Bank provides feeding and nursing grounds for many whale species, including the humpback whale.

Photo: Elliott Hazen

The high productivity of Stellwagen Bank supports foraging activity for diverse seabird species.

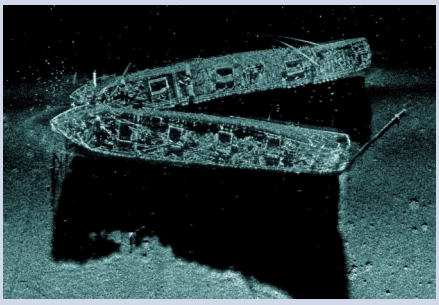


Photo: NOAA and Raytheon AST

The sanctuary is home to numerous shipwrecks, reminders of our nation's maritime heritage.

Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) stretches between Cape Ann and Cape Cod and is east of the Boston metropolitan region. The 842 square mile sanctuary hosts one of the most biologically diverse ecosystems in the Gulf of Maine. The underwater landscape was formed by the retreat of glaciers during the last Great Ice Age. Renowned for its biological diversity and remarkable productivity, the sanctuary is a critical feeding and nursery ground for several whale and dolphin species and has become one of the world's premier whale watching destinations. Named an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society, the sanctuary's rich waters serve as a stopover location for migrating birds and a seasonal destination for both summer and winter species. The sanctuary's position astride the historic shipping routes and fishing grounds for Massachusetts's oldest ports also makes it a repository for shipwrecks representing several hundred years of maritime transport.

Research and Monitoring

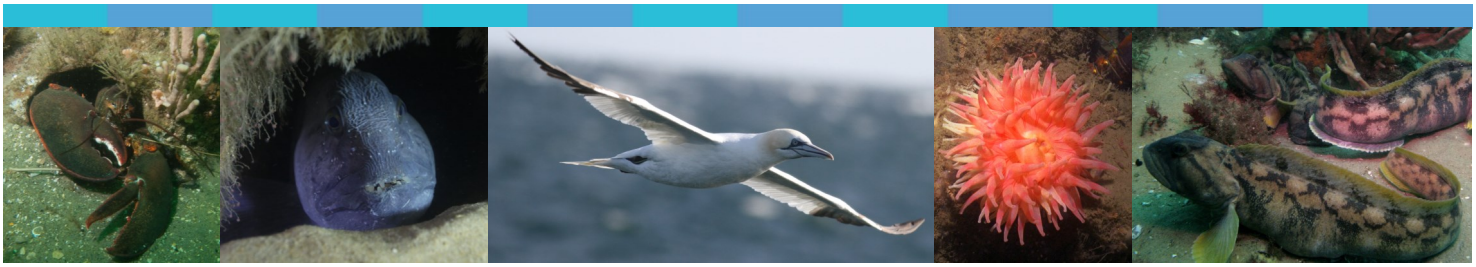
On-going projects are focused in three main areas: (1) marine mammal protection, (2) biodiversity conservation, and (3) maritime heritage preservation. Researchers study humpback whale behaviors through the use of non-invasive tags that record data, while other scientists measure man-made noises and analyze the effects on right whale communication. With satellite tags, scientists study great shearwater flight paths and prey distribution. Periodic seabird surveys by researchers and volunteers help the sanctuary determine distribution and abundance. Other studies include shipwreck identification and documentation; forage fish abundance, distribution and status; internal wave formation; seafloor habitat characterization; and cod spawning ground determination using acoustic technologies.

Education and Outreach

The sanctuary produces a variety of print and electronic publications, including the online newsletter, "Stellwagen Bank E-Notes". The sanctuary co-sponsors an annual K-12 marine art contest with Massachusetts Marine Educators and helps organize an introductory marine science course with Massasoit Community College. The sanctuary also co-sponsors education programs for recreational boaters and the whale watching community; provides curricular materials for educators; offers informal education programs on shipwrecks and whales; and supports short and long-term exhibits at several of the region's major museums and aquariums.

Photo: Ari Friedlaender, NOAA Fisheries permit #14245

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary is one of the best whale watching destinations in the world.



Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

Location
25 miles east of Boston, 3 miles southeast of Cape Ann and 3 miles north of Cape Cod

Protected Area
842 square miles

Designation
November 1992

Habitats
Boulder ridges
Gravel banks
Muddy basins
Open ocean
Rocky ledges
Sandy banks

Key Species
American lobster
Atlantic bluefin tuna
Atlantic cod
Atlantic white-sided dolphin
Great shearwater
Humpback whale
North Atlantic right whale
Razorbill
Sand lance
Wilson's storm petrel

National Marine Sanctuary System

Scale varies in this perspective. Adapted from National Geographic Maps.

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781-545-8026

On the Web
Email: stellwagen@noaa.gov
www.facebook.com/SBNMS
Twitter: @NOAASBNMS

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Network of marine protected areas
Encompasses more than 170,000 square miles
Established October 1972

On the Web
sanctuaries.noaa.gov
www.facebook.com/NOAAOfficeofNationalMarineSanctuaries
Instagram: @noaasanctuaries
Twitter: @sanctuaries
Tumblr: @noaasanctuaries

Photo: Michael Thompson, NOAA Fisheries permit #633-1763-01

North Atlantic right whales visit Stellwagen Bank and Cape Cod Bay to feed in the highly productive waters.

Photo: Doug Costa

Atlantic cod is a species with ecological, economic and cultural significance for New England.

Photo: Tane Casserley, NOAA

A cunner hides among the marine invertebrates covering the remains of a sanctuary shipwreck.

http://stellwagen.noaa.gov