

2013 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

FATHOM THAT! a marine sanctuary adventure

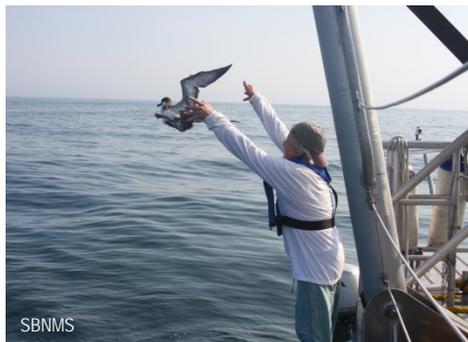


Dial and Dive In! (781) 304-1013
Explore your national marine sanctuary without getting wet.
The tour is free, but your normal calling rates apply.

SBNMS

FATHOM THAT! - SANCTUARY STORIES ON CELL PHONES

“Fathom That!” a new outreach project, funded partially by a National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Hollings Grant, is bringing sanctuary historical events, cutting edge research and timely conservation programs straight to the public. Listeners can access audio messages via a simple phone call or a supplementary mobile website. To access the audio messages, listeners dial 781-304-1013 and then enter unique extensions for specific stories. The mobile website is <https://bycell.mobi/stellwagen> and is also accessible by QR code. In partnership with the regional whale watch fleet, “Fathom That!” signs have been installed on most whale watch vessels.



SBNMS

FOLLOW THAT BIRD: TAGGING GREAT SHEARWATERS

When sanctuary researchers attached satellite tags to ten great shearwaters in the summer of 2013, they were surprised by the results. The technology revealed the long-ranging, Gulf of Maine-wide transits of the birds (which can be viewed online at <http://stellwagen.noaa.gov/science/shearwater13.html>). From the three months of archived data, scientists will study movements, life cycle, and feeding and foraging habits of these important sanctuary seabirds and identify hotspots of biological activity. This dataset further expands our knowledge of the sanctuary ecosystem, which serves as a sentinel site for the Gulf of Maine.



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ANIMALS WITHOUT PASSPORTS - TRAVELING EXHIBIT

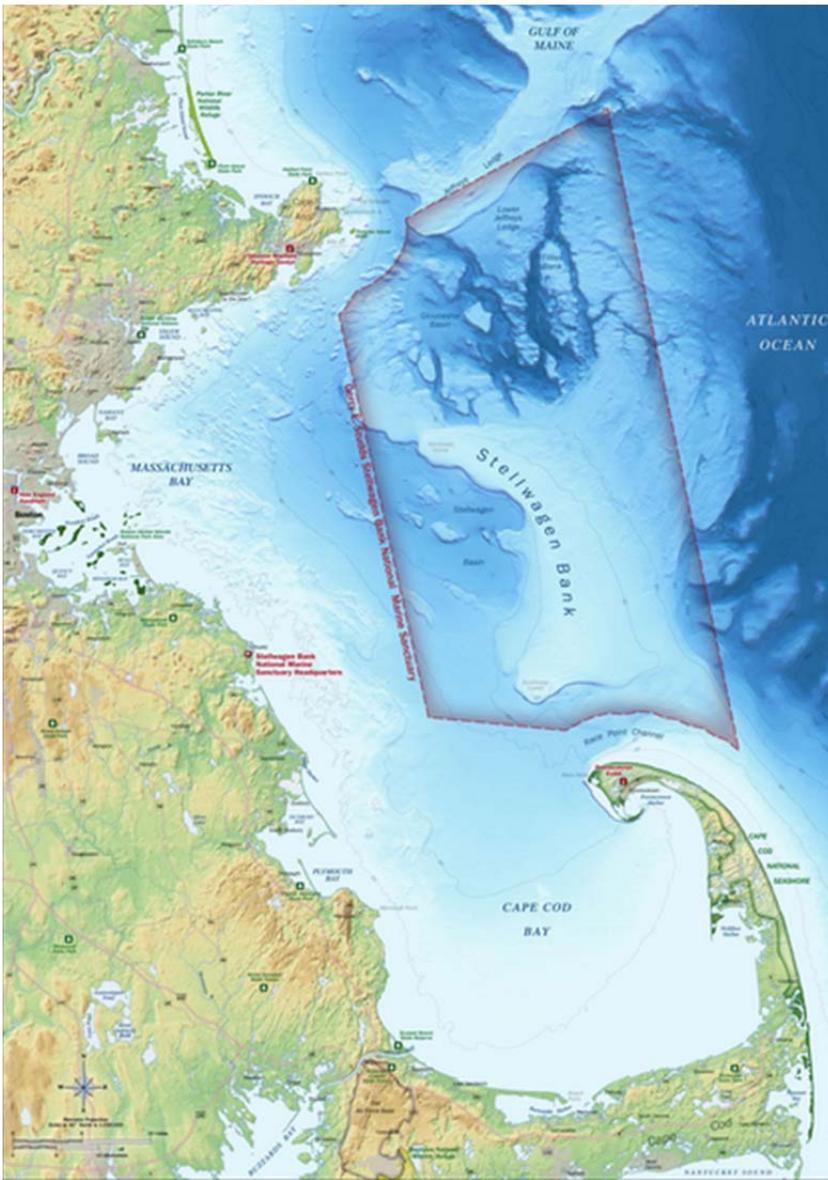
Humpback whales are truly international citizens and, without passports as a barrier, they freely cross many borders. A new traveling exhibit from the sanctuary features this iconic great whale and the Sister Sanctuary program that is helping to protect this population of endangered animals along their migratory route. The traveling exhibit premiered at the Mystic Aquarium in April with an extended run until the end of the year. Upcoming stops include two top tourism attractions - the Worcester EcoTarium and the Boston Museum of Science.



NURTEC-UConn

BIG RESULTS FROM A SHRIMP EFFORT

In December, after 15 years of dedicated work, researchers delivered results for the Seafloor Habitat Recovery Monitoring Project (SHRMP). The project studied seafloor communities at paired sites that were either impacted or unimpacted by bottom-contact fishing gear. Sites were located in mud, sand, gravel and boulder habitats. The final report indicated that the Western Gulf of Maine Closure Area habitats (unimpacted study sites) showed significant recovery from chronic fishing gear impacts, but have not reached stable climax states. Multiple papers for scholarly journals based on SHRMP are now in development.



LOOKING AHEAD

- Mystic Seaport's whaleship, *Charles W. Morgan*, undertakes its 38th voyage in 2014. Now an ambassador to the whales, this historic vessel will dedicate three days to research in the sanctuary. Throughout the multi-port tour, thousands of visitors will learn about sanctuary science and stewardship.
- Stellwagen Bank is working to establish a designated habitat research area (DHRA) along with NOAA Fisheries and the New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC). The NEFMC has selected the DHRA, partially located within the sanctuary, as a preferred alternative in the Omnibus Essential Habitat Amendment 2 Draft EIS, which will be presented for public comment in 2014. The DHRA will provide long-term sites for the study of gear impacts on various seafloor habitats.
- The sanctuary is already considered one of the foremost locations for whale research. In 2014, efforts will be underway to make Stellwagen Bank NMS the ONMS Center of Excellence for Marine Mammal, Acoustic and Conservation Research.

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary sits at the mouth of Massachusetts Bay, just 25 miles from the busy port of Boston. The 842-square-mile sanctuary is one of the world's premiere whale watching destinations and historically important as a fishing ground. Atlantic cod, haddock, various flounders and bluefin tuna are among its treasured species. Its waters support a rich assortment of marine life, including critically endangered North Atlantic right whales. Numerous shipwrecks, representing more than 400 years of maritime travel, rest on the sanctuary seafloor.

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is committed to supporting lives and livelihoods across the nation and in sanctuary communities through socioeconomic research and monitoring to understand the economic and social drivers of sanctuary resources and improve management practices.

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



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

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a system of 14 marine protected areas encompassing more than 150,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The system includes 13 national marine sanctuaries and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. For more information on the National Marine Sanctuary System, visit: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>