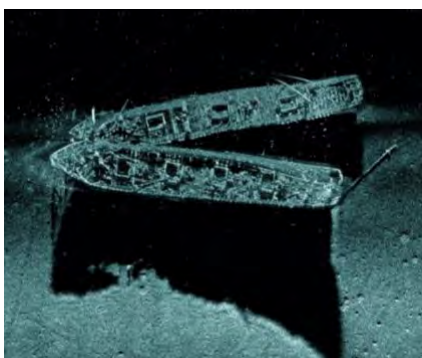




Stellwagen Bank provides feeding and nursing grounds for many whale species, including the humpback whale. Photo: NOAA, under NOAA Fisheries permit #605-1904



The high productivity of Stellwagen Bank supports foraging activity for diverse seabird species. Photo: Elliott Hazen



The sanctuary is home to numerous shipwrecks, reminders of our nation's maritime heritage. Photo: NOAA and Raytheon AST

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

The sanctuary 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.

Renowned for its remarkable productivity, the sanctuary is a critical feeding and nursery ground for several marine mammals and has become one of the world's premier whale watching destinations. The sanctuary's rich waters provide year-round habitat for birds. The sanctuary's position astride historic shipping routes and fishing grounds also makes it a repository for shipwrecks representing several hundred years of maritime transport.

Research and Monitoring

Research is focused in three areas: (1) marine mammal protection; (2) biodiversity conservation; and (3) maritime heritage preservation. Researchers study humpback whale behavior and measure man-made noises and their effects on marine life, such as right whale communication. Scientists also 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 and distribution; and seafloor habitat characterization.

Education and Outreach

The sanctuary produces a variety of print and electronic publications, collaborates with the Boston University Marine Program to use the sanctuary as a living laboratory, and co-sponsors an annual K-12 marine art contest with Massachusetts Marine Educators. In the area of whale conservation, the sanctuary works with partners to bring timely information to shipping companies, recreational boaters, and the whale watch community, in addition to participating in the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team and other resource management activities.



Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary is one of the best whale watching destinations in the world. Photo: Ari Friedlaender/NOAA, under NOAA Fisheries permit #14245

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



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Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Network of marine protected areas
Encompasses more than 620,000 square miles
Established October 1972

On the Web

sanctuaries.noaa.gov
Facebook: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
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Tumblr: @noas Sanctuaries
YouTube: [youtube.com/user/sanctuaries](https://www.youtube.com/user/sanctuaries)



North Atlantic right whales visit Stellwagen Bank to feed. Photo: Michael Thompson/NOAA, under NOAA Fisheries permit #633-1763-01



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



A cunner hides among the marine invertebrates covering the remains of a sanctuary shipwreck. Photo: Tane Casserley/NOAA