

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary



Photo: Greg McFall, NOAA

Boaters, divers and fishermen enjoy the wonders of Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary.



Photo: Greg McFall, NOAA

More than 200 fish species seek shelter and food in Gray's Reef.

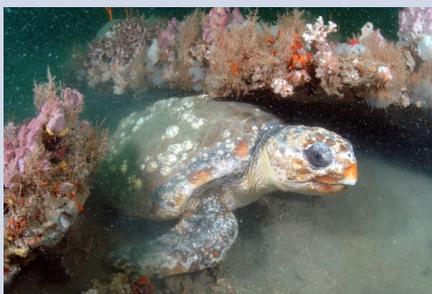


Photo: Greg McFall, NOAA

The threatened loggerhead turtle forages and rests among the rocky outcrops of Gray's Reef.

Gray's Reef National Marine

Sanctuary (GRNMS) protects a vibrant hard-bottom area off the Georgia coast. The reef's scattered rocky outcroppings and ledges provide homes for an abundance of marine life. Crabs, lobsters, soft corals, sponges, sea stars and other organisms form a dense carpet of living creatures, covering the nooks and crannies of Gray's Reef and giving it the name "live bottom." The reef attracts more than 200 species of fish, including black sea bass, snappers, groupers and mackerels. Loggerhead sea turtles, a threatened species, forage and rest year-round at Gray's Reef, and the reef is within the only known winter calving ground for the highly endangered North Atlantic right whale. The 22 square mile sanctuary is the only protected natural reef and one of a few natural marine protected areas in the Atlantic Ocean between Cape Hatteras, North Carolina and Cape Canaveral, Florida.

Gray's Reef also attracts people: recreational boaters, anglers and divers are among the sanctuary's user groups. However, given the sanctuary's remote location 16 miles east of Sapelo Island, Georgia, most people experience Gray's Reef through pictures or videos showing some of its colorful fish and benthic organisms. No need to get your feet

wet; Gray's Reef has exhibit partnerships with the Georgia Aquarium, the Tybee Island Marine Science Center, the Fernbank Museum of Natural History, Georgia Southern University and South Carolina Aquarium, among others.

Research and Monitoring

GRNMS provides a living laboratory for study of this unique marine ecosystem. The sanctuary's research team, in partnership with scientists from other agencies and universities, undertake numerous investigations to understand the status and condition of marine life and habitats. Whether it is the study of coral settlement on the reef or research on native fish populations, science conducted in Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary helps NOAA make informed decisions that protect the sanctuary.

Education and Outreach

GRNMS invites Georgia residents and visitors to explore and learn about the sanctuary's delicate ocean ecosystems and how they can help protect and conserve the ocean. Exhibits are on display in a variety of locations, and the sanctuary hosts events for all ages, such as the Gray's Reef Ocean Film Festival and an exciting regional ROV team competition in which students create, launch and operate underwater robots.



Photo: Greg McFall, NOAA

Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary is one of the largest near-shore live-bottom reefs off the southeastern United States.



Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary

Location

16 miles off the coast of Sapelo Island, Georgia

Protected Area

22 square miles

Designation

January 1981

Habitats

Flat bottom troughs
Flat top ridge
Ledges and crevices
Scarps
Slopes and sandy areas

Key Species

Black sea bass
Grouper
Hard and soft coral
Loggerhead sea turtle
North Atlantic right whale
Nurse shark
Red snapper
Sea whips
Tunicates
Vase sponge

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



Olympic Coast

Greater Farallones

Cordell Bank

Papahānaumokuākea

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale

Monterey Bay

Channel Islands

American Samoa (U.S.)
(Including Rose Atoll)

Wisconsin - Lake Michigan

Thunder Bay

Stellwagen Bank

Mallows Bay - Potomac River

Monitor

Gray's Reef

Florida Keys

Flower Garden Banks

Find Us

10 Ocean Science Circle
Savannah, GA 31411
912-598-2345

On the Web

Email: graysreef@noaa.gov
www.facebook.com/graysreefsanctuary
 Twitter: @graysreefms

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Network of marine protected areas
Encompasses more than 600,000 square miles
Established October 1972

On the Web

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



Photo: Greg McFall, NOAA

Gray's Reef researchers deploy monitoring equipment on the reef.



Photo: Greg McFall, NOAA

Divers enjoy the abundant marine life protected and conserved for present and future generations.



Photo: NOAA NMFS

Gray's Reef lies within the calving grounds of the endangered North Atlantic right whale.

<http://graysreef.noaa.gov>