

2014 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



CHARLES W. MORGAN'S 38TH VOYAGE

The last surviving wooden whaleship, the *Charles W. Morgan*, undertook its 38th voyage after an 80-year hiatus when it sailed to Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) in June. The *Morgan* visited former New England whaling ports and raised awareness about today's marine mammal conservation efforts. Sanctuary staff helped produce nine OceansLive web TV programs that attracted approximately 25,000 viewers. NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries partnered with Mystic Seaport to host an exhibit tent at the dockside village at each port of call, which attracted more than 62,000 visitors.



THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL WHALE WATCHING SEASON

In the summer, whale watchers at SBNMS witnessed some of the best shows in decades. A small, schooling fish called the sand lance, an important prey species, drew whales to the sanctuary. The sand lance is critically important to the success of the sanctuary's food web. In partnership with U.S. Geological Survey scientists, sanctuary researchers have initiated a study to understand this key species and its habitat better. Using sediment grab samples, video, photography and biochemical sampling, the team is assessing habitat use, seasonal variation and population health.



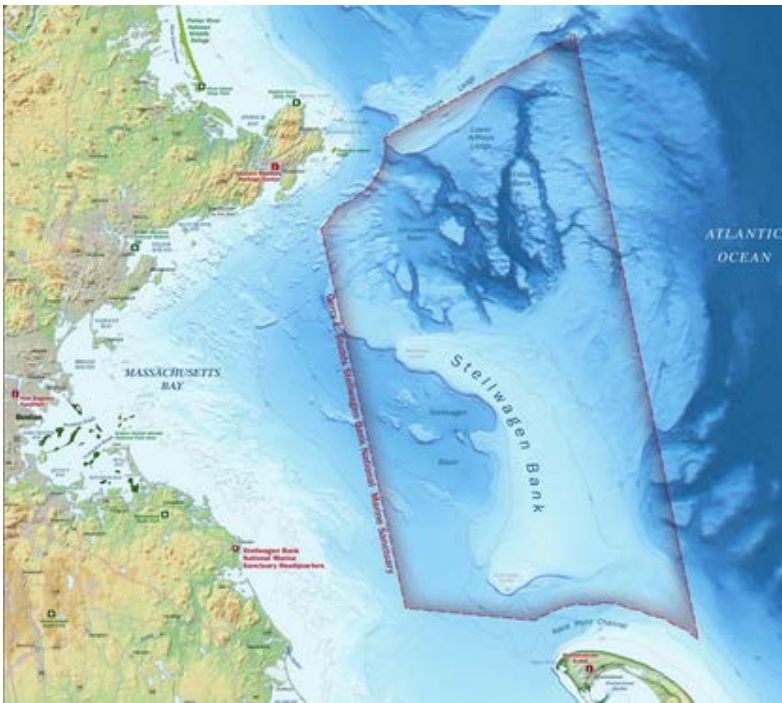
RESEARCH TEAMS TRACK SANCTUARY SEABIRDS

Seabirds now attract more than just birdwatchers; they attract research teams. Citizen scientists with the Stellwagen Sanctuary Seabird Stewards (S4) collected data during 50 research cruises in 2014. Five cruises were on the sanctuary's research vessel, *Auk*, and 45 were with whale watch operators during regular trips to Stellwagen Bank. In a second seabird project, a team of scientists, including staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, attached satellite tags to ten great shearwaters to learn about the movements, life cycle, feeding and foraging habits of this sentinel species in the Gulf of Maine. For more information: <http://stellwagen.noaa.gov/science/shearwater13.html>



ANIMALS WITHOUT PASSPORTS EXHIBIT MIGRATES TO BOSTON

SBNMS' humpback whales migrate more than 3,000 miles to and from the breeding and calving grounds where several marine mammal sanctuaries are located. The sanctuary-created *Animals without Passports* exhibit has also been traveling this year. The exhibit highlights these whales and their migration, while introducing visitors to SBNMS and its sister sanctuaries. *Animals without Passports* visited the Worcester Ecotarium early in the year and then moved to the Boston Museum of Science, which receives approximately 1.5 million visitors each year. The Boston stopover has been so well received that the exhibit's stay has been extended into 2015.



Art: Tom Freeman. Photo: Anne Smrcina, SBNMS.

National Marine Sanctuary Foundation artist-in-residence Tom Freeman created a whale research painting for SBNMS. The sanctuary is the ONMS Center of Excellence for Acoustics and Marine Mammal Conservation Research

LOOKING AHEAD

- SBNMS has been working with the International Fund for Animal Welfare to inform shipping companies about their compliance with speed requirements in North Atlantic right whale seasonal management areas within sanctuary boundaries. In 2015, companies achieving the highest conservation standards will be recognized.
- The sanctuary is a focal point in marine science education programs at Boston University and Massasoit Community College. Additionally, an annual K-12 marine art contest at Massachusetts Marine Educators uses sanctuary species as the theme. All programs will continue in 2015.

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 is historically important as a fishing ground. Atlantic cod, haddock, various flounders and bluefin tuna are among its treasured species. The sanctuary's 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. The sanctuary was established on November 4, 1992.

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



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>