

## STELLWAGEN BANK E-NOTES: *sanctuary news & events* Jan/Feb/Mar 2013



*Humpback Mother and Calf*  
by Elisabeth Bowerman, grade 11  
Falmouth High School

## Marine Art Contest for K-12 Students Now Underway

The 2013 Marine Art Contest for students in grades K-12 is underway. The contest theme is “Amazing Ocean Creatures of Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary”. The contest, sponsored by Massachusetts Marine Educators (and co-sponsored by Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, New England Aquarium, Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, Whale and Dolphin Conservation and Stellwagen Alive), is free and open to all students from public, private and home schools. **Deadline is Thursday, April 25, 2013.** A copy of the contest rules can be found at the MME website at [www.massmarineeducators.org](http://www.massmarineeducators.org) or the sanctuary website at [http://stellwagen.noaa.gov/news/pdfs/art\\_contest\\_2013.pdf](http://stellwagen.noaa.gov/news/pdfs/art_contest_2013.pdf)

2012 Marine Art Exhibit Tours Region (see page 4)

Calendar Featuring Winning Art from 2012 Now Available (see page 4)



[www.facebook.com/SBNMS](http://www.facebook.com/SBNMS)



[www.youtube.com/user/SBNMS](http://www.youtube.com/user/SBNMS)

### In This Issue:

Christmas Bird Count	p.2
Volunteer Wins Scout Honor	p.3
Sanctuary Staff in the News	p.3
Surviving Nemo in Scituate	p.3
Safety Award to Auk Crew	p.3
Exhibit Moves to P'town	p.4
Sanctuary Calendar	p.4

EDITOR: Anne Smrcina

To receive notices about new issues or to provide feedback on this publication, contact us at [stellwagen@noaa.gov](mailto:stellwagen@noaa.gov) or 781-545-8026 and provide your e-mail address. This information will be held securely and not released to any outside organization or individual.

## Seabird Stewards Take to the Seas for the Annual Christmas Count

On a very cold but calm January 3, the Stellwagen Sanctuary Seabird Stewards (S4) joined forces again with National Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count team. The group sighted 714 individual birds, totaling 16 distinct species, including an Atlantic puffin, numerous razorbills, black-legged kittiwakes, Bonaparte's gulls, dovekies, and an Iceland gull. Unlike last year, when light, intermediate and dark color morphs were observed, there was not a single northern fulmar seen this year.

The sanctuary's Seabird Stewards program has incorporated the Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count into its seasonal surveys of seabird diversity and abundance. All of the counts use the redefined Stellwagen Bank Christmas Bird Count survey area, which is now completely within sanctuary boundaries and comprises a subset of sanctuary research coordinator David Wiley's sanctuary use study area in the mid-1990s and 2001-2002.



Participants bundled up for the annual Christmas Bird Count in the sanctuary. Temperatures hovered in the teens throughout the day. Credit: Anne-Marie Runfola, SBNMS.

The volunteer corps of experienced birders, who serve as citizen scientists, is providing the sanctuary with some of its most detailed information about avian species. Additional technical expertise came from NOAA Fisheries research scientist Marie-Caroline Martin.

This year's findings will be added to both the growing S4 and Christmas Bird Count databases to compare relative abundance and diversity of seabirds over time. This type of information helps researchers understand animal populations within the sanctuary and possible impacts on local ecosystems as well as serving as a barometer for other changes in the environment.

### Species List for 2012 Christmas Bird Count

- Atlantic Puffin
- Black Guillemot
- Black-legged Kittiwake
- Black Scoter
- Bonaparte's Gull
- Canada Goose
- Common Eider
- Common Loon
- Common Murre
- Dovekie
- Great Black-backed Gull
- Herring Gull
- Iceland Gull
- Northern Gannet
- Razorbill
- Ring-billed Gull



Razorbill in flight. Credit: Naeem Yusuff.

## Teen Ambassador Earns Highest Level Girl Scout Award for Sanctuary Project

On February 12, 2013, Sanctuary Ambassador, Caitlin Fitzmaurice, received the Girl Scout's highest and most prestigious honor, the Gold Award, for her outreach work with Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. Caitlin developed and led two events, *A Child's Sanctuary: Go Green for Marine Life*, for young children and their parents, once during the summer and again in the fall. The programs celebrated the sanctuary's marine mammals. During the programs, a combined total of 130 children and their parents listened to ocean stories inside a life-sized whale model, tried on a blubber glove, ate like a whale and learned about entanglement risks to marine mammals and how the sanctuary and its partners work to protect them.

Caitlin led six other sanctuary Ambassadors at each event, and organized the programs in partnership with the Scituate Library. Both events garnered several articles in local press, including a full-page photo spread in the Scituate Mariner. Feedback was very positive, with participants requesting future events, introductions to local schools, and more information on volunteering with the sanctuary. In addition to the library programs, Caitlin also gave presentations to several groups, including the October 2012 meeting of the Sanctuary Advisory Council and a meeting of Scituate science teachers. She will continue offering programs to the public about her work with the sanctuary.

This is the first time a volunteer has run *A Child's Sanctuary* programming without the Volunteer Program Coordinator present. This paves the way for additional programs run by volunteers, giving the sanctuary much greater outreach potential.



Caitlin Fitzmaurice earned the Girl Scout's Gold Award, the organization's highest honor. Credit: Anne-Marie Runfola.

## Sanctuary Issues Report Cards on Compliance with Right Whale Rules

In January, 219 letters were sent to 163 shipping companies in 25 countries reviewing their ships' compliance with rules related to right whale safety. These "report cards" were based on Automatic Identification System (AIS) data collected throughout 2012. Information gathered by AIS includes ship name, direction, speed, and cargo. This is the fourth year that these sorts of report cards have been issued by the sanctuary.

From the archived AIS numbers, sanctuary GIS analysts Michael Thompson and Brad Cabe were able to analyze ship speeds in the Off Race Point and Cape Cod Bay Seasonal Management Areas that partially overlap the sanctuary. Attached to the letters were maps that highlighted ship tracks and calculated ship transit times if the ships were to maintain a legal, safe speed. A goal of this education project is to increase knowledge of and compliance with right whale regulations.

Mike and Brad have been analyzing data from 2009 to 2012 to determine trends in ship transits and to evaluate the effectiveness of the report card project. The team is also working with NOAA Fisheries to examine compliance of vessels involved in the sanctuary outreach project for all Seasonal Management Areas between New England and Florida. Funding for these compliance programs has been provided by the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

### SANCTUARY TRIVIA

In 2012, volunteers provided 7,043 hours of service to the sanctuary in operations, research, education and volunteer programs.

### Stellwagen Staff in the News

Sanctuary Research Coordinator **Dave Wiley** was interviewed by BBC News for a segment on the shifting of the Traffic Separation Scheme (Boston shipping lanes) to protect great whales in the sanctuary. Estimated audience in England is 7 million and a world reach of some 180 million viewers.

**Leila Hatch**, sanctuary marine ecologist and bioacoustician, was interviewed by CBS-News for a story on the increasing levels of noise in the ocean, which create problems for whale hearing. The segment can be viewed at <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50138301n>. This program also has an estimated viewership of 7 million individuals nationwide.

### SANCTUARY TRIVIA

By the end of 2012, there had been approximately 15,000 downloads of the iPad/iPhone **WhaleAlert** App, which was released in April 2012).

## Stellwagen Sanctuary Successfully Weathers Nemo Blizzard

Strong winds, heavy snow and crashing waves battered the Scituate coastline during Feb. 8-9. From New York to Maine, the historic storm, nicknamed Nemo, caused power outages and wreaked havoc. The shoreline of Scituate, which sticks out into Massachusetts Bay and traditionally gets pounded by waves forced across the Gulf of Maine by northeasters, was hit hard again. Local newscasters gravitate to this location for the most dramatic footage of wave action, street flooding and coastal erosion. Massachusetts Governor Duval Patrick closed state highways to all but emergency vehicles from Friday afternoon through late Saturday. Sustained winds at the height of the storm were close to 50 mph and gusts reached hurricane force.



Storm debris litters the boathouse beach berm after the storm. Credit: Michael Thompson.

Sanctuary facilities fared well in the storm, due in large part to the efficient actions of Facility and Operations Coordinator Dave Slocum and Massachusetts Maritime Academy intern Nick Fenton. Power, down throughout most of the South Shore for several days, returned on Monday (a back-up generator provided power to several heat pumps in our main buildings) and prevented the pipes from freezing.

## Sanctuary's Vessel Captain and Crew Receive Safety Pro Award

Captain Robert "Bob" Wallace and his crew have received the National Ocean Service's Safety Pro Award for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of fiscal year 2013. In making the award, NOS reported: "Since NOS acquired the research vessel *AUK* in 2006 for the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, Captain Wallace and his crew have conducted more than 380 research missions involving more than 2,500 passengers without incident. This excellent safety record is a direct result of the captain's and crew's diligence in providing safety briefings to passengers prior to every mission, ensuring adherence of passengers to safety protocols during the course of the mission, conducting safety drills throughout the year, and maintaining the vessel and safety gear (PFDs, EPIRBs, etc.) in proper working order. Captain Wallace's firm, Wallace Ocean Services, provides a captain, backup captain (David Arch), and two mates (Chris Fosdick and Stephen Kibner). These individuals have been involved with operating the vessel since 2006 and their familiarity with it and with the high standards for safety by the NOS small boat program has contributed to the excellent safety record, not to mention their combined 130+ years of experience running vessels of various types."

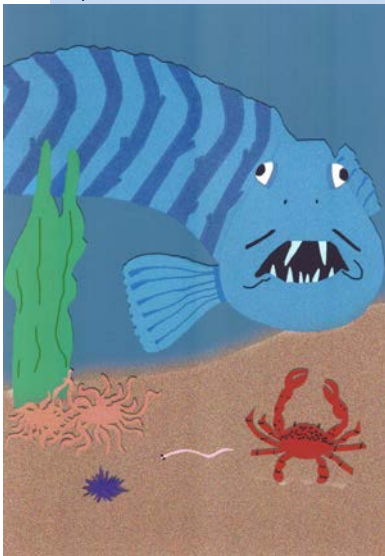


The busy sanctuary vessel crew can rarely be found in one place. Through the magic of photo editing, sanctuary GIS analyst and computer guru Mike Thompson got them all together. From left to right: Bob Wallace, Dave Arch, Steve Kibner and Chris Fosdick.

# Stellwagen Sanctuary Calendar

- Mar. 5            *Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting* at Holiday Inn, Rockland, MA. 9:30am-3:30pm
- Mar. 9            *In the Belly of a Whale* at South Shore Natural Science Center, Norwell, MA. Sanctuary education activities and talk.
- Mar. 9-11        *Boston Sea Rovers Conference* in Danvers, MA. Sanctuary booth.
- Mar. 17          *St. Patrick's Day Parade* in Scituate, MA. Sanctuary float.
- Mar. 20          *Mass. Marine Educators High School Science Symposium* at UMass/Dartmouth. Sanctuary talks and exhibit.
- Mar. 23          *Science on the Streets* at Cape Cod Museum of Natural History in Brewster, MA. Sanctuary booth.

*Wolffish and Seafloor Invertebrates*  
by Shaelyn Keane, grade 9,  
Plymouth South HS



## Marine Art Exhibit Now Touring Region

Winning entries (and many of the honorable mentions) from the 2012 MME Marine Art Contest are part of an exhibition that is touring in the sanctuary region. The show is now located at the J.F. K. Federal Building in Boston's Government Center. The show will move to the Salem National Historic Site Visitor Center in March, the New Bedford Oceanarium in April and NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office in Gloucester in May. All prize winners and honorable mention awardees are also posted on the sanctuary website at <http://stellwagen.noaa.gov/pgallery/kidscorner.html>

## 2013 Marine Art Calendar Available

A 2013 calendar featuring art from the 2012 MME Marine Art Contest is now available from Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. The calendar can be downloaded from the website at [http://stellwagen.noaa.gov/news/pdfs/art\\_calendar2013.pdf](http://stellwagen.noaa.gov/news/pdfs/art_calendar2013.pdf).

## Animals without Passports Exhibit Migrates to Center for Coastal Studies



The *Animals without Passports* exhibit ended its run at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on Dec. 31, 2012 and then migrated north to Provincetown. Exhibit panels have been relocated to the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies conference room at the laboratory facility.

The exhibit provides information on the migratory path of the humpback whale between North Atlantic feeding grounds and Caribbean breeding grounds and showcases Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary's sister sanctuaries program and whale research projects. Additionally, the exhibit describes the various hazards humpback whales face as they journey across ocean borders. Exhibit funding was provided by the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

A related traveling exhibit with the same name is now under development for initial installation at the Mystic Aquarium later in the spring.

(Photos above and below) *Animals without Passports* exhibit now resides at PCCS. Credit: Deborah Marx, SBNMS.



# NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



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

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Ocean Service  
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries  
Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary



<http://stellwagen.noaa.gov/>