

Visitor Information

V.4, February 2015



Matthew Lawrence, SBNMS

A diver explores the Unidentified Trawler's wheelhouse in 105 feet of water on top of Stellwagen Bank.



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Colorful anemones on the *F/V North Star*'s propeller make for a nice photo opportunity while exploring the shipwreck in 100 fsw.



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Divers interested in photography and videography will find good visibility and a variety of different subjects, from shipwrecks to fish and colorful invertebrates.

Diving



While many of New England's popular dive spots are relatively close to shore, some excellent diving can be found further afield. Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary's position between Cape Ann and Cape Cod offers divers a chance to explore different environments at the mouth of Massachusetts Bay, where strong currents and exposed waters create challenging dive conditions.

Fifteen percent of the sanctuary, 126 square miles, is shallower than 130 feet of seawater (fsw) at low tide. Much of this area lies atop Stellwagen Bank where depths range from 65 feet in the south to 110 feet in the north.

Sanctuary dive sites include numerous shipwrecks and natural habitat areas on Stellwagen Bank, Sanctuary Hill, and Jeffreys Ledge. The sanctuary is home to a variety of marine life. What you will see depends upon the environment you visit. In the sand and gravel areas on top of Stellwagen Bank you may encounter sand lance schools and monkfish, while the boulders on Jeffreys Ledge hide Acadian redfish and Atlantic wolffish. At nearly every location you will encounter large sponges and anemones encrusting rocks or shipwreck structure.

You are also likely to see sculpins, flounders, cunner, skates, and cod on most dives. Schools of dogfish or pollock make dives particularly exciting.

Diving offshore is unlike diving at a similar depth inshore. In addition to deep water, you may experience strong currents. Plan your dive around slack tide for the best conditions. Slack tide on Stellwagen Bank can best be judged by subtracting 30 minutes from slack tide at the Boston Light or Race Point tide stations. Another hazard divers may encounter is fishing gear. Gill nets pose the greatest threat because they are hard to see and designed to ensnare. Additionally, monofilament line, lobster pot lines, and derelict trawl nets can also catch divers.

Dive vessels should fly a red and white diver down flag and the blue and white international dive flag since the sanctuary is frequently transited by both American and foreign-flagged ships. Also be aware that a portion of the sanctuary is located in the shipping lanes for vessels coming into or out of the port of Boston.

Visit the sanctuary's website for a list of dive charters that may run trips to the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

Sanctuary Regulations Pertaining to Divers

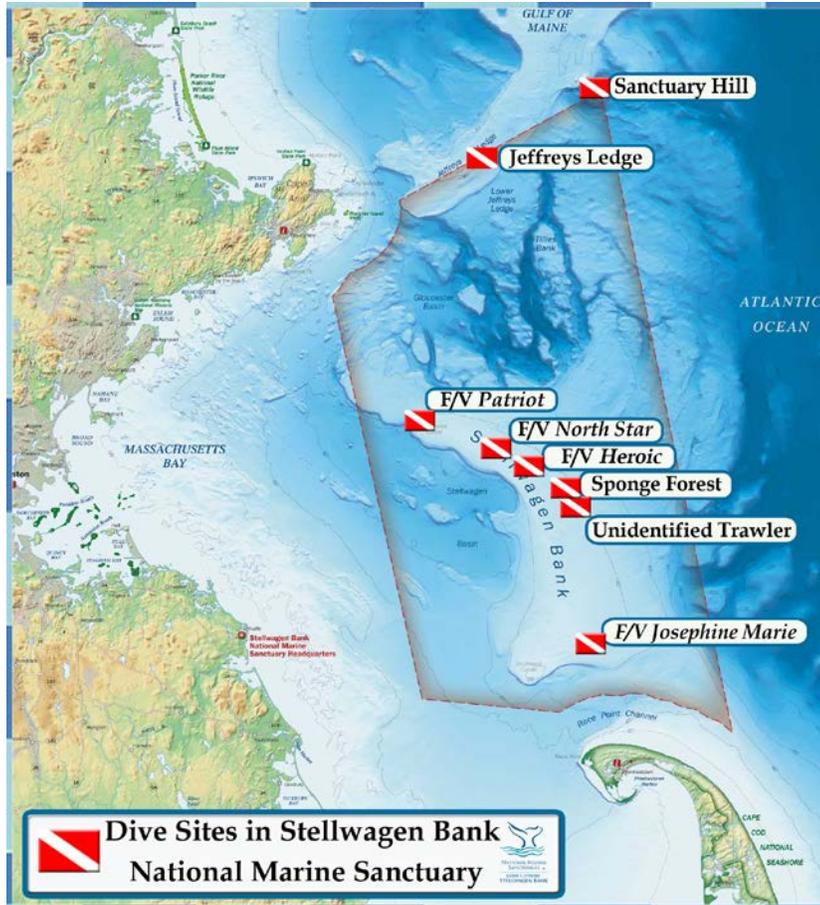
Divers visiting the sanctuary must follow regulations that protect historical resources and marine mammals. Divers are prohibited from moving, removing or injuring, or attempting to move, remove or injure, or possess a sanctuary historical resource. Divers are not permitted to grapple or tie a down line onto a historic shipwreck. Diving to purposely interact with whales is considered harassment under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.



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A spiny sunstar clings to a boulder at the Sponge Forest dive site.

Dive Site Guide



Jeffreys Ledge

On the sanctuary's northern edge, rocky ridges rise to within 110 feet of the surface. Piled boulders shelter redfish and cusk.

Sanctuary Hill

Strong currents sweep this solid bedrock pinnacle that rises from 325 feet to 115 feet 18 nautical miles offshore.

F/V North Star

Location: 42-23.052 N x 70-21.343 W



Parker Collection, Maritime Gloucester

The 55-foot long wooden dragger was outfitted for clam dredging when it sank in 2003 in 100 fsw. The wreck is broken into three main pieces: clam dredge, hull and engine, and deck machinery. A subsea mooring facilitates diving on this wreck.

Sponge Forest

Location: 42-19.471 N x 70-17.598 W

The Sponge Forest is an area on top of Stellwagen Bank named after the numerous tall finger sponges that cling to cobble and boulders. Codfish and cunner hide among the larger boulders that are also home to anemones and other invertebrates.



Ben Cowie-Haskell, SBNMS

F/V Patriot

Location: 42-24.256 N x 70-27.197 W



Phil Cusumano

The wreck is home to schools of cod, hake, and pollock. Divers should be on the lookout for entangling fishing nets hanging from its hull.

The 62-foot long steel dragger sank while fishing in 2009. It now lies on its starboard side in 100 fsw.

F/V Josephine Marie

Location: 42-10.925 N x 70-13.466 W



John Harper

This 80-foot long, steel stern trawler sank in 1992 while returning from a fishing trip. It now lies upside down on the southern end of Stellwagen Bank in 105 fsw with its bow pointing southeast.

Unidentified Trawler

Location: 42-18.73056 N x 70-17.8425 W



Heather Knowles, Northern Atlantic Dive Expeditions, Inc.

The name of this trawler shipwreck has yet to be uncovered. The wreck sits in 105 fsw and is broken into four pieces: wheelhouse, hull, stern, and net reel. Its structure attracts cod and wolffish that hide within its parts. If you know the vessel's identity please contact the sanctuary. The shipwreck is in the outbound Boston shipping lane. Dive boats must abide by shipping lane regulations. A subsea mooring facilitates diving on this wreck.

F/V Heroic

Location: 42-24.256 N x 70-27.197 W



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Originally built as USS *Heroic*, AMc-84, during World War II. Fishermen converted the coastal minesweeper into an eastern rig dragger after the war. Fire claimed the dragger in 1969 and it now rests at a depth of 100 feet. A subsea mooring facilitates diving on this wreck.