

SANCTUARY WATCH

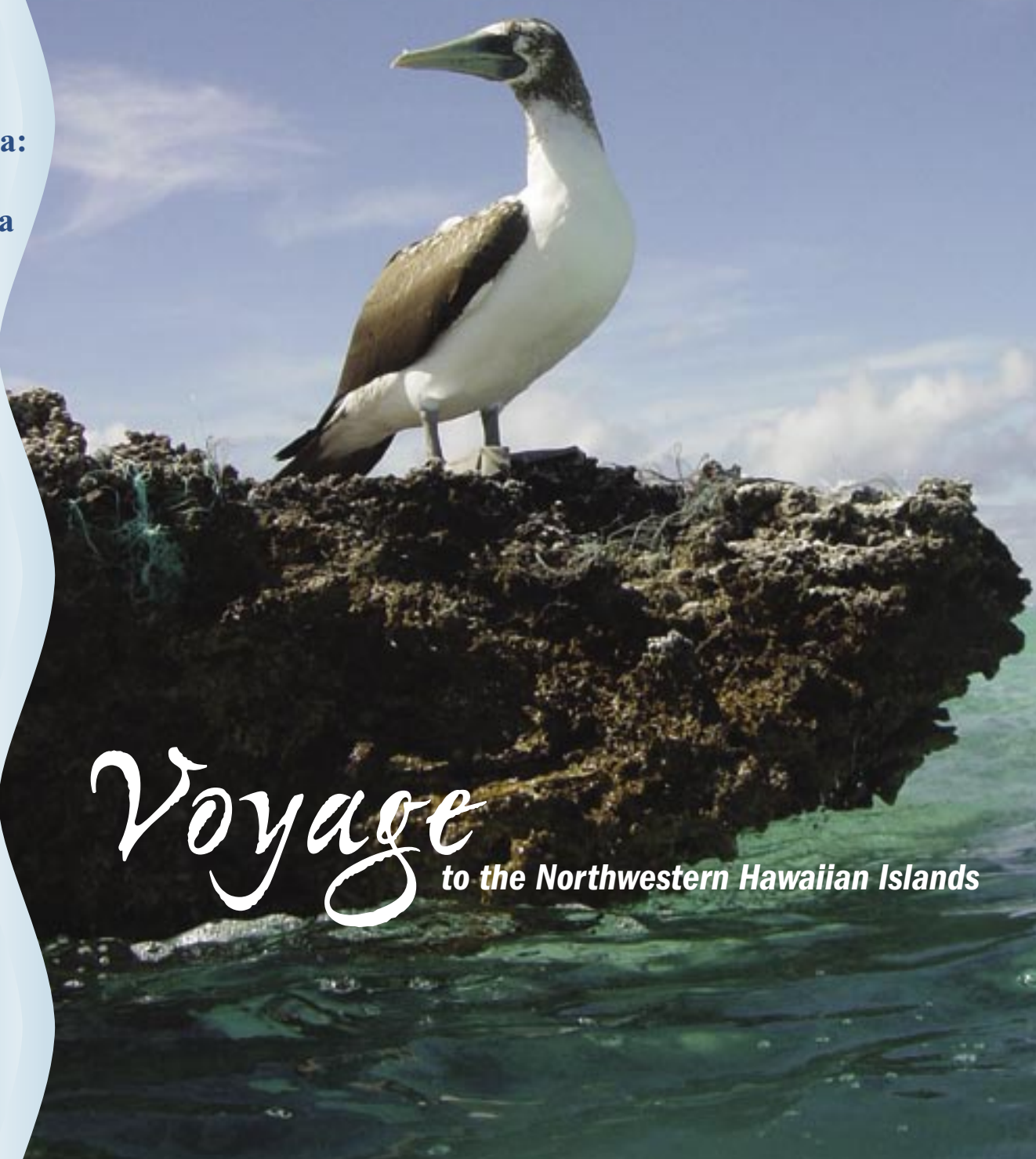
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Voyage
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NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARIES



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Letter from the Director

Thirty years ago, on a cold January day, a group of dignitaries gathered in Washington, D.C. to celebrate the creation of something special, America's first national marine sanctuary. Establishing *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary ensured that one of America's most important historic artifacts—the wreck of the famed Civil War ironclad that did battle with the *CSS Virginia*—would not be lost to the sands of time. Later that same year, a coral reef in the

Florida Keys was also designated a sanctuary.

Setting aside these areas as national marine sanctuaries marked the beginning of our nation's commitment to protecting special places off our coasts that represent the best of America's natural ocean wonders and historical treasures. This commitment started our nation on a journey similar to one begun in 1872 when President Ulysses Grant set aside 2.2 million acres of wilderness as Yellowstone National Park.

However, a significant difference between sanctuaries and national parks is that the wonders of marine sanctuaries are usually hidden beneath the waves. But through dynamic education programs and visitor centers, more people are learning about national marine sanctuaries every day.

We have come a long way these past 30 years. Today, there are 13 national marine sanctuaries, and a process is underway to designate a 14th sanctuary in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Reflecting on the past three decades and looking forward to the next three will be a consistent theme throughout the National Marine Sanctuary System this year. Channel Islands, Florida Keys and Thunder Bay sanctuaries will also celebrate significant anniversaries by hosting public festivals, lectures and other events.

It is fitting that in this year of reflection and rededication that the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, the law that serves as the blueprint for how we manage sanctuaries, is up for reauthorization by Congress this year. As our guest columnist, Leon Panetta, points out in *Sanctuary Voices*, this provides an opportunity to bring the law up to date and incorporate lessons learned from 30 years of experience managing marine and cultural resources. Two major ocean commissions—one federal and one private—have contributed to our growing body of knowledge about our oceans, providing additional food for thought as the reauthorization process gets underway.

For now, sit back, relax and enjoy this issue of *Sanctuary Watch* as we take you on a voyage to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands on one of NOAA's newest ships, the *Hi'ialakai*; introduce you to a naturalist who is making a difference at Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary; and bring you up to date on the many exciting activities taking place at *your* national marine sanctuaries, America's ocean and Great Lakes treasures.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Basta, Director
NOAA's National Marine
Sanctuary Program

Sanctuary Watch is a publication of the Communications Branch of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Sanctuary Program. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

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Cover: A brown booby vigilantly scans the fish-rich shallows of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Photo: © Daniel Suthers

Sanctuary Program Launches New Education Web Site

One of the missions of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program is to enhance public awareness, understanding and appreciation of the marine environment. With that in mind, the sanctuary program has launched a new Web site, sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education. Visitors can browse image galleries, take a virtual dive in a submersible, download puzzles, read online storybooks and more. A special section for teachers offers curriculum, professional development opportunities and digital labs.

Forum Explores California Ocean Issues

NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program brought together marine scientists, conservationists, and federal and state resource managers in January 2005 for a special public forum in San Francisco on California's marine environment. Panelists included California Secretary for Resources Michael Chrisman; California Academy of Sciences Senior Scientist John McCosker; Natural Resources Defense Council Ocean Policy Analyst Kate Wing, and National Marine Sanctuary Program Director Daniel J. Basta. The panel discussed the vital role that oceans play in our lives; what steps are being initiated that will impact the future of California's ocean and coasts; and how individual citizen actions can have a profound impact on ensuring California's ocean future.

Sanctuary Program Hosts Workshop with Fishermen

The sanctuary program hosted a workshop in San Francisco in January 2005 with fishermen from Pillar Point Harbor, Calif., as part of its semi-annual business meeting. The goal of the workshop was to hear from commercial and recreational fisherman on how the sanctuary program can develop community-based partnerships between the fishing community and sanctuary program. Gulf of the Farallones sanctuary now has an office in Half Moon Bay and wants to invest in projects that educate the public about the history and culture of Pillar Point Harbor. During the workshop, participants discussed ways to communicate the value of Pillar Point Harbor to public, including commercial fishing activities and recreational uses, and how to enhance involvement of fishermen in sanctuary projects. For more information, contact Karen Reyna at 415-561-6622.

Sanctuary Program and REEF Expand Fish Counts

In an ongoing effort to better understand fish populations within Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, NOAA researchers and the Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) collaborated in December 2004 on 63 fish surveys, cataloguing 47 species during a four-day trip to the California sanctuary,

located off Santa Barbara. The National Marine Sanctuary Program's partnership with REEF also extended in 2004 to Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary in American Samoa, where REEF and sanctuary staff conducted training sessions and dive surveys in November for 25 local participants. For more information about REEF fish counts, please visit www.fishcount.org.

Humpback Whale Sanctuary Hosts Hawaiian Culture Celebration

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary hosted a celebration in January 2005 marking the revitalization of the nearby 1,600-

year-old Ko`ie`ie royal Hawaiian fishpond. A crowd of more than 200 supporters, dignitaries and guests gathered for ceremonies and speeches. A canoe landing by the Kihei Canoe Club was followed by blessings and ceremonial chants by the Warriors of Lahaina. Speakers noting the importance of preserving Hawaiian culture included Congressman Ed Case;

Kimokeo Kapahulehua, president of the Association of the Fishponds of Maui; Rob Parsons, Maui Mayor Alan Arakawa's environmental coordinator and Allen Tom, regional coordinator of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program.



Fishpond revitalization celebration. Photo: Wes Martin

Sanctuary Program FY05 Budget Announced

In December 2004, NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program received its FY05 budget from Congress. In the budget, \$51 million was provided for operational funding, including \$2 million for the conservation of artifacts recovered from the wreck of the Civil War ironclad USS *Monitor*, which was designated a national marine sanctuary in 1975. An additional \$10 million in construction funds were provided for exhibits at Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve in Alpena, Mich., and a new facility at the University of California Santa Barbara.

(Cont'd. on pg. 6)

Voyage of Discovery

Exploring the world's most remote coral reef ecosystem



The NOAA research vessel *Hi'ialakai* off Pearl and Hermes Atoll.
Photo: © Daniel Suthers

Fair seas and sunny skies blessed the new NOAA research vessel *Hi'ialakai* as it set sail on September 13, 2004, from Honolulu on its first mission: A 34-day expedition to the remote Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI).

But menacing swells and zaps of lightning would test the seaworthiness of the 224-foot vessel and the mettle of its crew on its way home.

Randall Kosaki, research coordinator for the NOAA-managed Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve and the expedition's chief scientist, recalled sleepless nights "falling off bunk beds and duct-taping everything down" as the *Hi'ialakai* heaved through choppy seas.

Nothing, though, would prevent the *Hi'ialakai*, bearing 18 scientists and three education specialists, from successfully completing a comprehensive survey of NWHI coral reef ecosystems.

The ship's five-week maiden voyage went "spectacularly well," said Kosaki, who said the sometimes rough seas underscored the importance of having a vessel tough enough to traverse the world's most remote archipelago.

During the expedition, researchers assessed the health of coral reefs, studied marine life and mapped portions of the reserve. They also conducted surveys in adjacent waters and examined reefs managed by the State of Hawai'i and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The *Hi'ialakai*'s itinerary included French Frigate Shoals, Gardner Pinnacles, Maro Reef, Laysan Island, Lisianski Island, Pearl and Hermes Atoll, Midway Atoll and Kure Atoll.

"The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are one of the world's treasures," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

The living coral reef colonies of the NWHI are indeed a spectacular underwater landscape—home and haven to more than 7,000 species, including marine mammals, fishes, sea turtles, birds and invertebrates. At least one quarter are found only in Hawai'i.

The reserve is undergoing a process for designation as the 14th national marine sanctuary, to safeguard the unique geology, biology and cultural history of this vast, ecologically rich region. Due to their isolation and early federal protections, these coral reefs are among the healthiest and most extensive reef ecosystems remaining on the planet, where large predators, such as jacks, sharks and grouper still exist in healthy abundance.

The reserve comprises the majority (50-70 percent) of the nation's reefs and is the second largest marine protected area in the world, after Australia's Great Barrier Reef. Encompassing an astounding 132,000 square miles, the reserve spans an area 1,200 nautical miles long and 100 nautical miles wide.

Many species, including the Hawaiian monk seal, green



A diver surveys Acropora, or table top coral, at French Frigate Shoals. Photo: © James Watt



A brown booby and brown noddies lift off from Pearl and Hermes Atoll. Photo: © James Watt



NOAA scientist Randall Kosaki has a close encounter with a jellyfish at La Perouse Pinnacle. Photo: © Daniel Suthers



Endangered Hawaiian monk seals call the NWHI home. Photo: © James Watt

sea turtles and leatherback and hawksbill sea turtles, are rare, threatened or endangered. Scientists believe that many more species are yet to be discovered in this “natural laboratory.”

“One of the difficulties of working up in those waters is simply getting there,” Kosaki said. “Now we have a highly capable dive ship that greatly improves our ability to monitor the health of our remote coral reef ecosystems.”

Hi‘ialakai in Hawaiian means “embracing pathways to the sea” and “guiding leaders of the seas.” True to its name, the research vessel follows in the wake of the great double-hulled canoes navigated by Polynesian explorers in the islands many centuries ago.

Homeported in Hawai‘i to support ocean research and conservation activities in the Hawaiian archipelago and greater Pacific under NOAA’s National Ocean Service, the *Hi‘ialakai* was commissioned into the NOAA fleet in September 2004.

Hawai‘i Sen. Daniel Inouye was instrumental in getting the former U.S. Navy ship retooled as a state-of-the-art research platform “to support our shared responsibility of managing the resources of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.”

The ship is designed to support diving operations and multi-beam sonar mapping of the ocean floor. Equipped with such hardware as a recompression chamber, wet and dry labs and mixed gas diving capabilities, the *Hi‘ialakai* enables reserve managers and research partners to significantly extend their scientific exploration of the vast region.

The recent cruise reinforced vital partnerships between state and federal agencies with stewardship responsibilities in the NWHI. It was the third coordinated research effort undertaken under the auspices of the reserve since 2000.

These research forays support U.S. Coral Reef Task Force and Coral Reef Conservation Program activities undertaken in collaboration with NOAA’s National Ocean Service, National Marine Sanctuary Program, NOAA Fisheries, State of Hawai‘i, University of Hawai‘i, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Coast Guard.

Making full use of the ship’s new capabilities, researchers conducted more than 800 scuba dives, collected data on the abundance and diversity of fishes, algae, corals and other invertebrates, and photographed deeper water habitats.

Kosaki exulted over the high densities of reef fishes and large predatory fishes he and other researchers observed. “It was common to see 20 to 30 sharks or ulua [jacks] on a single dive,” the fish biologist said. “It’s a humbling reminder that their relative absence in the main Hawaiian islands is a direct reflection of the impacts of human activities on those reefs.”

Yet even NWHI reefs are not immune from outside threats. A wide range of factors could potentially impact the natural balance and health of these ecosystems’ fragile chain of life, the inner workings of which scientists don’t fully understand.

“The *Hi‘ialakai* will help NOAA provide managers of these

(Cont’d. on pg. 6)



The USS *Monitor* (lower left) clashed with the CSS *Virginia* on March 9, 1862. Photo: Naval Historical Center

America's First National Marine Sanctuary Turns 30

When the Union ironclad USS *Monitor* sank off North Carolina during an 1862 storm, no one thought that the vessel that had revolutionized naval warfare would ever be seen again. But technology and perseverance would triumph over tragedy. The *Monitor*, best known for its four-hour duel with the Confederate ironclad CSS *Virginia* (formerly the *Merrimack*), was located by a team of researchers in 1973. Two years later, Secretary of Commerce Frederick Dent, with President Gerald Ford's approval, ensured that the sunken, historically significant vessel would receive the protection it deserved. On January 30, 1975, he declared the wreck site a national marine sanctuary and placed it in NOAA's care. Since then, NOAA has worked in partnership with the U.S. Navy, The Mariners' Museum, universities, oceanographic institutions and private sector groups to save this national treasure and share its story with the American people. Happy 30th anniversary *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary!



Background Photo: *Monitor* Collection, NOAA



For more information about Monitor National Marine Sanctuary, visit monitor.noaa.gov.



NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARIES
MONITOR
1975 - 2005

30th Anniversary

Voyage of Discovery (Cont'd. from pg. 4)

three and a half million acres of coral reefs with the sound science they need to protect these precious resources, which are facing increasing stress from overfishing, marine debris and other human activities,”

Lautenbacher said.

During the cruise, coral biologists documented the present condition of some of these reefs since a major coral bleaching event was first detected in 2002. They also monitored tumors and “white syndrome” disease afflicting Acropora, or table coral, in the French Frigate Shoals. Found at one of seven reefs surveyed in 2003, the syndrome was found at three of those same reefs on the recent trip. (Acropora are the most abundant types of coral found on coral reefs, but they are rarely found in Hawai‘i.)

Coral disease has contributed significantly to the decline of reefs in the Florida Keys and the Caribbean. So monitoring and sustaining the health of NWHI corals is “a high priority” according to Greta Aeby, coral biologist with Hawai‘i’s Division of Aquatic Resources.

Scientists aboard the *Hi‘ialakai* also assisted divers from a NOAA marine debris removal charter vessel, who discovered the remains of what could be a pair of English whaling ships, the *Pearl* and *Hermes*, that struck these reefs in 1822. If the site is positively identified, it will signify the earliest western shipwreck found in the Hawaiian Islands.

Kosaki was surprised to see “giant copper pots, nails, cannon, metal fittings, even wooden timbers remarkably preserved here in crystal clear water with giant ulua and knifejaws milling around.”

Capturing the majesty of the remote islands for those back on shore was a priority for the expedition team.

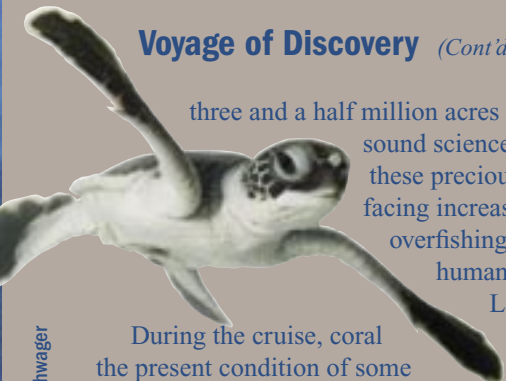
Daniel Suthers, science writer and University of Hawai‘i professor, uploaded colorful daily accounts of the journey to the expedition’s Web site, www.hawaiianatolls.org, via satellite link. Also on board were nature photographers Susan Middleton and David Liittschwager, who have spent several years documenting NWHI flora and fauna. A book of their photographs will be published by *National Geographic* in October 2005. A touring exhibit is also being planned with the reserve.

The *Hi‘ialakai*’s voyage of discovery did not end with the fall 2004 expedition. It continues as scientists analyze their data, laying fertile groundwork for others to follow. Trips to the NWHI will occur annually.

Kosaki is excited about the potential of acquiring new insights to become better ocean stewards. “Ultimately, this knowledge will enable us to improve the management and conservation of these unique, precious living resources,” he said. “Hopefully these reefs will teach us something about how to sustain life on this blue planet.”



Photo: © David Liittschwager



Newsplash

(Cont'd. from pg. 2)

Thunder Bay Sanctuary Breaks Ground on Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center

Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve broke ground in October 2004 on the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center, a 20,000-square-foot facility in Alpena, Mich., that will preserve and highlight the maritime heritage of the Great Lakes and the shipwrecks of Michigan’s Thunder Bay. When completed, the facility will feature a maritime heritage “discovery center” featuring over 8,000 square feet of exhibits on the Great Lakes, shipwrecks, archaeology and maritime history. The center will also have an auditorium for showing films and live video feeds from Thunder Bay shipwrecks, an archaeological conservation laboratory, and an education resource room. The center will be housed in a former paper mill located in Alpena’s historic downtown area and will be the cornerstone of a redevelopment of the city’s waterfront.

Sanctuary Partners with Undersea Center and NASA to Explore Gulf of Mexico

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary teamed up with the National Undersea Research Center at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in October 2004 to explore the reefs and banks of the Northwestern Gulf of Mexico. The research team, which deployed both scuba divers and unmanned submersibles during the 10-day expedition, operated from the USA Ship *Liberty Star*—one of two ships contracted by NASA to recover space shuttle booster rockets. This unique inter-agency collaboration resulted in more than 70 dives, the collection of 56 sponges and the removal of invasive orange cup coral.



The USA Ship *Liberty Star*, contracted by NASA to recover space shuttle rocket boosters, helped Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary researchers explore “inner space” in the Gulf of Mexico last fall.
Photo: Emma Hickerson/FGBNMS

Photo: Anne Smrcina/SBMS



Star of the Sea

Regina Asmutis-Silvia

“Save the whales” may be a catch phrase for some people, but for Regina Asmutis-Silvia, it is a full-time calling. A

scientist by training, this biologist with the International Wildlife Coalition has also taken on roles as educator, advocate and fundraiser, focusing on projects that lead to better understanding and conservation of marine mammals. One of the principal beneficiaries of this multifaceted individual is Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

“I probably visited the sanctuary 120 times this past year,” said Asmutis-Silvia, who takes on the additional role as whale watch naturalist for a Plymouth, Mass.-based company from late spring to early fall. While providing entertaining (“but educational,” she noted) commentary during the trip about the whales and the sanctuary, she continuously logs data on whale behavior and captures images of whale flukes for identification purposes.

“I’ve known Regina since 1990 when she served as my student intern at Bridgewater State College,” said sanctuary research coordinator Dave Wiley. “Not only has she become one of the premiere naturalists in the region, but she has become a whiz at photo identification. She can name many of the sanctuary whales on sight, and then be able to tell you their mothers and (in the case of female whales) their offspring.”

Asmutis-Silvia teamed with Wiley and Stormy Mayo of the Center for Coastal Studies to disentangle the first right whale in the early 1990s, in an area within the sanctuary boundaries. Through her work with the Cape Cod Stranding Network, she has helped pioneer efforts to save stranded pilot whales and dolphins.

This intimate knowledge of Stellwagen Bank whales and an in-depth understanding of the issues facing these animals have proved indispensable during the sanctuary’s management plan review process.

“Regina, an alternate to our advisory council, really stepped up and supported the sanctuary by chairing two working groups (Marine Mammal Entanglement and Marine Mammal Behavioral Disturbance) and serving as a member on a third (Marine Mammal Vessel Strike),” said sanctuary superintendent Craig MacDonald. “These working groups were addressing issues deemed critically important by the public.”

At the International Wildlife Coalition, Asmutis-Silvia takes on much of the domestic marine mammal advocacy work, where she focuses on those same conservation issues – entanglement, behavioral disturbance and vessel strike – as she did with the sanctuary working groups but in a broader arena.

“With the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, you have a relatively small area with large numbers of whales and boats, making for an interesting case study. The working group process was an important undertaking and a valuable experience,” Asmutis-Silvia said.

Asmutis-Silvia, a devoted mother to two young sons, also tries to reach out to youth and build interest in marine mammal conservation. Over a recent two-week period, with the sanctuary’s inflatable life-sized, walk-in right whale model, she gave presentations to six schools, reaching over 1,000 students. “We ‘digested’ the students – walking them from the mouth through the body,” she reported.

Another education program she helped create is the “See a Spout” campaign for boating safety classes. The five catchy safety tips, including “Avoid Troubles, Steer Clear of Bubbles!” and “Don’t Chase, Give the Whales Space!” provide boaters with memorable slogans that, if followed, may prevent vessel strikes and keep boaters in compliance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Despite her busy schedule, Asmutis-Silvia continues to envision new programs and pursue funding sources to make these ideas a reality. Her past, present and future efforts have and will continue to make the public more aware of these magnificent marine mammals and Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary a safer place for whales and humans alike.



Critter Files: Leatherback Sea Turtle

Have you ever wondered if a leatherback sea turtle's back is really made of leather? Despite its name, the shell, more correctly called the carapace, is made up of tiny bones and thick oil-saturated tissue, which only resembles leather products used by humans.

Virtually unchanged for 65 million years, the leatherback's unique character goes much deeper than its shell. It is the deepest diver of all sea turtles, descending to depths in excess

of 3,000 feet. The leatherback is also by far the largest sea turtle, stretching from five to eight feet in length and weighing from 600 to 2,000 pounds!

Big and tough, the leatherback is also the most traveled of the sea turtle family, thanks to an ability to maintain a stable core body temperature that makes it resistant to "cold-stunning" – a problem that sends the leatherback's "cold-blooded" counterparts into a state

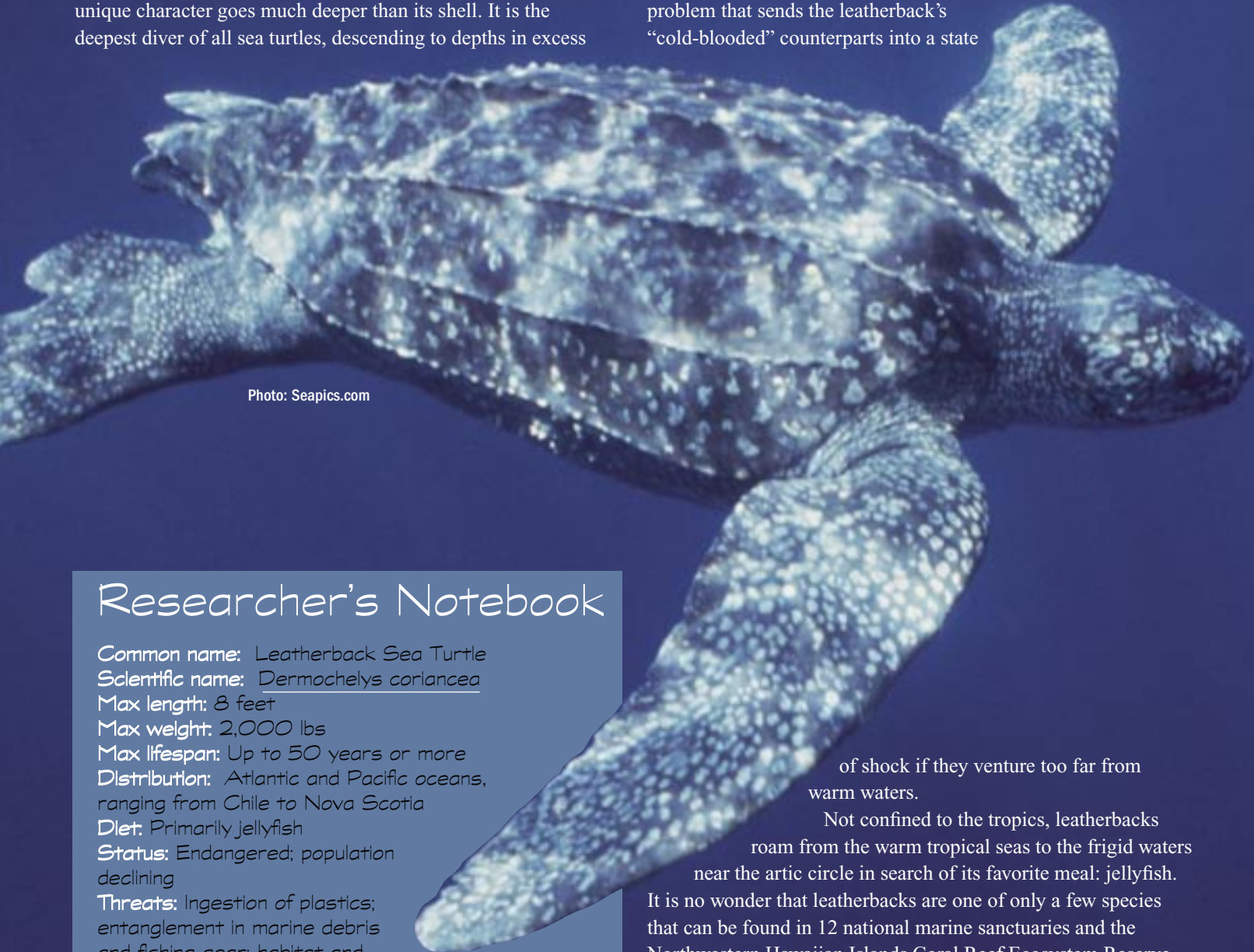


Photo: Seapics.com

Researcher's Notebook

Common name: Leatherback Sea Turtle

Scientific name: *Dermochelys coriacea*

Max length: 8 feet

Max weight: 2,000 lbs

Max lifespan: Up to 50 years or more

Distribution: Atlantic and Pacific oceans, ranging from Chile to Nova Scotia

Diet: Primarily jellyfish

Status: Endangered; population declining

Threats: Ingestion of plastics; entanglement in marine debris and fishing gear; habitat and nesting disturbance; egg poaching

of shock if they venture too far from warm waters.

Not confined to the tropics, leatherbacks roam from the warm tropical seas to the frigid waters near the arctic circle in search of its favorite meal: jellyfish.

It is no wonder that leatherbacks are one of only a few species that can be found in 12 national marine sanctuaries and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve. So, be sure to keep your eyes open during your next sanctuary visit. You just might see one!



National Marine Sanctuaries to Benefit from New Partnership

America's National Marine Sanctuaries will be the beneficiary of a new public-private partnership between the nonprofit National Marine Sanctuary Foundation and the MeadWestvaco consumer and office product company.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, the nonprofit partner of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program, and MeadWestvaco are offering a variety of calendar products featuring unique underwater photography of our national marine sanctuaries.

Products range from \$3 to \$14, with a portion of each sale donated to the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. Each calendar purchase will benefit conservation-based education and outreach programs designed to preserve, protect and promote national marine sanctuary resources.

"Not only are these calendars a compilation of amazing underwater photographs, they are a dynamic tool for educating the American public about our national marine sanctuaries," said Lori Arguelles, executive director of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

This high-quality product line includes six different 14-month calendar items: a monthly pocket planner, a twin-loop calendar, a saddle stitched calendar, a vertical calendar, a monthly desk blotter and an address/telephone book. Inside each product are brilliant color photos of the unique underwater world of our national marine sanctuaries.

The calendars also offer information about each sanctuary, including where it is located and what type of marine animals or cultural resources reside

within its borders. The calendars include photographs donated by both amateur and well-known, professional photographers, including world-renowned marine wildlife photographer Bob Talbot.

For more information about and photographs of these calendar products or to make a purchase, go to <http://www.NMSFocean.org>.



How You Can Participate in Sanctuary Resource Management

NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program welcomes and encourages the public's participation in the management of national marine sanctuaries. Sanctuary advisory councils play a key role in representing the public's interests in sanctuary matters. All sanctuary advisory council meetings are open to the public. Please consider attending a council meeting at your nearest sanctuary. To learn more about sanctuary advisory councils, please contact Karen Brubeck at 206-842-6084 or Karen.Brubeck@noaa.gov.

Upcoming Advisory Council Meetings

Channel Islands
channelislands.noaa.gov
Mar. 18
May 20
Jul. 22
Sept. 23
Oct. 24-28 (Retreat)
Nov. 18

Monterey Bay
montereybay.noaa.gov
Feb. 4
Apr. 1
Jun. 3
Aug. 5
Oct. 7
Dec. 2

Cordell Bank
cordellbank.noaa.gov
Mar. 10 (Retreat)
Jul. 7
Sept. 29
Dec.

**Northwestern
Hawaiian Islands**
hawaiiireef.noaa.gov
TBD

Florida Keys
floridakeys.noaa.gov
Feb. 15
Apr. 19
Jun. 21
Aug. 16
Oct. 18
Dec. 13

Olympic Coast
olympiccoast.noaa.gov
Mar. 18
May 20
Jul. 15
Sept. 30
Nov. 18

Gray's Reef
graysreef.noaa.gov
Mar. 24

Stellwagen Bank
stellwagen.noaa.gov
Feb. 15
Jun. 9

Gulf of the Farallones
farallones.noaa.gov
Jan. 27

Thunder Bay
thunderbay.noaa.gov
Mar. 8
May 10
Jul. 12
Sept. 13
Nov. 8

**Hawaiian Islands
Humpback Whale**
hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov
Mar. 17
May 12
Sept. 8

Background Photo: Brad Danitz

Sanctuary Voices

The Future of Our Sanctuaries
is in Your Hands



Photo courtesy L&SIPP

By Leon Panetta

Director

Leon & Sylvia Panetta
Institute for Public Policy

Growing up in a coastal community that thrived on the fishing industry not only gives one a greater appreciation for the majesty and mystery of the ocean, but also for its economic and cultural value. My grandfather was a sardine fisherman in Monterey, California, and during my boyhood I witnessed the collapse of the sardine industry and the impact it had on the community. I have made it a point to get involved and do my part in protecting the oceans, whether in the U.S. Congress, the White House or in my capacity as a trustee of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

For more than 16 years, I had the privilege of representing the people of the Monterey Peninsula in Congress, and during my tenure, I worked hard to protect California's coast. I am especially proud of helping to establish the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, the largest in the country. I can attest that our national marine sanctuaries are important and vital resources, which help to balance both the economic and ecological needs of communities around the country.

More recently, I had the honor of chairing the independent Pew Oceans Commission and listening to the testimony of hundreds of people sharing their experiences with the issues and challenges facing the ocean today. Our commission's conclusions and recommendations were remarkably similar to those of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

The consensus of the two reports is that our oceans are in trouble. Ocean ecosystems are nearing a state of collapse because of overfishing, pollution, and poorly planned coastal development. Currently, ocean management responsibilities are dispersed among several different federal, state and local agencies creating a need for better jurisdictional regard for our oceans. Better coordination at all levels of government is needed and our decision making and management systems must be updated to address the challenges facing the marine environment.

One important tool is the National Marine Sanctuary Act. First passed by the U.S. Congress in 1972 to protect marine resources, the act resulted in the creation of the National Marine Sanctuary Program. Periodically, Congress reviews and revises this act. Over the next several months changes will be proposed and one of the most important considerations is looking at additional

areas for protection. Both commission reports are clear: We need to designate additional marine protected areas.

The National Marine Sanctuary Act originally called for places of special ecological, historical, scientific or cultural significance to be set aside as sanctuaries. We need to return to that original mandate and invest significant effort in identifying, declaring, and managing new areas that need to be set aside for this special level of protection. We cannot ignore our responsibility and we must not overlook this important opportunity to act.

My grandfather instilled in me a deep-seated love of and respect for the ocean and the bounty it provides. As I look into the eyes of my own grandchildren, I am mindful that while we have come a long way, we still have many miles to go when it comes to turning the tide and truly creating a legacy of ocean conservation.

The oceans are a public trust, and we owe it to future generations to ensure that we leave this vital resource in better shape than we found it. An investment in our nation's marine sanctuaries is an important step in the right direction. Learn more about ways you can help by contacting the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation at www.NMSFOcean.org.

The opinions expressed by columnists in "Sanctuary Voices" do not imply endorsement by NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program of any particular product, service, organization, company or policy.



Photo: OCNMS



NATIONAL MARINE
SANCTUARIES

The National Marine Sanctuary
Program is part of NOAA's
National Ocean Service

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<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>



SANCTUARY
WATOH

vision

People value marine sanctuaries as treasured places protected for future generations.

mission

To serve as the trustee for the nation's system of marine protected areas to conserve, protect and enhance their biodiversity, ecological integrity, and cultural legacy.

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National Marine Sanctuary System



The National Marine Sanctuary Program 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. The system includes 13 national marine sanctuaries and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, which is being considered for sanctuary status. The sanctuary program is part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which manages sanctuaries by working cooperatively with the public to protect sanctuaries while maintaining compatible recreational and commercial activities. The program works to enhance public awareness of our marine resources and maritime heritage through scientific research, monitoring, exploration, educational programs, and outreach.