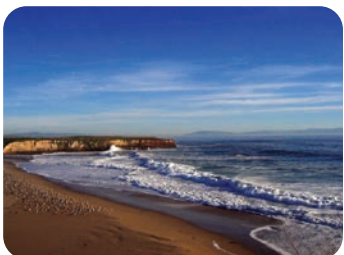


SAFEGUARDING AMERICA'S MARINE RESOURCES

The NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 629,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters. The National Marine Sanctuary System protects the nation's premier marine resources, builds resilience for the future, strengthens coastal economies and communities, ensures healthy marine resources to enhance recreation and tourism, and increases awareness and stewardship of our marine environment.

HABITAT DIVERSITY

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is one of the richest, most diverse marine environments in the world. Wave-swept beaches, lush kelp forests, rugged tide pools, and one of the deepest underwater canyons in North America are just a few of the habitats found within the sanctuary. Each of these vastly different environments teem with life, from tiny plankton to the largest animal that has ever lived on Earth—the blue whale.



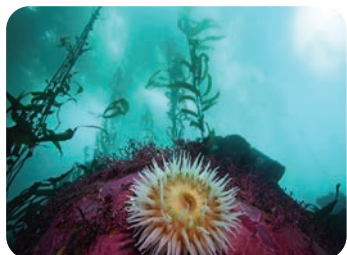
Sandy Beach

Beaches harbor a world of marine life that is mostly out of sight. Worms, sand crabs, snails, and clams live beneath the sand at the water's edge.



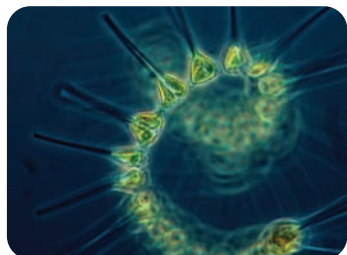
Seafloor

Much of the seafloor habitat is covered with sand and mud. Here, sand dollars, tube worms, stingrays, flatfishes, brittle stars, and anemones flourish.



Kelp Forest

Supporting a rich array of marine life including fish, urchins, and sea stars, kelp can tower 100 feet above the sea floor, forming dense underwater forests.



Open Water

Most of the planet's living space is found in the open ocean, where algae and animal boundaries are shaped by water composition and circulation.



Deep Canyon

Deep submarine canyons, some descending more than two miles below the surface, harbor a variety of animals specially adapted to a life of darkness.



Wetland

Elkhorn Slough is an important resting, feeding, breeding, and nursing area for a huge variety of species, including harbor seals and pelicans.



Tide Pool

Rocky shores are an ideal habitat for small creatures. At low tides, pools form to become wet oases for snails, sea stars, small fish, anemones, and more.



Seamount

Davidson Seamount, an undersea mountain, is one of the largest in the world. At 7,480 feet tall, its summit is still 4,101 feet below the surface.

Photos: NOAA (beach, flatfish, kelp forest, plankton), © 2014 MBARI (anglerfish), © 2006 MBARI/NOAA (yellow sponge)

RECREATION AND TOURISM

For those who love nature and outdoor activities, the sanctuary offers exciting adventures for everyone. Whether it's watching whales, paddling among kelp forests, or exploring tide pools, there is no more spectacular place to enjoy the ocean and outdoors.

Sanctuary Visitor Centers

Stop by one of our interpretive centers to enjoy exciting, interactive exhibits. Knowledgeable volunteers are on-hand to answer your questions and enhance your understanding of the sanctuary.

Coastal Discovery Center, San Simeon

Located at William Randolph Hearst Memorial Beach on beautiful San Simeon Bay, the center celebrates the connection between land and sea, offering interactive displays and programs that highlight the cultural and natural history of the region.

Sanctuary Exploration Center, Santa Cruz

Overlooking the ocean, the Sanctuary Exploration Center is located in the heart of the Santa Cruz's famed beach area just steps away from the city's Municipal Wharf. The center features engaging interactive and multimedia exhibits to help visitors explore the sanctuary's remarkable marine environment, as well as their personal role in protecting this special underwater treasure.



Scuba Diving

Abundant marine life, kelp forests, and rocky reefs make the sanctuary one of the world's best cold-water scuba diving destinations.



Fishing

Whether from the shore, a public pier, or a charter boat, the sanctuary offers top-notch fishing! Follow regulations and acquire license where necessary.



Boating

Take a trip by sailing or motor boating to have a wonderful experience in the sanctuary. Local harbors offer boat rentals and charters for hire.



Paddle Sports

Kayaking and stand up paddle boarding provide a unique experience. Many local businesses provide rentals, lessons, and group tours.



Surfing

The sanctuary has surf breaks year-round for all experience levels. Always be careful of submerged rocks and powerful waves.



Whale Watching

Monterey Bay is one of the best whale watching destinations in the world. Join one of the many local tour operators or observe from the shore.



Tide Pooling

During a good low tide, visit the sanctuary's rocky shores. Carefully explore tide pools to discover diverse ocean creatures without getting wet.



Wildlife Viewing

Responsibly view wildlife in their natural setting. Enjoy, but keep your distance. Do not disturb, attract, or feed animals in the sanctuary.



Sightseeing

Enjoy breathtaking views of the sanctuary along the coast while supporting local businesses. Take in a visit to one of our free visitor centers.



Stewardship

The sanctuary needs you! Be a volunteer for water quality monitoring, wildlife protection, beach cleanups, and more. Contact us for opportunities.

MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY



USS Macon
The USS Macon, a 785-foot dirigible, was lost offshore of Point Sur on February 12, 1935. In 1990, researchers located the Macon's remains at a depth of nearly 1,500 feet below the surface.

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is a federal marine protected area offshore of California's central coast. Stretching from Rocky Point in Marin to Cambria, the sanctuary encompasses a shoreline length of 276 miles and 6,094 square miles of ocean, extending an average distance of 30 miles from shore.



FUN FACTS

Bixby Bridge

Adjacent to the sanctuary is one of the world's highest single-span concrete arch bridges at 714 feet in total length, 24 feet wide, and 260 feet of clearance below. Completed in 1932, Bixby Bridge was built as a way to link northern and southern California through Big Sur.

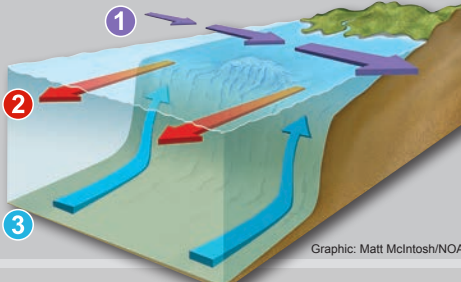


Octopus Garden

Within the sanctuary's boundary lies Davidson Seamount, a 7,480 foot tall mountain resting on the seafloor more than 12,000 feet deep. During a deep-sea expedition to the seamount ridge flanks in 2018, scientists discovered the largest known aggregation of octopus (*Musoctopus robustus*) on the planet, named the "Octopus Garden." Here, warmth from deep-sea thermal springs accelerates the development of octopus eggs.

Coastal Upwelling

This oceanographic phenomenon supports primary productivity for marine life. The process consists of: 1) persistent winds push water southward; 2) wind and the Earth's rotation drive surface water away from the shore; and 3) surface water is replaced by colder, nutrient-rich water that "wells up" from the deep, leading to blooms of plankton.



Plankton

Diverse group of tiny plants and animals form the base of the ocean's complex food web.



Krill

Krill are shrimp-like crustaceans that measure about one inch in length and can be found in dense swarms in offshore waters. Krill are an important source of food for whales, seabirds, and fishes.

Shorelines

Beaches are one of the most visible and visited places. The sanctuary has a shoreline length of 276 miles, and beaches make up about half of the sanctuary's coastline.

Shipwrecks

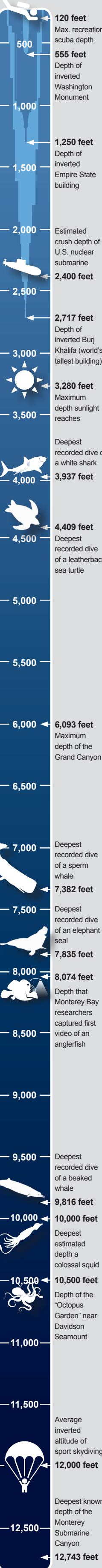
Hundreds of shipwrecks have occurred in the sanctuary and were a result of the significant maritime exploration and commerce that historically occurred in the region. Only a few sites have been located and surveyed.

Lighthouses

Six lighthouses along the sanctuary—Point Bonita, Point Montara, Pigeon Point, Santa Cruz, Point Pinos, and Point Sur—have acted as safety beacons for sailors over hundreds of years.

How Deep?

At the center of the sanctuary lies the Monterey Submarine Canyon, which extends below the surface to more than two miles deep and rivals the Grand Canyon in size and depth. This unique natural feature supports abundant deep-sea life.



WILDLIFE DIVERSITY

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is often called the "Serengeti of the Sea," and for good reason—wildlife watching is top-notch! The yearly explosion of marine life can be due to upwelling, a process where deep, cold, nutrient-rich water is brought to the sunlit surface. These nutrients support plant plankton growth, which in turn becomes food for small organisms that form the diets of hundreds of different animals, from small fish to humpback whales. The diverse wildlife that can be found in the sanctuary includes at least 36 species of marine mammals, 180 species of seabirds, 525 species of fish, 450 species of algae, and countless invertebrates.



Whales

- Many species seen year-round
- Some can be seen from shore
- Humpback whales are common
- Most feed on krill and small fish



Dolphins & Porpoises

- Commonly seen in large pods
- Mostly eat fish and squid
- Orcas can feed on marine mammals
- Produce click and whistle sounds



Seabirds & Shorebirds

- Migratory and resident species
- Shorebirds forage along the coast
- Seabirds migrate across the ocean
- Some only come to shore to breed



Seals & Sea Lions

- Rest along shores year-round
- Can be seen swimming in harbors
- Hunt fish, octopus, and squid
- Harbor seals breed in the sanctuary



Elephant Seals

- Spend most of their life far offshore
- Breed, give birth, and rest onshore
- Males fight for turf and females
- View at Año Nuevo State Park



Sea Otters

- Use rocks to open and eat shellfish
- Live in kelp forests and sloughs
- Groom to keep their fur waterproof
- Forage on crabs, urchins, and clams

Photos: Doug Croft (whale), Karen Grimmer/NOAA (dolphins), Emily Wood/NOAA (surf bird), Dan Linham (harbor seals), Michael Baird (elephant seals), Michael Baird (sea otter)



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WILDLIFE VIEWING CALENDAR

SEABIRDS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Common Murre												
California Least Tern												
Western Gull												
Brown Pelican												
Brandt's Cormorant												
Sooty Shearwater												
Caspian Tern												
Marbled Murrelet												
SHOREBIRDS/WADERS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Snowy Plover												
Least Sandpiper												
Western Sandpiper												
Sanderling												
Willet												
Marbled Godwit												
Great Blue Heron												
Great Egret												
SEALS/SEA LIONS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Harbor Seal												
Elephant Seal												
California Sea Lion												
Steller Sea Lion												
Northern Fur Seal												
WHALES/DOLPHINS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Blue Whale												
Humpback Whale												
Gray Whale												
Orca												
White-sided Dolphin												
Risso's Dolphin												
Common Dolphin												
Bottlenose Dolphin												
Harbor Porpoise												
SEA OTTERS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Southern Sea Otter												
SEA TURTLES	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Leatherback Turtle												

Note: The population of seabirds is lowest in March/April, increasing to a peak in September, then declines through winter. The population of shorebirds is highest in October/November, declining as they continue south. It peaks again in April/May, as they migrate back to northern breeding grounds.

Legend:
● endangered
● threatened
 can usually be found somewhere in the sanctuary
 does not always occur annually

REGULATIONS

Activities prohibited to protect the resources within Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (this list does not include all exemptions or activities):

- Exploring for, developing, or producing oil or minerals
- Discharging or depositing materials into the water
- Injuring or disturbing marine mammals, seabirds, and sea turtles
- Operating motorized personal watercraft, except within five designated areas
- Flying motorized aircraft below 1,000 feet along portions of the coast
- Moving, injuring, or possessing historical resources of the sanctuary
- Introducing or releasing introduced species
- Altering or placing any structures on the seabed
- Chumming for great white sharks

RESPONSIBLE WILDLIFE VIEWING

Respect. Protect. Enjoy.

HANDS TO YOURSELF
Keep wildlife safe and healthy.

KEEP PETS HOME OR ON A LEASH
Wildlife and pets can harm each other.

REPORT WILDLIFE THAT SEEMS ABANDONED OR SICK
Leave it to the experts.

Give wildlife space.

HANG BACK AND ENJOY THE VIEW
NOAA Enforcement Hotline
+1 (800) 853-1964

LEND A HAND WITH TRASH REMOVAL
Keep their home clean.

SNACKS TO YOURSELF
Wildlife can find their own food.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE
Help others become responsible wildlife watchers.