



A SPECIAL PLACE

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary boasts picture postcard scenery nearly everywhere you look—pelicans soaring above the swell, sea otters lounging in soft beds of kelp and waves crashing wildly on a rocky shore. It is home to a rich array of marine life and diverse habitats. The sanctuary stretches along one quarter of the central California coast, and is deeper than the Grand Canyon at its deepest point.

VARIETY OF HABITATS

Encompassing more than 6,000 square miles, 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 Beaches

Stunning beaches harbor a world of life that is mostly out of sight. Worms, sand crabs, snails, and clams live beneath the sand at the water's edge, where shorebirds probe for a tasty meal.



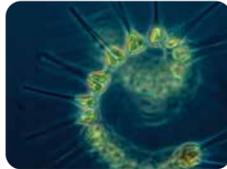
Seafloors

Beyond the waves, much of the seafloor is covered with sand or mud. Here, sand dollars, tubeworms, anemones, brittle stars, flatfishes, and stingrays hide.



Lush Kelp Forests

Supporting a rich array of life, including fish, snails, crabs, sponges, urchins, anemones, sea stars and lingcod, kelp can grow up to 18 inches a day, and tower 100 feet above the ocean floor.



Open Water

Winds drive surface water away from the coast, which upwell cold nutrient-rich water from below. This process fuels the growth of phytoplankton, the base of the sanctuary's abundant food web.



Deep Canyons

The largely unexplored submarine canyons, some descending more than two miles, harbor a variety of animals specially adapted to a life of darkness. Some even produce their own light.



Tranquil Wetlands

Elkhorn Slough, part of the sanctuary and one of California's last great coastal wetlands, is an important resting, feeding, and breeding area for a huge variety of species.



Tide Pools

Rocky shores are an ideal environment for small creatures. When tides subside, tide pools form to become wet oases for a diverse range of creatures like snails, sea stars, small fish, anemones, and more.



Davidson Seamount

Davidson Seamount, an undersea mountain, is one of the largest in the world. From base to crest, it is 7,480 feet tall, yet its summit is still 4,101 feet below the surface.

Habitat photos (left to right): MBNMS, OCNMS, Chad King, NOAA MESA Project, ©2014 MBARI, Steve Lonhart, Vince Stamey, MBARI

THINGS TO DO:

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 free 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 State 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

Just steps away from the famed beach boardwalk, the center features state-of-the-art interactive and multimedia exhibits. Explore the sanctuary's remarkable marine environment, as well as your personal role in protecting one of our nation's special underwater treasures.

montereybay.noaa.gov/visitor/



SCUBA Diving

Abundant sea life and kelp forests make Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary one of the world's greatest cold-water SCUBA diving destinations.



Fishing

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



Boating

Whether a motor, sail, deep sea fishing, wildlife, and/or whale watching boat, you are almost guaranteed to have a wonderful experience on the sanctuary.



Paddle Sports

Canoeing, kayaking, and paddle-boarding provide a unique, interactive experience with nature. Many local businesses provide rentals, lessons and group tours.



Surfing

Monterey Bay is a popular year-round surfing destination, for beginners and veteran surfers alike. Always be careful of submerged rocks and powerful waves.



Whale Watching

Monterey Bay is the marine equivalent of going on an African safari. The diversity in the sanctuary is amazing. Look close, and you may even see whales from shore.



Tide Pooling

Looking for an exciting ocean adventure? Go no further than the sanctuary's rocky shores. During low tide, you can discover all sorts of critters without getting wet!



Wildlife Viewing

Responsibly view animals in one of the richest ecological regions along California's central coast. The sanctuary is home to an amazing amount of diverse creatures.



Sightseeing

Enjoy breathtaking views of the sanctuary along the coast while eating and shopping in coastal communities. Take-in a visit to one of our free visitor centers.



Stewardship

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

MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY



Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is one of our nation's most spectacular marine protected areas, and offers some of the best year-round wildlife viewing in the world! This "Serengeti of the Sea" stretches along the central California coast from San Francisco to Cambria and includes pristine beaches, jewel-like tide pools, lush kelp forests, steep canyons, and an offshore seamount teeming with life—from tiny shrimp to giant blue whales.



USS Macon

Of the 1,276 sunken vessels in the sanctuary, one of the most notable is the USS Macon, a helium-filled dirigible that crashed and sank off Point Sur in 1935.

FUN FACTS

Bixby Bridge

Adjacent to the sanctuary is one of the world's highest single-span concrete arch bridges. It was built by prisoners eager to earn "good time" off their prison sentences. Dedicated in 1932, it is declared to be "one of the most photographed bridges in the world."

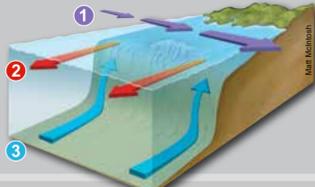


Lone Cypress

On a granite hillside off California's scenic 17-mile drive, the famous Lone Cypress overlooks Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. This tree, nearly 300 years old, is perhaps the most photographed in North America. As a species, the Monterey Cypress naturally grows no place on Earth except for right off the sanctuary shore.

Upwelling

Coastal upwelling is largely responsible for the great wealth and diversity of marine life in the sanctuary. Here is how it works: 1) persistent winds push water southward, 2) wind and the Earth's rotation drive surface water away from the shore, 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 organisms that form the base of the ocean complex food web.



Left to Right: Diatom: USGS; Copepod: Woods Hole, SEA; Larval Crab: NOAA

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.

Shoreline

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

Shipwrecks

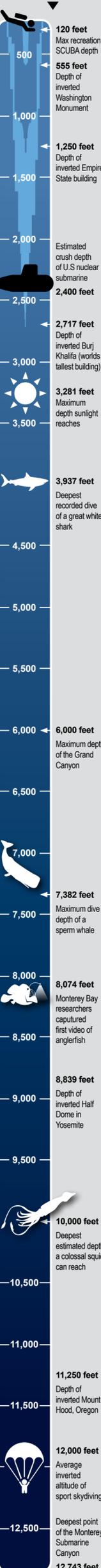
The sea floor preserves remnants of the sites where people lived and of the vessels in which they conducted trade and fought wars. There are 1,276 reported shipwrecks within the sanctuary.

Lighthouses

The six lighthouses along Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary—Point Bonita, Point Montara, Pigeon Point, Santa Cruz, Point Pinos, and Point Sur—acted as safety beacons for sailors over hundreds of years. Today, these important landmarks are popular tourist attractions.

How Deep?

The sanctuary covers 6,094 square miles, one and a half times the size of the largest national park in the continental U.S. At its center is an underwater canyon, the Monterey Submarine Canyon, which in terms of height/depth ratio is deeper than the Grand Canyon.



WILDLIFE VIEWING

Monterey Bay is sometimes known as the "Serengeti of the Sea," and for good reason: wildlife watching in Monterey Bay is like going on a safari in Africa. This yearly explosion of marine life can be traced to upwelling, a process where deep, cold, nutrient-rich water is brought to the surface. This water feeds plankton, 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 & Dolphins

- Outstanding place to see whales
- 29 species seen in the sanctuary
- Some come seasonally, some year-round
- Some can be seen from shore



Sea Otters

- Use rocks to open and eat shellfish
- Wrap in kelp to prevent drifting away
- Groom to keep their fur waterproof
- Found in kelp forests or Elkhorn Slough



Sea Birds & Shorebirds

- One of the best birdwatching sites in U.S.
- Over 180 species of marine birds
- Shorebirds forage on wetlands & beaches
- Some only come to shore to breed



Seals & Sea Lions

- Found in large numbers
- Offshore, near shore, and in harbors
- Hunt fish, octopus, and squid
- Harbor seals breed in the sanctuary



Elephant Seals

- Most of their time is spent far offshore
- Breed and rest onshore
- Engage in bloody fights for turf and females
- Best seen at Año Nuevo & Piedras Blancas



Keep Wildlife Healthy

- Keep your distance and watch quietly
- Don't feed wildlife
- Avoid sensitive habitats
- Dispose of trash properly

Wildlife photos (left to right): Chad King, Michael Baird, Sandy Johnston, Dan Lineham, Michael Baird, Megan Gong



WILDLIFE VIEWING CALENDAR

This calendar shows what time of year you can expect to see certain animals around the sanctuary.

SEABIRDS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Common Murre	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
California Least Tern	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Western Gull	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
California 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	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Killer Whale (Orca)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Pac. 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 Sea Turtle	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█

*Note: The number of seabirds is lowest in March/April, increasing to a peak in Sept., then declines through the winter. The population of shorebirds is highest in late Oct.-early Nov., declining as they continue south; it peaks again in April or May, as they migrate back to northern breeding grounds.

█ can usually be found somewhere in the sanctuary
 █ doesn't always occur annually
 █ endangered
 █ threatened

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

Brochure design, layout and icons: Matt McIntosh

AMERICA'S UNDERWATER TREASURES



The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 170,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The network includes a system of 13 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments. For more information on the National Marine Sanctuary System, visit: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

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

- National Marine Sanctuary
- ▲ Marine National Monument
- Proposed National Marine Sanctuary

Depth infographic: Matt McIntosh