



Flower Garden Banks



Habitats

- Coral reefs
- Algal-sponge communities
- Brine seep
- Sand flats
- Pelagic, open ocean
- Drowned reefs

Key Species

- Star and Brain coral
- Grouper
- Manta ray
- Hammerhead shark
- Loggerhead sea turtle

Flower Garden Banks

National Marine Sanctuary

lies one hundred miles off the coasts of Texas and Louisiana where three underwater gardens emerge from the depths of the Gulf of Mexico. The Flower Garden and Stetson Banks are surface expressions of salt domes beneath the sea floor. These premier diving destinations harbor the northernmost coral reefs in the continental United States and serve as regional reservoirs of shallow-water Caribbean reef fishes and invertebrates.

Research Activities

A wide range of research activities are conducted in the sanctuary: monitoring reef health, cephalopod, elasmobranch and sea turtle surveys, mass coral spawning, genetics, fish censuses, and deep-water remotely operated vehicle surveys.

Education Activities

Classroom and shipboard presentations and volunteer training workshops for teachers and researchers are important parts of the sanctuary education activities. A news bulletin, brochures, posters and videos join with a technical series to relay research and management activities to the public.



Location
Roughly 110 miles south of the Texas-Louisiana border

Protected Area
56-square miles

Designation
January 1992
October 1996,
Stetson Bank

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Above: A marbled grouper in the Flower Garden Banks;
left to right:
goldentail morays;
french angelfish;
coral spawning



Photos: Joyce & Frank Burek

