

# Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary



Photo: Matt McIntosh, NOAA

Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary is full of amazing habitats, with many ways to enjoy them.



Photo: Scot Anderson

In the fall, sanctuary waters host one of the largest concentrations of white sharks in the world.

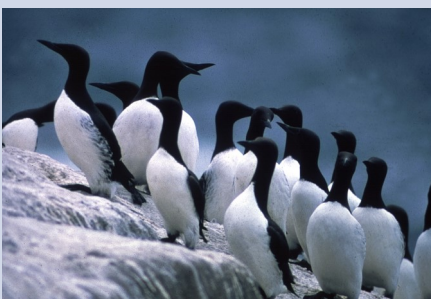


Photo: NOAA

The sanctuary provides crucial habitat for more than a quarter of a million breeding seabirds, like these common murrens.

## Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

(GFNMS), an area of 3,295 square miles off the northern and central California coast, protects the wildlife and habitats of one of the most diverse and bountiful marine environments in the world. The region's unique combination of seafloor contours, ocean currents and wind patterns, fueled by the sun, triggers an abundance of life in these waters. The sanctuary is a globally significant, extraordinarily diverse and productive marine ecosystem that supports a variety of wildlife and valuable fisheries. It provides breeding and feeding grounds for at least 25 endangered and threatened species; 36 marine mammal species, including blue, gray and humpback whales, harbor seals, elephant seals, Pacific white-sided dolphins, and one of the southernmost U.S. populations of threatened Steller sea lions; over a quarter of a million breeding seabirds; and one of the most significant white shark populations on the planet.

## Research and Monitoring

Conservation science protects the sanctuary by providing management with current data on marine life and ecosystem health. Research, monitoring and habitat mapping promote an understanding of ecosystem structure and

function, detect environmental problems, and track the health and trends of habitats and marine life in the sanctuary. The sanctuary evaluates and addresses adverse impacts from human activities on sanctuary resources. Areas of special focus include reducing the threat to whales from ship strikes, protecting breeding seabird colonies and white sharks from human disturbance, and minimizing risks from oil spills and vessels. By ensuring a healthy ocean, we help make marine and coastal ecosystems more resilient to the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification.

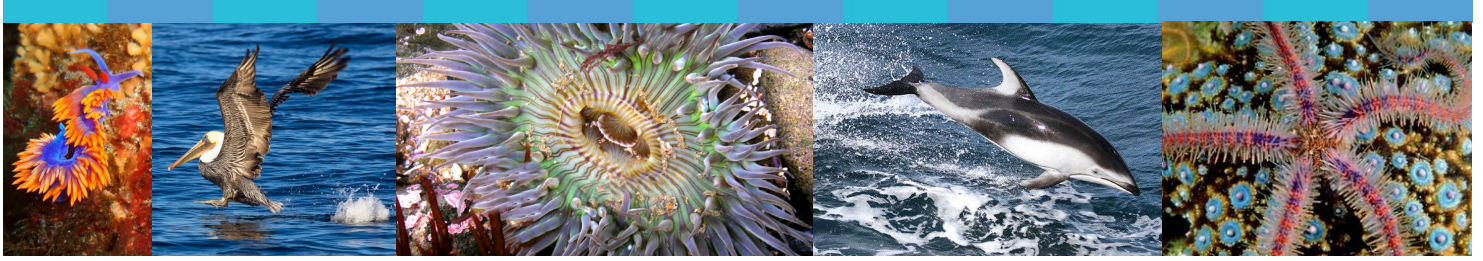
## Education and Outreach

The vision of the sanctuary is to create an ocean literate, involved public that can make informed environmental decisions. Public programs include exciting and engaging learning experiences for all ages: whale watching, tidepooling, kayaking, lectures, workshops, classes and exhibits. School programs use the ocean's enormous appeal to teach science and provide interactive programs for teachers and students at the shore, in the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Visitor Center, and in their classrooms. Programs promote an ocean conservation ethic, and foster active stewardship.



Photo: Matt McIntosh, NOAA

Point Arena Lighthouse sits near the northern boundary of Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary.



# Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

## Location

Off the northern and central California coast

## Protected Area

3,295 square miles

## Designation

January 1981

## Habitats

Bays and estuaries  
Continental shelf and slope  
Deep benthos  
Deep rocky reefs  
Islands  
Kelp forests  
Open ocean  
Sandy and rocky shores

## Key Species

Ashy storm petrel  
Blue whale  
Common murre  
Dungeness crab  
Harbor seal  
Krill  
Steller sea lion  
Tufted puffin  
White shark

## NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



## Find Us

991 Marine Drive, The Presidio  
San Francisco, CA 94129  
415-561-6622

## On the Web

Email: [farallones@noaa.gov](mailto:farallones@noaa.gov)  
<https://www.facebook.com/GFNMS>

## Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Network of marine protected areas  
Encompasses more than 600,000 square miles  
Established October 1972

## On the Web

[sanctuaries.noaa.gov](http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/NOAAOfficeofNationalMarineSanctuaries](https://www.facebook.com/NOAAOfficeofNationalMarineSanctuaries)  
Instagram: @noaasanctuaries  
Twitter: @sanctuaries  
Tumblr: @noaasanctuaries

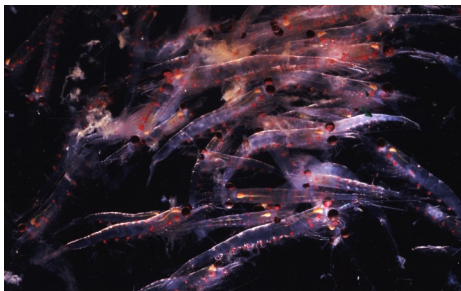


Photo: Jamie Hall, NOAA

Tiny krill, a shrimp-like zooplankton, form the base of the sanctuary's globally significant food web.



Photo: Matt McIntosh, NOAA

The sanctuary is home to one of the southernmost U.S. populations of threatened Steller sea lions.



Photo: Tom Johnson

Endangered blue whales, the largest animals ever to have lived on earth, feed in GFNMS in summer and fall on huge swarms of krill.

<http://farallones.noaa.gov/>