

NORTHEAST CANYONS AND SEAMOUNTS MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT

THE PLACE:

The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument is a stunning marine protected area in the Atlantic Ocean, about 130 miles southeast of Massachusetts. Covering more than 3 million acres, this monument features unique geological features including deep-sea canyons and underwater mountains that provide rich habitat for a diversity of marine life.

WHY IT'S SPECIAL:

The monument hosts a variety of ocean life, including endangered whales, sea turtles, and at least 54 species of deep-sea corals. The coral forest provides essential spawning, breeding and feeding grounds for many animals. In addition to the deep-sea corals, the monument attracts some of the highest concentrations of whales and dolphins seen on the East Coast. Sea turtles and puffins regularly enjoy it.

One of the deepest spots is twice as deep as the Grand Canyon. Northeast Canyons and Seamounts produces abundant krill and plankton that nourish large whales and seabirds.

THE STAKES:

If the monument's protections are revoked, the Trump administration could open the area to commercial fishing and mining, which would threaten fragile ecosystems and the rare species that inhabit them. The destruction of deep-sea corals, which take centuries to grow, and the disruption of delicate habitats could lead to a decline in biodiversity. The monument's role as a reference site for studying climate change and marine ecology would be compromised, hindering our understanding of, and ability to protect, ocean environments.



Image courtesy of NOAA Ocean Exploration, 2021 North Atlantic Stepping Stones: New England and Corner Rise Seamounts.

Large Bubblegum Coral

This large bubblegum coral (*Paragorgia arborea*) was observed during Dive 19 of the 2021 North Atlantic Stepping Stones expedition. Based on published radial growth rates for this species, this colony is approximately 100 years old! We saw several large coral colonies during the dive, prompting one of our on-shore scientists to refer to the dive site as "the land of giants."

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