

## This Day in History... January 30, 1975

# First National Marine Sanctuary

On January 30, 1975, the USS Monitor National Marine Sanctuary was established off the coast of North Carolina. It was America's first national marine sanctuary created under the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act passed three years earlier.

*Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary is located off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and is centered around the wreck of the USS *Monitor*. The site is also near a number of World War II shipwrecks in what is sometimes called the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." The USS *Monitor* was a famous ironclad Civil War ship built to lead the Union Navy. The ship was completed in just 100 days and launched January 30, 1862. On March 9,

1862, it faced off against Confederate ironclad CSS *Virginia* near Hampton Roads. The battle ended in a stalemate, but *Monitor*'s reputation was cemented in history from then on. It supported Union forces for the next several months before sinking off the coast of Cape Hatteras in a New Year's Eve storm. *Monitor* remained lost until the wreck was finally discovered by a scientific research vessel on August 27, 1973 – more than 100 years later.

In the meantime, the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill had raised concerns about the safety of marine ecosystems. On October 23, 1972, the United States Congress passed the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, establishing the National Marine Sanctuary Program. Protected waters include those with special conservational, recreational, ecological, historical, cultural, archaeological, scientific, or educational qualities.



*The USS Monitor is one of just three accessible monitor wrecks in the world.*

January 30, 1975. Of the 15 current national marine sanctuaries, it's one of just two to protect a cultural resource. Over the years, diving expeditions have found that a century of salt water has sped up the deterioration of the ship. Several pieces and artifacts have been raised and put on display in the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Virginia, as well as museums in Georgia and North Carolina. In 1986, the *Monitor* was declared a National Historic Landmark. Today, the

USS *Monitor* and nearby World War II wrecks are popular destinations for divers. The ships have created artificial reefs that are home to many marine species.



*Before this light was built, the area was known as the "Graveyard the Atlantic." This is the tallest bright lighthouse in the US.*

There are currently 15 designated national marine sanctuaries and two national marine monuments, protecting over 620,000 square miles of US waters. Most of these are located in the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans, but two are in the Great Lakes. National marine sanctuaries are administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and "preserve the extraordinary scenic beauty, biodiversity, historical connections, and economic productivity of our most precious underwater treasures." This includes coordinating and assisting scientific research efforts, working with native populations to respect cultural and historic traditions, and more.

Volunteers also help carry out this mission. In 2021 alone, volunteers contributed over 40,000 hours to our national marine sanctuaries. In the past 17 years, that number exceeded 100,000. National marine sanctuaries help ensure the survival of some of our most vulnerable ecosystems. Thanks to our sanctuaries, we can continue to enjoy our oceans and lakes and the flora and fauna that call them home.



*Stamp pictures a sand tiger shark, one of the many creatures protected by the marine sanctuaries.*



*The sanctuary is located off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, which is a national seashore.*

## This Day in History... January 30, 1975

# First National Marine Sanctuary

On January 30, 1975, the USS Monitor National Marine Sanctuary was established off the coast of North Carolina. It was America's first national marine sanctuary created under the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act passed three years earlier.

*Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary is located off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and is centered around the wreck of the USS *Monitor*. The site is also near a number of World War II shipwrecks in what is sometimes called the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." The USS *Monitor* was a famous ironclad Civil War ship built to lead the Union Navy. The ship was completed in just 100 days and launched January 30, 1862. On March 9,

1862, it faced off against Confederate ironclad CSS *Virginia* near Hampton Roads. The battle ended in a stalemate, but *Monitor*'s reputation was cemented in history from then on. It supported Union forces for the next several months before sinking off the coast of Cape Hatteras in a New Year's Eve storm. *Monitor* remained lost until the wreck was finally discovered by a scientific research vessel on August 27, 1973 – more than 100 years later.

In the meantime, the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill had raised concerns about the safety of marine ecosystems. On October 23, 1972, the United States Congress passed the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, establishing the National Marine Sanctuary Program. Protected waters include those with special conservational, recreational, ecological, historical, cultural, archaeological, scientific, or educational qualities.



*The USS Monitor is one of just three accessible monitor wrecks in the world.*

January 30, 1975. Of the 15 current national marine sanctuaries, it's one of just two to protect a cultural resource. Over the years, diving expeditions have found that a century of salt water has sped up the deterioration of the ship. Several pieces and artifacts have been raised and put on display in the Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Virginia, as well as museums in Georgia and North Carolina. In 1986, the *Monitor* was declared a National Historic Landmark. Today, the

USS *Monitor* and nearby World War II wrecks are popular destinations for divers. The ships have created artificial reefs that are home to many marine species.



*Before this light was built, the area was known as the "Graveyard the Atlantic." This is the tallest bright lighthouse in the US.*



*Stamp pictures a sand tiger shark, one of the many creatures protected by the marine sanctuaries.*

The first national marine sanctuary was USS *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary off the coast of North Carolina, established



*The sanctuary is located off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, which is a national seashore.*

There are currently 15 designated national marine sanctuaries and two national marine monuments, protecting over 620,000 square miles of US waters. Most of these are located in the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans, but two are in the Great Lakes. National marine sanctuaries are administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and "preserve the extraordinary scenic beauty, biodiversity, historical connections, and economic productivity of our most precious underwater treasures." This includes coordinating and assisting scientific research efforts, working with native populations to respect cultural and historic traditions, and more.

Volunteers also help carry out this mission. In 2021 alone, volunteers contributed over 40,000 hours to our national marine sanctuaries. In the past 17 years, that number exceeded 100,000. National marine sanctuaries help ensure the survival of some of our most vulnerable ecosystems. Thanks to our sanctuaries, we can continue to enjoy our oceans and lakes and the flora and fauna that call them home.