

Gulf of Maine Visionary Award Nomination

Nominee Information:

New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance

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Background:

It is my pleasure to nominate the New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance (NECWA) for the Gulf of Maine Visionary Award.

Successful management and stewardship of the marine ecosystem requires effective research, outreach and partnership. With 11 years of experience, NEWCA understands that accomplishing this goal requires collaboration and understanding of all those who use the resource. Through partnerships with other regional organizations, scientific institutions, Federal and State agencies and the private sector, NECWA has done extensive work in order to determine trends and needs within marine conservation. From my experience, they seek to have a broader impact by using that knowledge to bridge the gap between awareness and solutions to marine threats.

For instance, recognizing the value of combining institutional strengths, NECWA works with various stakeholders to engage high school and college students in field experiences while educating them in marine conservation. This rare opportunity gives future marine scientists the tools, research opportunities and skills needed to address critical environmental issues that will lead to better ocean conservation. These skills open the door to successful employment within the field. Recently, one of NECWA's interns was hired as a Per Diem Environmental Educator at the Audubon Society of Rhode Island.

Through outreach and research, NECWA is better understanding how past and current human uses of the world's oceans affects the marine ecosystems. They seek to find sustainability between the human need for the ocean's many valuable natural resources and preservation of the marine ecosystem for future generations. It is due to the many accomplishments and programs of this all-volunteer organization, combined with their dedication to ocean conservation, that I recommend NECWA for this award.

Summary:

NECWA is dedicated to the protection and conservation of marine wildlife found in the Gulf of Maine by connecting people to coastal ecosystems through research, educational outreach, and conservation awareness. An all-volunteer organization established in 2005, NECWA's mission is to provide opportunities and experiences to the public through their many programs and projects.

NECWA's Marine Wildlife Internship Program involves high school students, college students, and graduate students and provides them with opportunities in field research, data analysis, community outreach, and wildlife conservation. Interns work as research assistants aboard commercial whale-watching vessels where they collect sighting and environmental data as well as engage with the public. When on land, interns analyze their data and learn photo-identification techniques for humpback whales.

NECWA assists with marine wildlife rescues by supporting organizations authorized to rescue marine mammals (New England Aquarium and IFAW). They also collaborate with Mass Audubon to rescue cold-stunned sea turtles. Live turtles are taken to rehabilitation facilities while dead turtles are necropsied. NECWA is the primary responder for ocean sunfish that strand along the shores of New England. Ocean sunfish that strand dead are necropsied on-site and this information is shared with other organizations worldwide.

NECWA participates in community-outreach programs, including beach cleanups, community presentations, festivals, and fishing shows. These programs engage the public by including PPT presentations, hands-on activities, and the viewing of a life-sized inflatable humpback whale and marine wildlife artifacts.

NECWA maintains the New England Basking Shark and Ocean Sunfish Project (NEBShark), a community-sighting network. By training volunteers to report their sightings of basking sharks and ocean sunfish seen offshore, NECWA engages the public and collects valuable data on both species of marine fish.

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