

CARIB Tails

SALT: Our Grand Dame

A humpback whale named "Salt" makes a 3,000-mile round-trip journey each year—swimming from the colder waters of the North Atlantic to the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea.

Salt is one of the most famous humpback whales in the world. She is known as the "Grand Dame of Stellwagen Bank" because she has been seen on Stellwagen Bank sanctuary in the Gulf of Maine in all but one summer since 1976. She is also the first Gulf of Maine humpback whale to have been seen by researchers in 1979 on Silver Bank off the Dominican Republic.

Her sighting confirmed the north-south migration route of humpback whales. Since then, researchers have found that a significant number of mother-calf pairs from Caribbean waters make the trip to Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, where the young learn to feed and mothers regain weight after their winter-long fast and nursing period.



Photo: PCCS

These days, humpbacks are given names based on the unique pattern on the underside of their tails.



Photo: PCCS

However, Salt's name was inspired by the thick white scarring on her dorsal fin that made it look like it was encrusted by salt.

Salt is a great-grandmother. Since 1976 she has escorted 13 of her calves from the mating and calving grounds in the Caribbean back to New England's feeding grounds. She currently has 11 grandchildren, and one great-grandchild, representing the fourth generation of humpbacks in her family group.



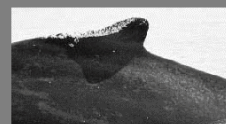
Map showing humpback whale migration range between Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and Sister Sanctuaries in the Caribbean.

Salt's Family Tree

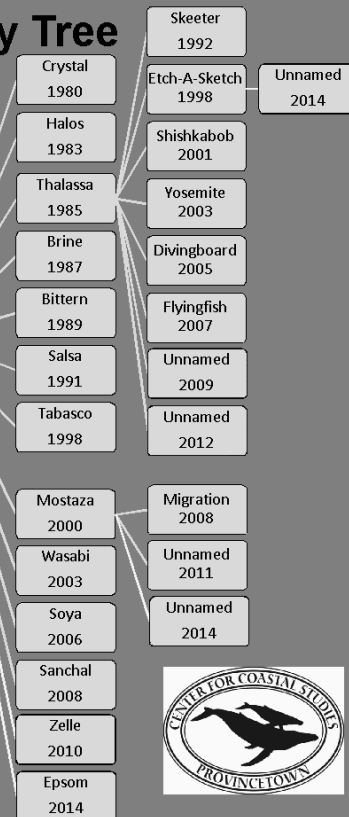
Salt is one of the most well-known humpback whales in the world. She has been studied by CCS since the mid-1970s.



Whales like Salt are not only well-loved by whale watchers but also key to our understanding of humpback whale biology, ecology and threats.



Salt was named for the white scarring on her dorsal fin



Salt's Family Tree