



# Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY FOUNDATION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Announces 2021 Sanctuary Sea Stars Brunch Honorees**

For more information: <https://montereybayfoundation.org/event/2021-sea-stars-brunch/>

Monterey, CA – August 5, 2021

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation announces its 2021 Sanctuary Sea Stars in five categories: Business and Tourism—San Luis Obispo County Business Improvement District; Education and Outreach--Kim and Thom Akeman; Research--Brandon Southall; Resource Protection—Commander Hale Allegretti and Lieutenant Anthony Solares; and the *Panetta Sea Star*—John and Vicki Pearse. The honorees will be recognized during the Foundation’s annual *Sanctuary Sea Stars Brunch* on Sunday, September 19, 2021 at 10:00 am PST at the Monterey Plaza Hotel, overlooking the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

“The *Sanctuary Sea Stars Brunch* is an extremely valuable opportunity for the ocean conservation community to gather and recognize individuals and organizations for their unique and important contributions to Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary,” said Paul Michel, Regional Policy Coordinator, NOAA Sanctuaries West Coast Region. “These are extraordinary people and groups doing extraordinary things to protect our sanctuary, inform science, and inspire the public.”

“The ocean’s most pressing challenges—climate change, habitat loss, pollution and marine life entanglements—lie underneath its surface, unseen. This year’s Sanctuary Sea Stars fuel hope by seeking to protect this very special part of the ocean, each in their own way-- be it by directly protecting sensitive marine life or by engaging communities in the stewardship of their local sanctuary,” said Ginaia Kelly, Chapter Director of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. “We are honored to recognize those Stars in our community who exemplify what it means to be a steward of this precious resource.”

Individual tickets and table sponsorships for the *Sea Stars Brunch* are available until September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at <https://montereybayfoundation.org/event/2021-sea-stars-brunch/>. Early bird tickets are

available through August 31, 2021. The event will include a brunch meal; awards and program presented by the esteemed Foundation board of directors: Co-Chairpersons, Secretary Leon Panetta and Former Santa Cruz Mayor, Hilary Bryant; Former US Congressperson Sam Farr; CEO/President of Cannery Row Company Ted Balestreri; Former Executive Director of the O'Neill Sea Odyssey Dan Haifley; Former CA State Assemblyman Fred Keeley; Businessman Gordon Eubanks; CEO/President of a reef-safe sunscreen company, Nova Covington; Santa Cruz City Councilmember Martine Watkins and Capitola Mayor Yvette Lopez-Brooks. The event will also include live music, a live auction and other festivities. The event is prepared to be held entirely outdoors, on the Hotel's courtyard, with room for social-distancing, if COVID-precautions warrant that level of protection.

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## 2021 Sea Star Biographies

The ***Panetta Sea Star*** award, the Foundation's highest honor, acknowledges individuals who are making an exceptional impact on sanctuary science, conservation or policy. John (posthumously) and Vicki Pearse will receive the *Panetta Sea Star* award for their countless scientific contributions and for being among the world's leading experts on marine invertebrates. The Pearse's also have dedicated their lives to teaching and inspiring generations of marine scientists and enthusiasts, from middle school children to graduate students, throughout their distinctive careers. Among the many impacts they have made to the scientific community, the Pearse's are highly regarded for their academic contributions--John as Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at UC Santa Cruz and Vicki, as a Research Associate at UCSC's Institute of Marine Sciences. They have published numerous scientific articles and invertebrate zoology textbooks, including *Living Invertebrates*. And along with Vicki's parents, Ralph and Mildred Buchsbaum, they revised the classic *Animals Without Backbones*.

Since John's retirement in 1994 and up to his passing in 2020, he continued to teach and mentor the next generation of environmentalists. In 2000, he founded a program that trained high school students to monitor coastal ecosystems. It eventually grew into the statewide program called [Long-Term Monitoring Program and Experimental Training for Students \(LiMPETS\)](#). Formally established in 2002, the LiMPETS Program helps youth develop a scientific understanding of the ocean by monitoring rocky intertidal and sandy beach ecosystems throughout coastal California, including within three national marine sanctuaries. This publicly accessible, scientifically sound, long-term data is used to inform marine resource managers, the scientific community, and future students. Annually, over 7,000 students and teachers participate in hands-on, experiential learning in the marine environments through this LiMPETS Program.

"The Pearse's have bestowed an incredible legacy of scientific knowledge to the world, but it is their dedication to mentoring and inspiring passion for ocean conservation in students over the decades that will be forever lasting in generations to come," said Dan Haifley, Board Member of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

The **Business and Tourism Sea Star** award goes to *San Luis Obispo County's Stewardship Traveler For Good Program*, which is a tourism marketing strategy for the County's Business Improvement District (CBID) and includes the San Luis Obispo North Coast Scenic Byway and the Big Sur Coast Highway adjacent to Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The Stewardship Travel Discovery Route was developed with input from Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and is promoted through the

County's 500+ lodging properties. The program promotes tourism themes which overlap with Sanctuary messaging in the form of wildlife viewing etiquette and "Respect Wildlife" messaging, appreciation for the natural beauty of the area, and the importance of conservation and resource protection. It connects visitors with scientists, naturalists, wildlife and heritage sites located along the Highway 1 corridor to increase visitor participation in stewardship-based activities such as "Science Saturdays" at the Coastal Discovery Center, family activities at State Parks campgrounds, volunteer tree plantings on conserved lands in Cambria and beach cleanups in Avila Beach. It also promotes whale watching, visits to the Piedras Blancas elephant seal rookery, intertidal and marine habitats, and participation in recreational fishing, kayaking, surfing and windsports. "Most importantly, it helps the visitor understand the value of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary," said Haifley. Receiving the award on behalf of SLO County Business Improvement District is Chief Administrative Officer, Cheryl Cuming.

The **Education and Outreach Sea Star** award goes to Kim and Thom Akeman for their 18-plus years of dedicated work monitoring, protecting and educating about the Pacific Grove harbor seals. The Akeman's continue to not only protect the Pacific Grove harbor seals as Bay Net volunteers, where they educate the public about noise and disturbance issues, but they also meticulously monitor and track each female seal and their pups. Since 2013, Kim has managed the Facebook page, *Harbor Seals of Pacific Grove*, which reaches thousands of followers and broadcasts information nationally and internationally. "They put an extraordinary amount of time into these annual efforts. Their research has the potential to be added to the Central and Northern California Ocean Observing System relative to reproductive success, population statistics, and human disturbance metrics, making a real difference in protecting this beloved species in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary," said Lisa Emanuelson, Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator, California Marine Sanctuary Foundation.

The **Research Sea Star** award goes to Brandon Southall, of Southall Environmental Associates, Inc. Southall was a leader in developing the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Ocean Noise Roadmap, which now guides all NOAA activities related to sound in the ocean. He has shared his expertise on several regional public panels on the topic, including addressing science questions related to cruise ships. Southall is actively involved in the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries "SanctSound" program in terms of planning, implementation, data analysis and interpretation, which will inform future policy making on the topic. He is a regional science leader, bringing together the strong Monterey Bay sound team, including organizing grant proposals and group presentations. Southall is an active member of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Research Activity Panel and regularly assists sanctuary staff when they have technical questions related to the impacts of sound on ocean-based species.

The **Resource Protection Sea Star** award will be awarded to Commander Hale Allegretti and Lieutenant Anthony Solares of the *United States Coast Guard (USCG)- San Francisco Sector*. Commander Allegretti and Lieutenant Solares are nominated for their work in developing a United States Coast Guard [Marine Safety Information Bulletin](#) to encourage vessels transiting through Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary to use the International Maritime Organization Recommended Tracks. When vessels are awaiting anchorage in San Francisco Bay, some may drift too close to shore, and USCG has been committed to notifying the vessels about staying offshore and away from sensitive sanctuary resources. Lieutenant Solares has contacted over two dozen large container ships since the end of February 2021, and Commander Allegretti is now re-broadcasting the bulletin to new vessels as they continue to await anchorage offshore. Their efforts help to protect the sensitive coastal areas that could

be devastated by an oil spill caused by a vessel collision, or the loss of cargo containers overboard that could occur during a grounding close to shore.

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**Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Foundation**, based in Santa Cruz/Monterey, is the official non-profit partner of Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and is the local chapter of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. The chapter's mission is to leave a thriving Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary to future generations by protecting habitats and wildlife, raising sanctuary visibility and awareness, and inspiring the public to be its stewards. We envision a healthy Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary recognized as a national treasure and as a model of outstanding ocean management, for its unique and abundant biodiversity and widespread community support. To learn more about the chapter at <https://montereybayfoundation.org/>