



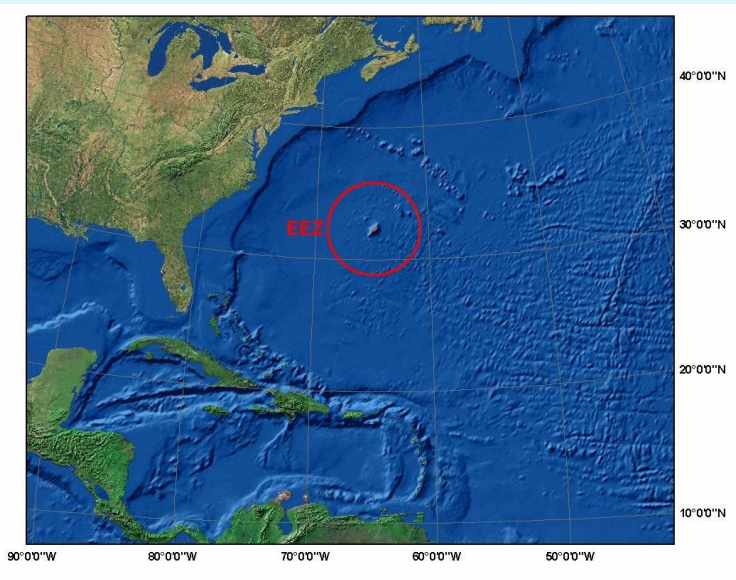
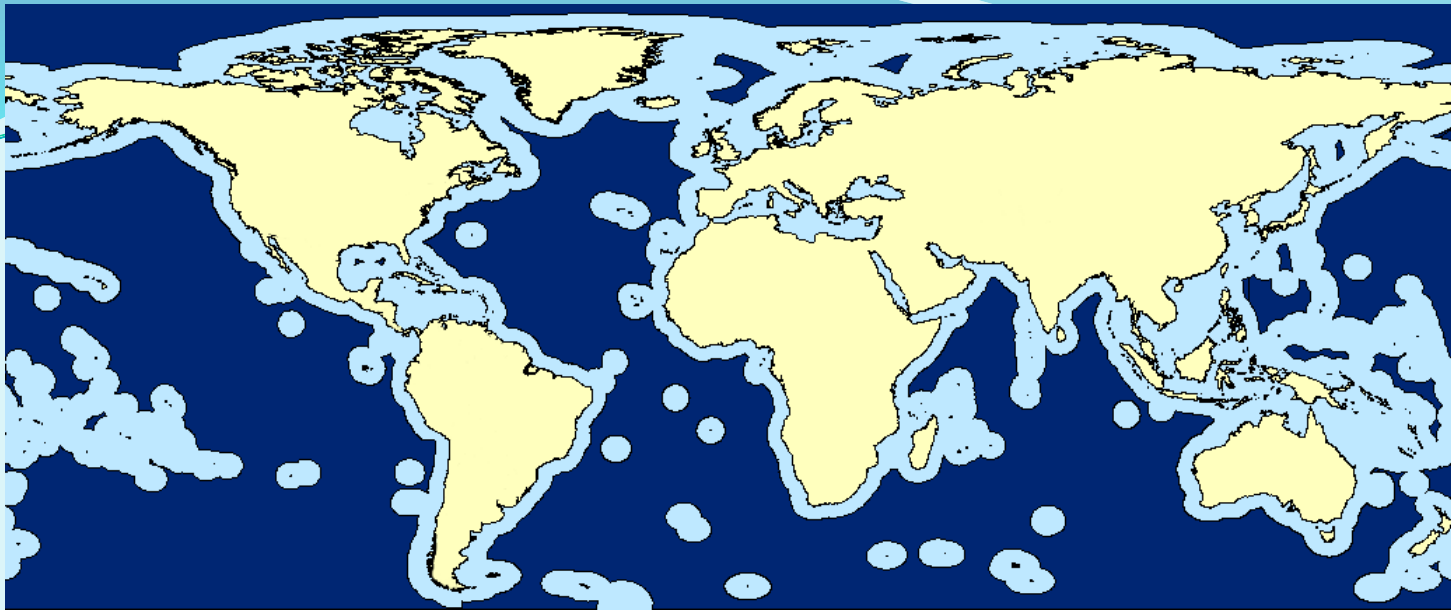
The Sargasso Sea: a unique and iconic ecosystem

Dr. David Freestone

Executive Secretary, Sargasso Sea Commission

Sargassum; An Environmental Threat ?
DC Environmental Film Festival Event
Washington DC, 19 March 2019





**Bermuda EEZ = 464,940 sq km
or 179,514 sq. miles**

**Sargasso Sea = ~ 5 179 976 sq
km or 2 million sq. miles**

Aims of the Sargasso Sea Project

Led by the Government of Bermuda to build a network of international partners to

- Achieve **international recognition** of the global importance of the Sargasso Sea
- Work with existing international and sectoral organisations to achieve better protection for the Sargasso Sea **in accordance with the Law of the Sea Convention**
- Use this experience as an indication of what is possible and not possible under current



Why is the Sargassum
important ?

*"Encountered weed ...in some
places so thick that it actually
held back the ships..."*

Columbus 20th September 1492





- Unique open-ocean sargassum-based ecosystem. Mostly High Seas
- Important for life history of many species (eels, turtles, tuna, billfish, sharks, etc.)

Fluitans





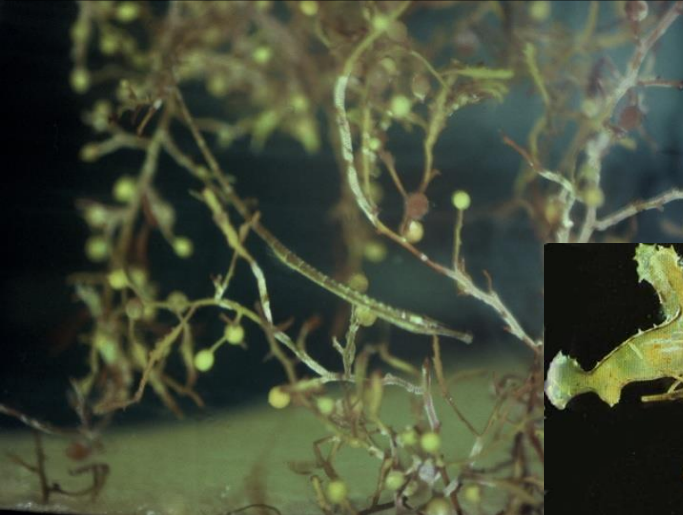
Plastic in Sargassum S Sarkis

Sargassum Endemics

145 invertebrate species live in association with Sargassum



©David Shale





Sargassum fish - JP Rouja



Sargassum Swimming Crab
NOAA



Sea horse JP Rouja

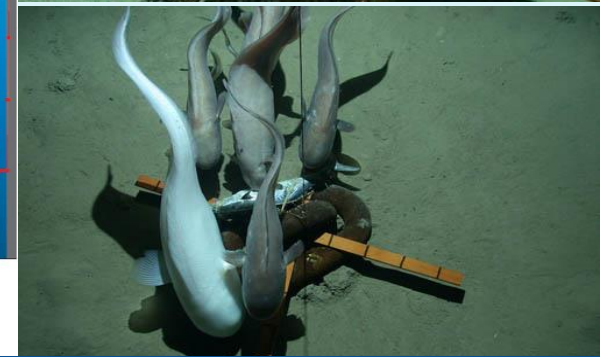
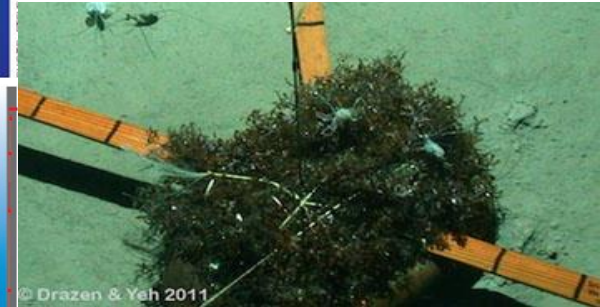
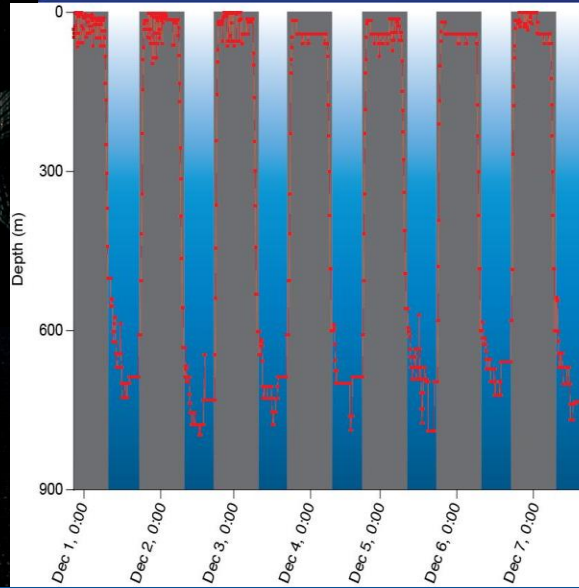
Iconic species





Humpback in Sargassum
Andrew Stephenson

Midwater and Benthic Fauna



Nursery/Feeding area: eggs/juveniles of >80 fish species occur in Sargassum





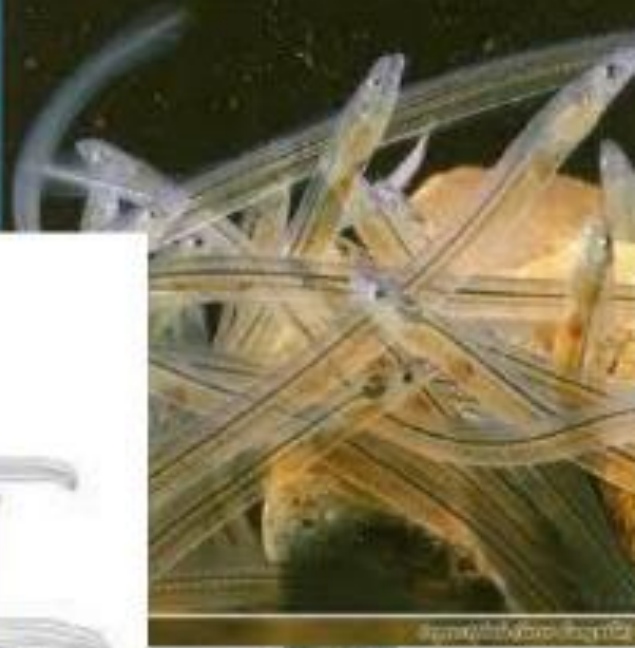
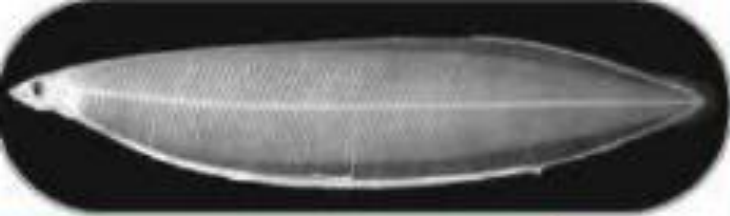
Flying fish eggs JP Rouja



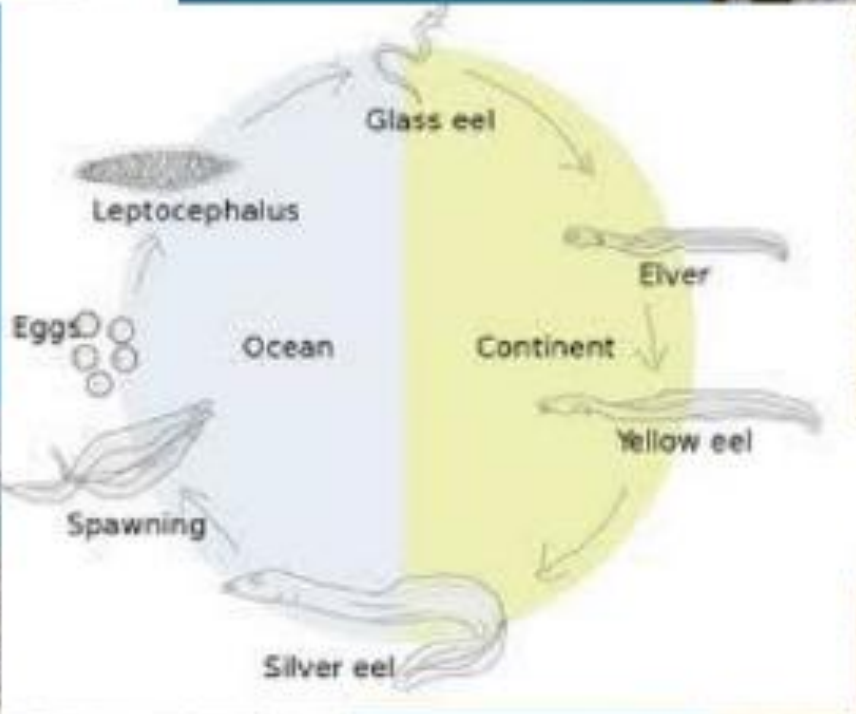
Flying fish JP Rouja



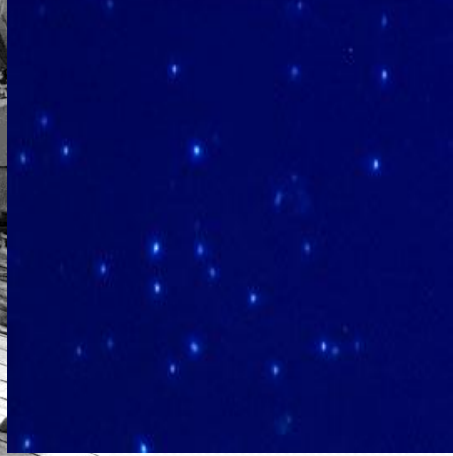
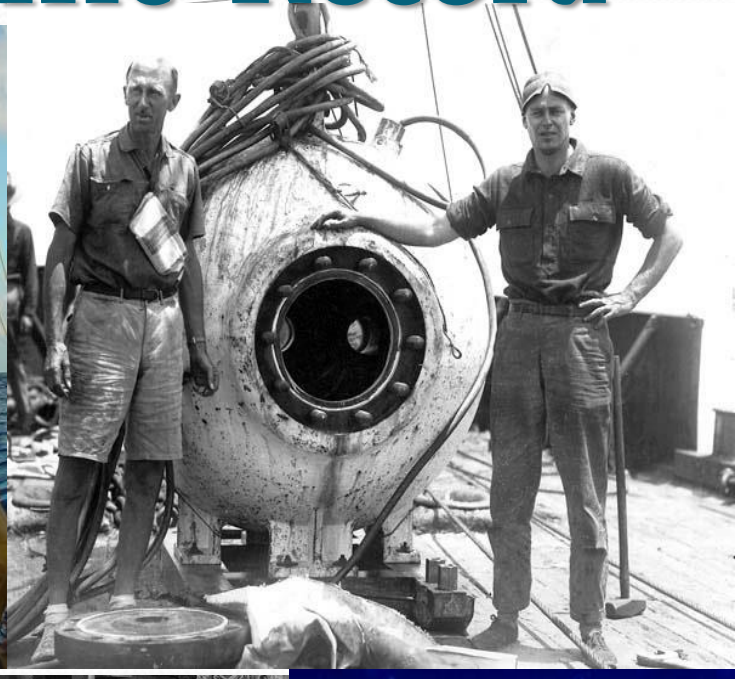
Baby Leatherbacks



European Eel Life Cycle



Unparalleled Scientific Record

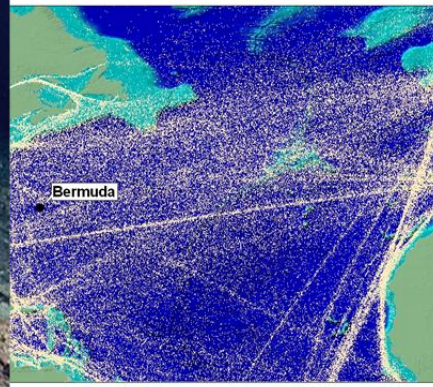
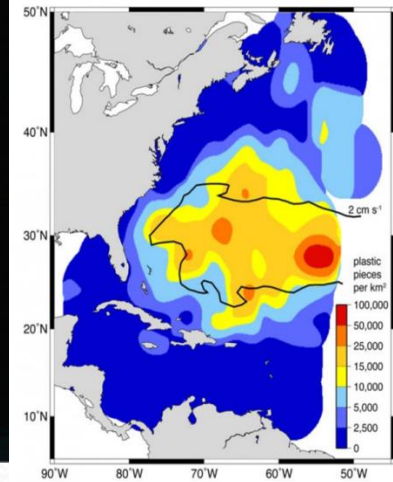
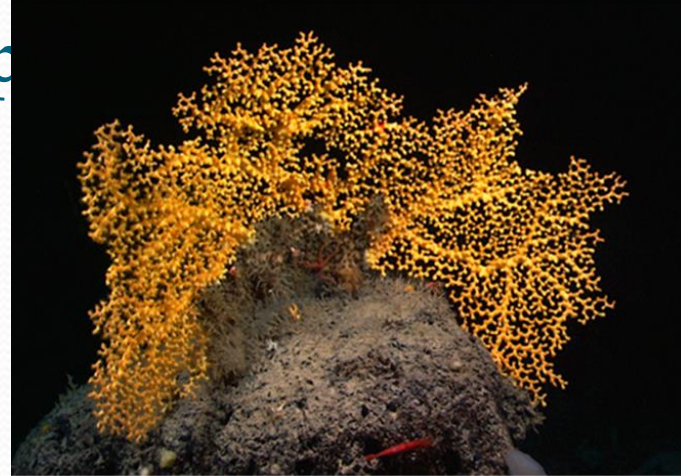


International Seakeeper's Award September 2013



Threats

- Garbage and plastics
- Pollution, discharges, sp
- Fishing
- Sargassum* harvesting
- Exotic species
- Climate change
- Ocean Acidification
- Deep sea mining
- Underwater cables ?



THANK YOU



For more information

www.sargassoseacommission.org