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**NEPTUNE blue paths**

# SANTO STEFANO SHOAL



**Attention  
FRAGILE**



**SPAMI  
species**



**Diving**



**Cultural and  
natural**



**Lowly  
frequented**

## Geographical location

Italy, Liguria, Imperia, Comune di Santo Stefano al Mare (IM)

## Name of conservation area (or protected area)

The shoals do not fall within protected areas or in SAC areas

## Degree of environmental protection

Between 2008 and 2009, the University of Genoa carried out a project to characterize the habitat and species present on the Shoals, quantify the damage caused by human activities on the area and evaluate possible conservation and management actions. Currently there is an application to the Ministry for the establishment of a marine protected area

## Diving site name

Shoal of Santo Stefano

## Geographical coordinates (reference system)

LAT **43°49'162" N**

LONG **07°54'775" E**

Reference system **WGS84**

## LOCATION



## Type of access to the diving site

**By boat**

## Site characteristics

Maximum depth

**from -24m to -45m**, visibility is always excellent; furthermore, along the shoals there are several diving spots at different depths, thus making the site accessible to all types of patents

Difficulty

**Low**



**Cultural and natural**

## Information from the managing organisation

The Nautilus diving center operates on the shoals, open all year round, specializing in technical diving, which performs about 1000 dives a year. In addition to this, other centers operate in the area, thus bringing the number of dives to around 2000 each year. In addition to underwater activities, there are many fishing boats (both professional and sports) on the shoal.



**INFORMATION**



**Diving**



**Permit not required**



# PATH MAP



Attention **FRAGILE**



**SPAMI species**

## Description of the site of natural interest

Oval-shaped rocky ridge that extends southwards, with a perimeter of about 8km, located at a distance from the coast between 500m - 2.5km, at a depth between 24 and 45m, the Shoals of Santo Stefano are one of the most interesting areas of the extreme west of Liguria.

The submerged peninsular structure starts from a depth of about -15 meters at a distance of a few tens of meters from the tourist port Marina degli Aregai (locality Santo Stefano al Mare) and goes towards the open sea up to a depth of -45m. The main Ligurian coastal current, which moves large masses of water in an East-West direction, impacts the shoal perpendicularly, influencing the structuring of the different benthic communities.

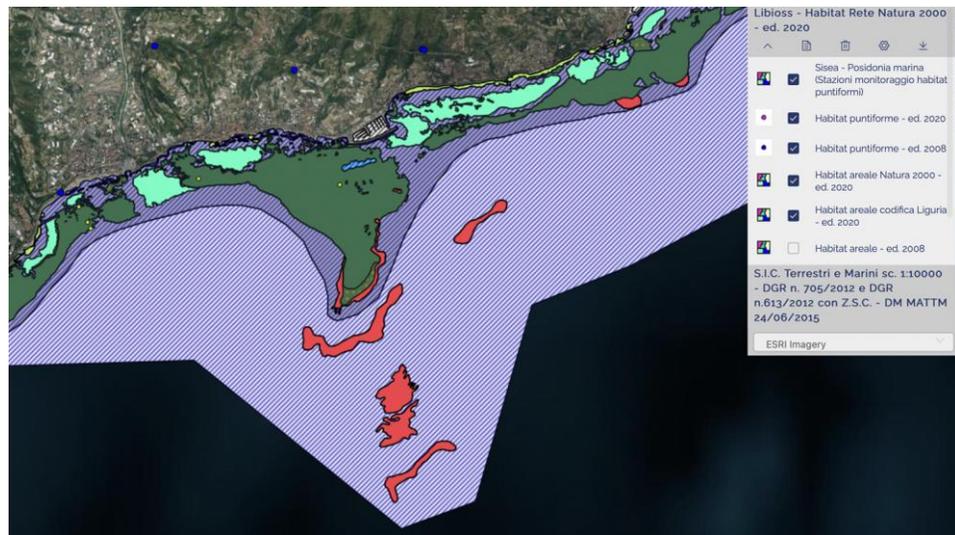
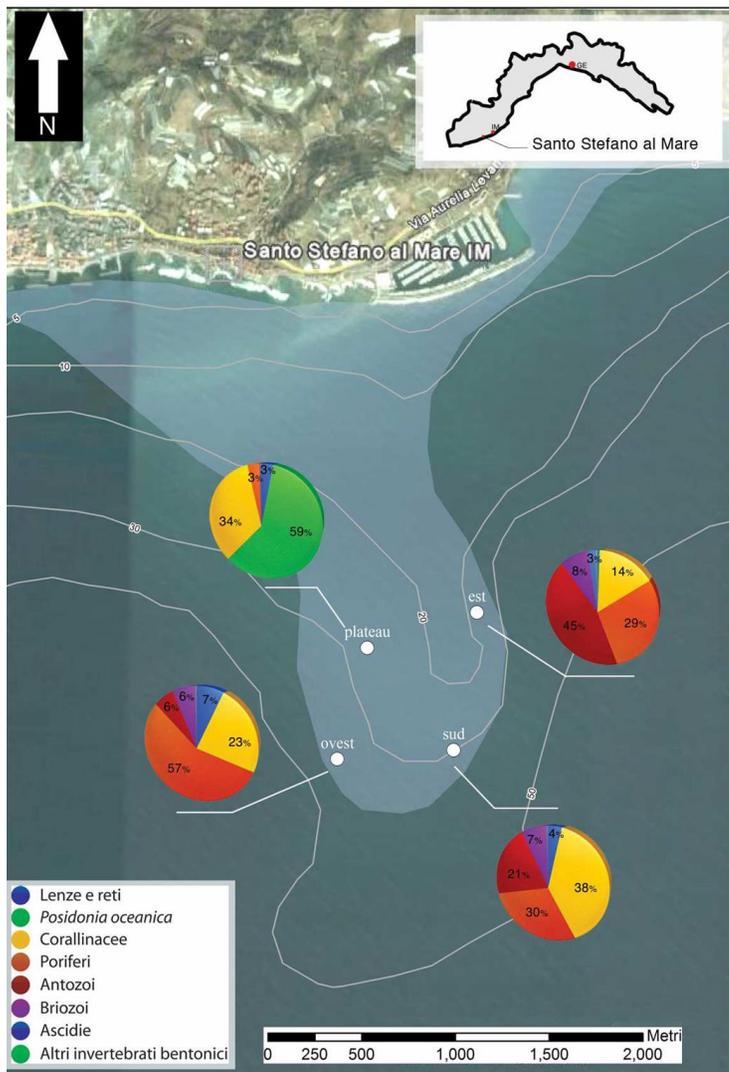
In fact, at least three different environments can be distinguished: 1) the most superficial one, the plateau or saddle of the shoal, with an algal dominance and a dense *Posidonia oceanica* meadows; 2) the west side hit by a strong dominant current and characterized by important populations of *Paramuricea clavata* which, together with various species of sponges, shape a habitat rich in ravines and cavities and give shelter to madrepores (*Leptopsammia pruvoti*) and differently branched bryozoans (*Pentapora fascialis* and *Smittina cervicornis*); 3) the east side, rich in suspended material and characterized by the presence of filtering animals that mostly populate the ravines of the rock and the vaults of small caves, thus sheltering from the risk of silting up.



## NATURAL

### Main species list

- *Posidonia oceanica*
- *Paramuricea clavata*
- *Leptopsammia pruvoti*
- *Pentapora fascialis*
- *Smittina cervicornis*
- *Paracentrotus lividus*
- *Centrostephanus longispinus*
- *Palinurus elephas*
- *Epinephelus marginatus*



## NATURAL

Area of main habitats (within a 100m radius of the site)

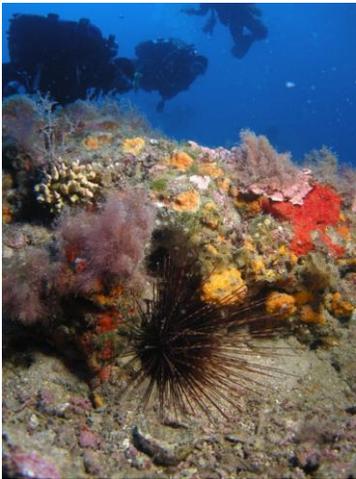
- Area of the main habitats: 250,000 m<sup>2</sup>
- Coralligenous (or precoralligenous) habitat: 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> plus two more rocky shoals for another 5,000 m<sup>2</sup>
- *Posidonia oceanica*: grassland in the upper part of the shoals 125,000 m<sup>2</sup>

Habitat map (GIS)



Environmental heritage photos

*Centrostephanus longispinus*



*Centrostephanus longispinus*



*Paramuricea clavata*



*Parazoanthus axinellae*

## Description of the site of cultural interest

### Roman ship

The wreck of a Roman ship carrying amphorae, presumably dating from the period between the 1st century BC. and the 1st century AD, it lies about sixty meters off the port of Aregai, in the southernmost area of the Shoals of Santo Stefano al mare. The ship, about 30m long and 10m wide, was most likely carrying amphorae of the "Dressel 1A" type, 110 centimeters high, used between the 1st century BC. and the 1st century AD, for the transport of wine, and it is estimated that the ship carried about 3,500. The wreck which is located at a depth of about 60m, in addition to its historical interest, has become a real biological oasis.

### Fiat BR20 aircraft

Fallen during World War II, the Fiat BR20 was the first Italian bomber to be built entirely of metal. The wreck lies at a depth of 47m, right in front of S. Stefano al mare and offers the opportunity to admire, in their surprising integrity, the machine gun, the bullets and both propellers. In addition to its undisputed historical interest, this wreck is also important from a biological point of view: the structure of the plane has in fact become a refuge for many marine species.



CULTURAL



# CULTURAL

## Cultural heritage photos

Amphorae of the Roman ship



Wreck of the Fiat BR20 plane



Wreck of the Fiat BR20 plane



Amphorae of the Roman ship