

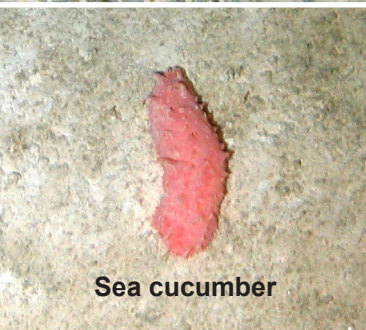
# Hatton-Rockall Basin

## Marine Protected Area

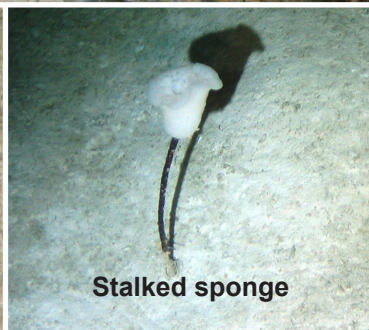


Unique seabed geology provides homes for deep-sea creatures, such as the wolf fish

All photos © National Oceanography Centre, UK



Sea cucumber



Stalked sponge



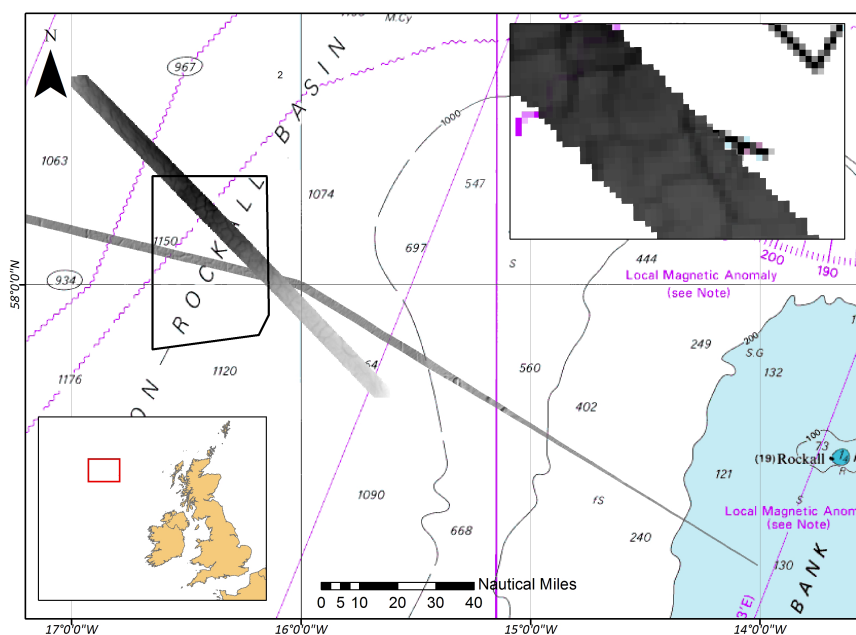
Firetrap anemone

# Hatton-Rockall Basin

## Marine Protected Area (MPA)

The Hatton-Rockall Basin MPA is located in the far west of Scotland's offshore waters. Rockall Bank lies to the east, Hatton Bank to the west, and George Bligh Bank to the north. At a depth of over 1 km, this muddy basin hosts a range of animals adapted to living in the deep-sea.

The seabed in this area is criss-crossed with unique examples of polygonal faults, an intriguing and scientifically important geological feature. The structure of the faults resembles the cracks found on a sun scorched desert, creating a unique relief on the seabed providing a habitat for deep-sea sponges.



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**Boundary of the Hatton Rockall Basin MPA with the inset image showing the polygonal faults geological feature**

**Location: 58° 03.548' N 16° 24.096' W**

**Area: 1,256 km<sup>2</sup>**





## Deep-sea sponges on polygonal faults

### Protected Features & Conservation Objectives

The aim is to **conserve** the **deep-sea sponge aggregations** and **offshore deep-sea muds** found within the Hatton Rockall Basin. Also conserved are the Marine Geomorphology of the Scottish Deep Sea Ocean Seabed and the polygonal fault systems on the sea floor.

Different types of animals can be found living in, and on, the muddy seabed within the Hatton Rockall Basin. A group of animals that often have five-starred symmetry, called *echinoderms*, are some of the most common animals found here, including sea cucumbers, starfish and sea urchins.

The MPA also includes aggregations of deep-sea sponges, including the aptly named birds-nest sponge. Associated with the harder edges of the polygonal faults, the sponge aggregations are hotspots of biodiversity, supporting many other species. The spine-like 'spicule' remnants left behind by dead sponges cover the seabed, preventing burrowing animals from establishing. This barrier enables animals that live on the seabed surface to thrive, including mats of brittlestars that wave their arms in the passing currents in pursuit of food.

# Further Information

Further information on Nature Conservation MPAs, the wider network and protected areas management is available at [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/marine/marine-environment/mpanetwork)

For Nature Conservation MPA site documents and more information about the fascinating range of marine life found in Scotland's seas, please visit

[www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/scottishmpas](http://www.jncc.defra.gov.uk/scottishmpas) - for offshore waters

[www.snh.gov.uk/mpas](http://www.snh.gov.uk/mpas) - for territorial waters



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JNCC  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Prawn emerging from deep water sponge

