

Sargasso Sea

August 11, 2020

- The Sargasso Sea is a vast patch of ocean named for a **genus of free-floating seaweed called Sargassum.**
- The Sargasso Sea is **unique in that it harbors species of sargassum that are 'holopelagi'** – this means that the algae not only freely float around the ocean, but it reproduces vegetatively on the high seas (Other seaweeds reproduce and begin life on the floor of the ocean).
- While all other seas in the world are defined at least in part by land boundaries, the **Sargasso Sea is defined only by ocean currents.**
- It is bounded on the west by the Gulf Stream, north, by the North Atlantic Current, east, by the Canary Current and south, by the North Atlantic Equatorial Current.
- **This system of ocean currents forms the North Atlantic Gyre.**
- It is the only sea on Earth which **has no coastline.**

Importance:

- Turtles use sargassum mats as nurseries where hatchlings have food and shelter.
- Sargassum also provides essential habitat for shrimp, crab, fish, and other marine species that have adapted specifically to these floating algae.
- The Sargasso Sea is a spawning site for threatened and endangered eels, as well as white marlin, porbeagle shark, and dolphinfish.
- Humpback whales annually migrate through the Sargasso Sea.
- Commercial fish, such as tuna, and birds also migrate through the Sargasso Sea and depend on it for food.