

Texas Artificial Reefs

A Tribute to the Lone Star State

Texas has been involved in artificial reef development for nearly 50 years. Numerous reef building materials have been used over the years. However, the first highly successful artificial reef development occurred during the mid-1970's when 12 obsolete Liberty Ships were sunk at five different sites in the Gulf of Mexico. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Artificial Reef Program has added materials to most of these sites and created others through programs like Rigs to Reefs, in which petroleum companies donate obsolete petroleum platforms to the Program.

To date, 25 artificial reef sites have been established to benefit the environment by creating habitat for marine organisms, and to provide areas for increased fishing and sport diving opportunities.

Detailed maps of Liberty ship reef sites in the Gulf of Mexico off Texas are available for purchase from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Artificial Reef Program. For additional information contact:

Artificial Reef Program
Seabrook Marine Laboratory
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
P.O. Box 8
Seabrook, Texas 77586
(713) 474-1418

Credits

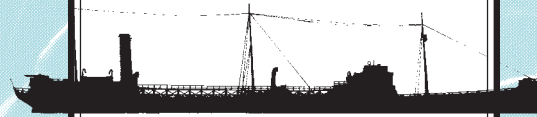
Historical research conducted by
Texas Historical Commission, Austin



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SS *John Worthington* WWII Tanker Wreck



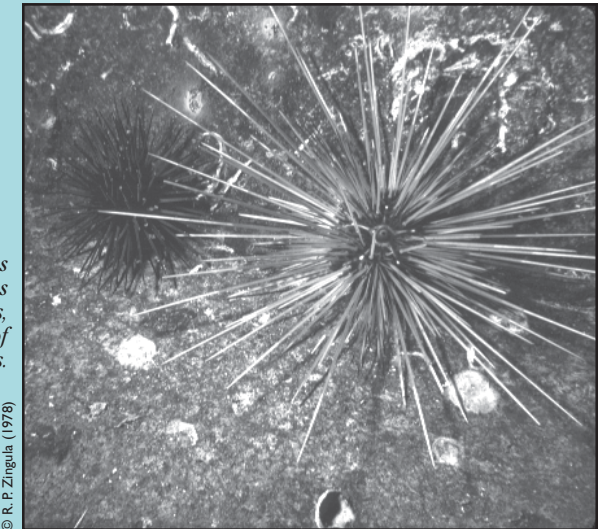
World War II Heritage
for Divers, Anglers
and the Public



The bravery of America's Merchant Marines helped the Allies win World War II. Now, fourteen World War II ships that carried supplies and oil into the most dangerous fronts of the war serve as artificial reefs off the coast of Texas. Located in six readily accessible reef sites, they offer divers and recreational anglers an encounter not only with magnificent reefs, but also with America's maritime heritage.

Built in 1920, the *John Worthington* was an Esso tanker. She made 20 voyages during the war before she was torpedoed off Brazil on May 27, 1943. Despite a hole the size of a house, the *Worthington's* crew sailed her all the way to Galveston where it was eventually determined that she was beyond repair. After being stripped and partly salvaged, the ship was abandoned behind Saint Joseph Island where she eventually succumbed to the sea.

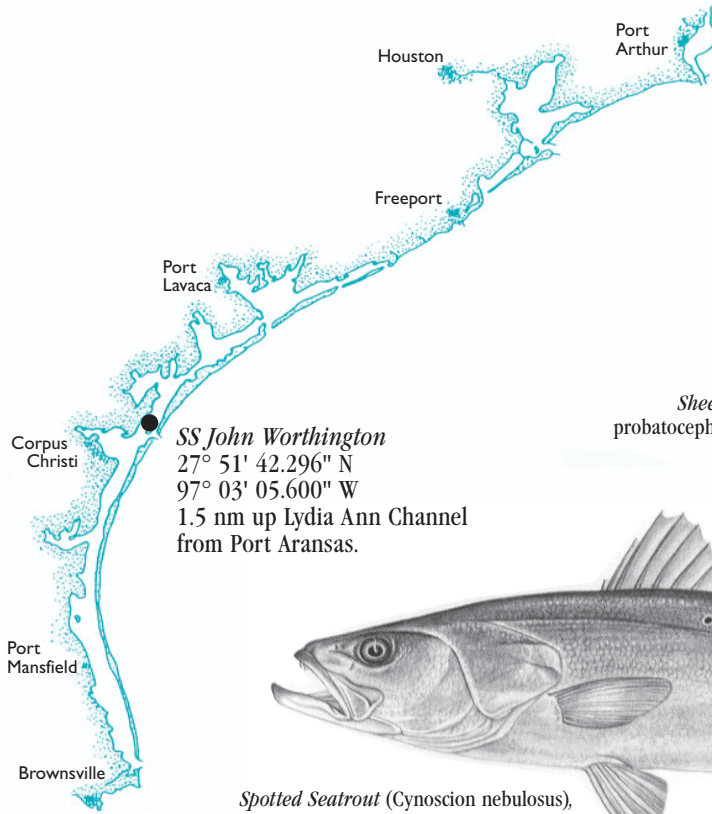
Long-spined sea urchins (Diadema antillarum), such as this one with white spines, graze along the decks of sunken Liberty ships.



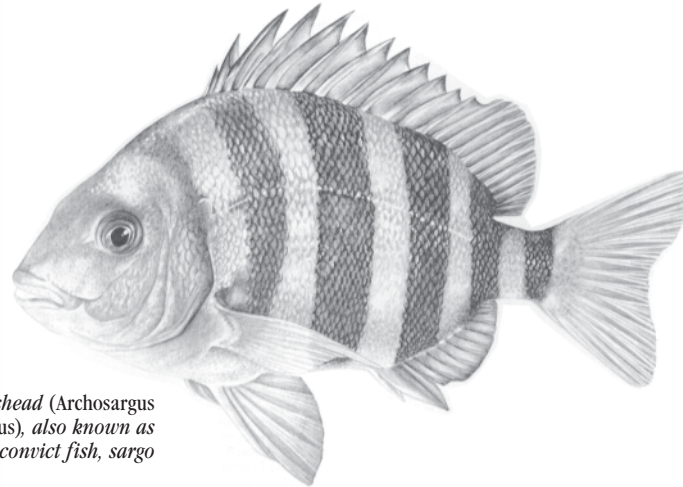
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The *John Worthington* is not officially included in the Texas Artificial Reef Program. Having come to rest in shallow State waters before the Program existed, the wreck is neither monitored nor maintained by the Program but is included in this brochure series for the benefit of anglers, divers and the general public. Twelve WWII Liberty Ships and one tanker are located at other reef sites along the Texas coast. Brochures for these reef sites are available from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

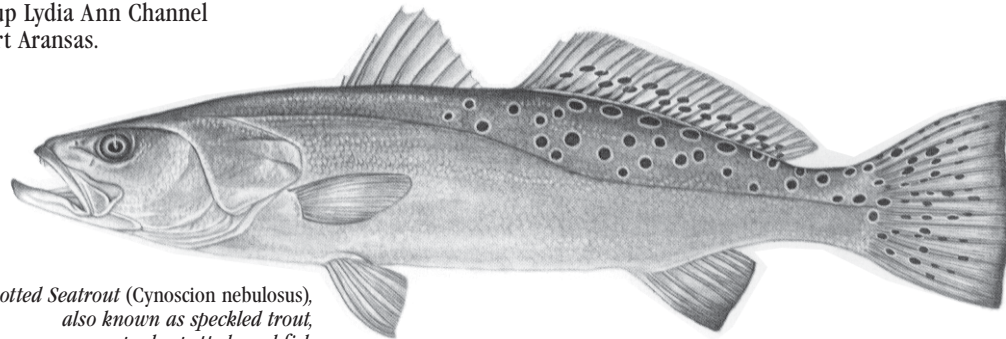
Diving opportunities on the *Worthington* are limited due to the shallowness of the site and variable water clarity. Visibility varies from good to poor. Anglers can target typical bay fishes such as sheepshead and seatrout.



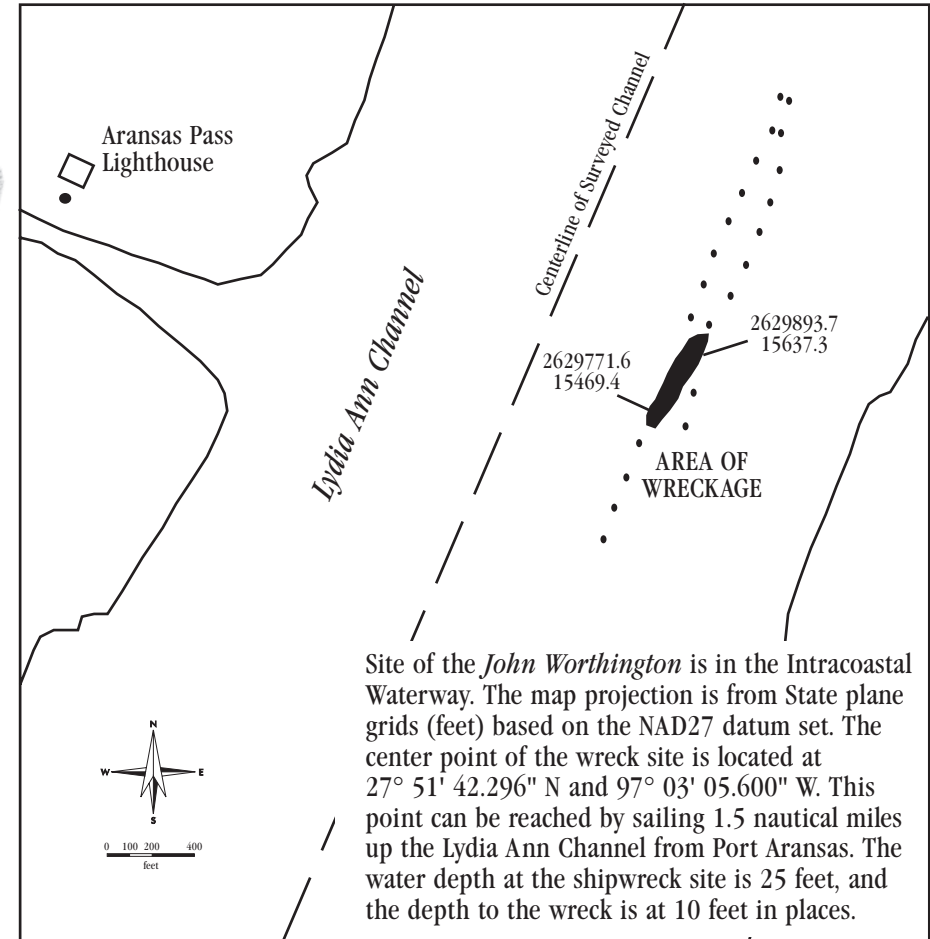
SS John Worthington
 27° 51' 42.296" N
 97° 03' 05.600" W
 1.5 nm up Lydia Ann Channel
 from Port Aransas.



Sheephead (*Archosargus probatocephalus*), also known as *convict fish*, *sargo*

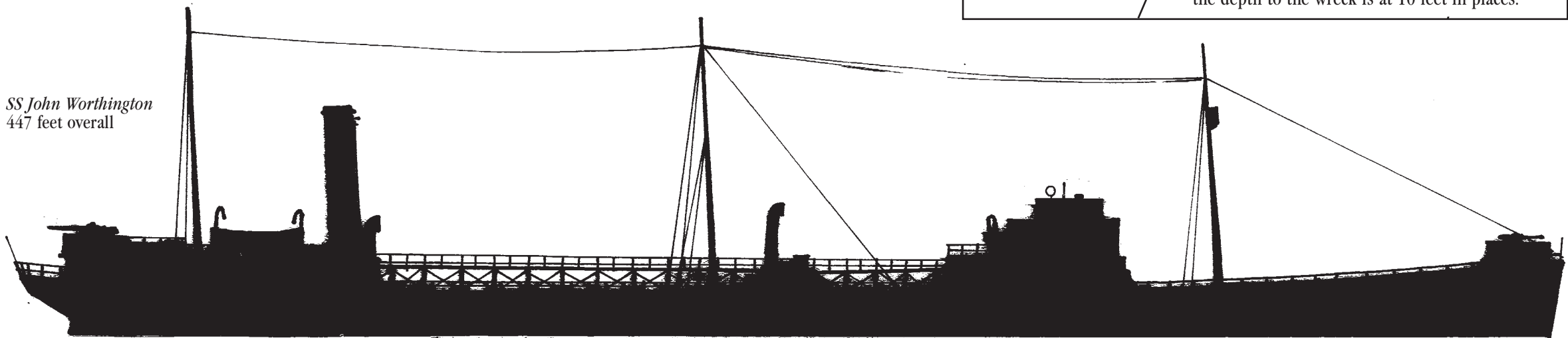


Spotted Seatrout (*Cynoscion nebulosus*), also known as *speckled trout*, *speck*, *spotted weakfish*



Site of the *John Worthington* is in the Intracoastal Waterway. The map projection is from State plane grids (feet) based on the NAD27 datum set. The center point of the wreck site is located at 27° 51' 42.296" N and 97° 03' 05.600" W. This point can be reached by sailing 1.5 nautical miles up the Lydia Ann Channel from Port Aransas. The water depth at the shipwreck site is 25 feet, and the depth to the wreck is at 10 feet in places.

SS John Worthington
 447 feet overall



Andrew Hall (1995)

the
WORLD WAR II TANKER WRECK