

Sussex Seasearch

Summary Report 2020



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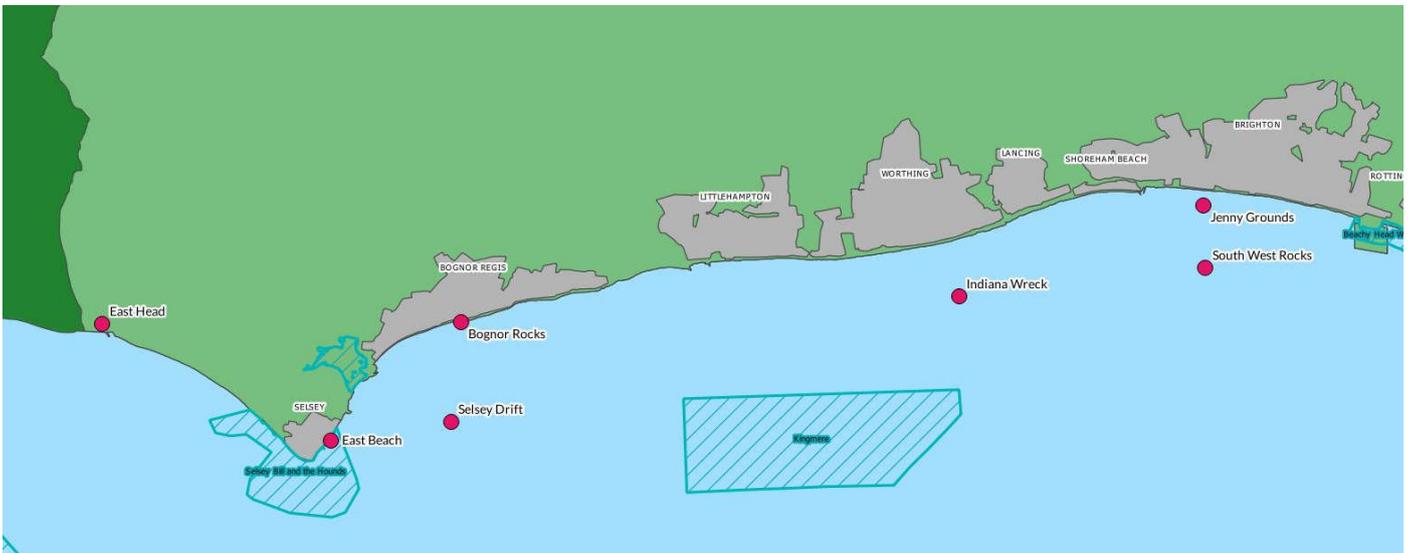
A common stingray flies amongst the seaweeds.

Right:

A snakelocks anemone nestled in the cobbles.

Both captured in shallow waters at East Beach, Selsey





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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Seasearch diving and training events were cancelled for 2020. However, we did receive a handful of forms from keen individuals who undertook some surveys in their personal activities during the break between lockdowns over the summer.

A total of ten forms were received for Sussex, all off the West Sussex coast. Across these forms, a total of 102 taxa were recording from 225 records; although this is far fewer than previous years, it is still a good number of records for so few surveys!

Most sites this year were shallow (<20m), the deepest being South-West Rocks at 14m.

Interestingly, the most commonly recorded species this year was the brown seaweed, *Chorda filum* (see image). This reflects the fact that many of our surveys this year were shallow and close to the coast.

Other commonly recorded species were snakelocks anemones, *Anemonia viridis*, edible crabs, *Cancer pagurus*, and dahlia anemones, *Urticina felina*.

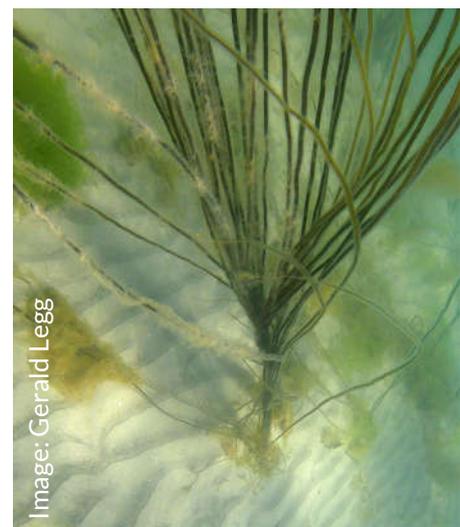


Image: Gerald Legg

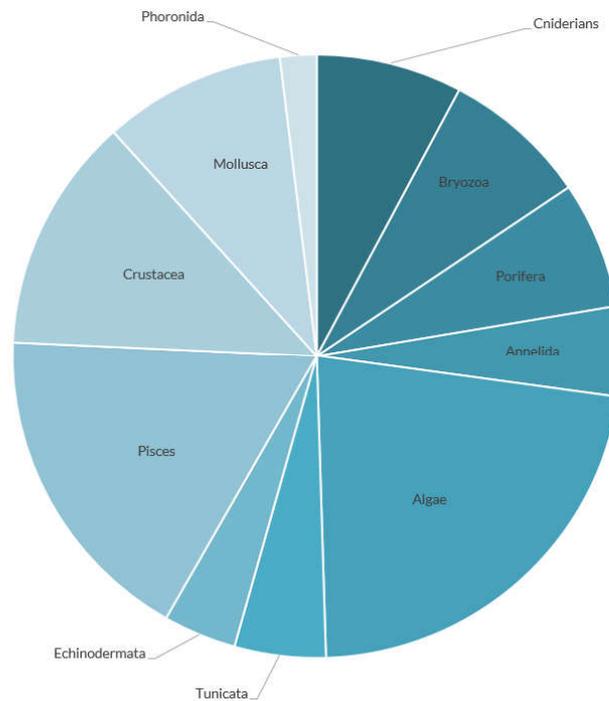


Chart illustrating the number of species in each taxonomic grouping.

Algae: ~23 species, including mermaids tresses, *Chorda filum*, Irish Moss, *Chondrus crispus*, and sea oak, *Halidrys siliquosa*.

Pisces: ~18 species, including thornback ray, *Raja clavata*, black bream, *Spondyliosoma cantharus*, and conger eel, *Conger conger*.

Crustacea: ~13 species, including edible crab, *Cancer pagurus*, common spider crab, *Maja brachydactyla*, and velvet swimming crab, *Necora puber*.

Mollusca: ~10 species, including including slipper limpet, *Crepidula fornicata*, blue mussel, *Mytilus edulis*, and common cuttlefish, *Sepia officinalis*.

Cnidaria: ~8 species, including snakelocks anemone, *Anemonia viridis*, plumed hydroid, *Plumularia setacea*, and dahlia anemone, *Urticina felina*.

Bryozoa: ~8 species, including sea mat, *Membranipora membranacea*, hornwrack, *Flustra foliacea*, and orange pumice, *Cellepora pumicosa*.

Porifera: ~7 species, including shredded carrot sponge, *Amphilectus fucorum*, goosebump sponge, *Dysidea fragilis*, and boring sponge, *Cliona celata*.

Tunicata: ~5 species, including sea grapes, *Molgula* spp., star ascidian, *Botryllus schlosseri*, and *Ascidiella scabra*.

Annelida: ~4 species, keel worms, *Spirobranchus* spp., and lug worm, *Arenicola* sp.

Echinodermata: ~4 species, including common starfish, *Asterias rubens*, brittle star, *Ophiothrix fragilis*, and green sea urchin, *Psammechinus miliaris*.

South-West Rocks

50°47.60N, 00°12.49W

This site is an outcrop of the chalk reef system that extends along this stretch of coast. The outcrops sit amongst areas of mixed ground.

Mixed red and brown algae grow on the top of the chalk reef, with short animal turf present on the sides. This site attracts lots of mobile life including many fishes, cuttlefish and jellyfish.

Bognor Rocks

50°46.70N, 00°41.38W

Rocky sandstone reef and boulders sitting amongst patches of sand and gravel. The rocky outcrops are covered in mixed seaweeds on the top surfaces and animal turf on the sides.

Piddocks bore into the soft rock and various crab species were seen hiding amongst the seaweeds.

Selsey Drift “The Park”

50°44.24N, 00°41.79W

Undertaken as a drift dive, this site is very mixed ground, including cobbles and pebbles and patches of sand / gravel. Mixed seaweeds and short animal turf is present where the sediment is stable enough.

Animal life, including various crabs, anemones and fish were seen here.

Right: A spotted ray flies over the shingle



Image: Claude Annels

East Beach, Selsey

50°43.83N, 00°46.42W

This site is mostly shingle with diverse algal cover, including *Chorda filum* and *Halidrys siliqua*. Mobile life including gobies and wrasse were present at this site.

Below (left): Mixed seaweed on cobbles and pebbles.



East Head

50°46.80N, 00°55.22W

An almost level sandy seabed with occasional pebbles and patches of *Chorda filum*.

Small fish were present, including juvenile corkwing wrasse, small bass and shoals of sand smelt.

Above (right): *Chorda filum* with fluffy hydroids attached.



During 2019, the Help Our Kelp partnership was formed between Sussex Wildlife Trust, Blue Marine Foundation, Marine Conservation Society, and Big Wave TV.

Since then, we have successfully lobbied to put the Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority's nearshore trawling byelaw in place - it was signed by the Secretary of State on 22nd March 2021.

This means our restoration project can truly begin, and we're looking forward to undertaking some Seasearch dives which compliment the research being undertaken for this project.



Image: Dan Smale

Above:

Map illustrating the extend of Sussex IFCA's nearshore trawling byelaw in West Sussex

© Big Wave Productions

Left:

A healthy, thriving kelp forest

A Huge Thank You...



Many thanks to all those who contributed to Seasearch in Sussex in 2020:

Claude Annels, Chris Bohea, Simon Foster, Gerald Legg and Sarah Ward.

Additional thanks to all those who kindly shared their images and footage, and to Gerald Legg for data entry and assistance with reporting.

Keep in touch

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Seasearch is a partnership between the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), The Wildlife Trusts, statutory nature conservation bodies and others, co-ordinated nationally by MCS and co-ordinated and delivered locally in England by Wildlife Trust and MCS local co-ordinators. Seasearch in Sussex is coordinated by Sussex Wildlife Trust.

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Sussex
Wildlife Trust