

Seasearch training

In 2013 we trained 57 divers on various Seasearch courses, enabling them to learn to identify new species and actively participate in conserving their local marine environment. The following people completed their training dives and gained their qualifications:

Observer
Hazel Selley
John McDonnell
Lizi Miller

Surveyor
Cat Wilding
Richard Morton



Welcome new Seasearchers!

During 2013 we have encouraged experienced divers to get involved with Seasearch, to engender interest in the Observer qualification.

John Yarrow has been an active diver for 16 years, is a keen underwater photographer, and was excited to get involved with Seasearch despite having missed the training for 2013. He says "If it had a face or could be regarded as food then it attracted my attention on a dive. All the other stuff, squidgy blobs and weedy bits, was just background. Then a few months back I responded to an article in Diver Magazine calling for divers to become involved with Seasearch..."

Phylum	Number of species recorded
Seaweeds	104
Sponges	50
Cnidarians	84
Worms	26
Molluscs	69
Crustaceans	24
Arthropods	5
Bryozoans	30
Echinoderms	21
Vertebrates	97
Seagrass	1
Other	8

Taking part in Seasearch can enhance your diving, enabling you to enjoy different aspects of the sport at the same time as taking an active part in conservation. John continues, "The Seasearch team have made me feel most welcome. Their enthusiasm is infectious and I can't wait to be able to spot, and perhaps even identify, a sea squirt for myself. One day I might even learn a Latin name or two!"



Tompot blenny.
Photo by John Yarrow

Cornwall Seasearch Surveys - Summary report 2013



Pink sea fingers. Photo by Trudy Russell.



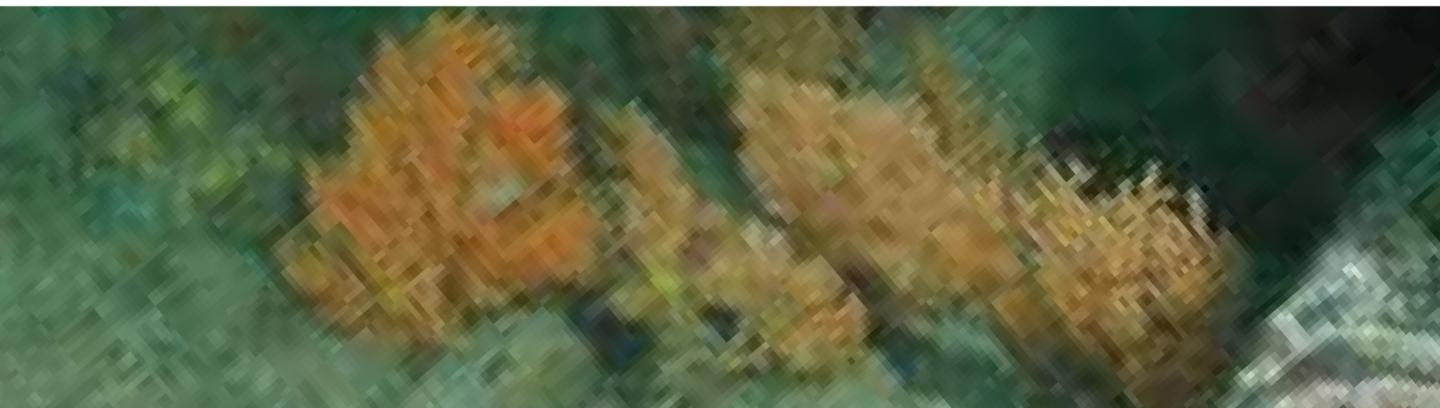
Nudibranch *Polycera quadrilineata*. Photo by Rich Morton



Plaice face. Photo by John Yarrow



Cuttlefish. Photo by John Yarrow



Pink sea fan forest. Photo by Keith Hiscock



Grey Seal. Photo by Nicola Faulks



Bloody Henry Star fish. Photo by Cat Wilding

To get involved in Seasearch please contact catherine.wilding@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk or visit our website www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/seasearch

These survey dives were conducted as part of the national Seasearch Programme. Many volunteers took part in these surveys during 2013, and we would like to thank all involved. Seasearch is a volunteer underwater survey project for recreational divers to actively contribute to the conservation of the marine environment. For details of Seasearch visit www.seasearch.org.uk. For details of Seasearch in Cornwall visit www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk. This report has been prepared by Catherine Wilding. Financial support for the production of this report and for data entry was provided by: PANACHE, CWT, and MCS.



Cornwall Seasearch 2013

A total of 82 Seasearch dives were carried out in 2013, involving 37 recorders. This produced records for 534 species, with 4,222 records in Cornwall in total. This represents an increase of 27% in the number of dives, and a 42% increase in the total number of records compared with 2012!

Manacles MCZ

Excitingly now one of Cornwall's first Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ's), surveys on the manacles rewarded keen divers with sightings of the tiny and highly camouflaged pink sea fan nudibranch, ling (*Molva molva*), and the beautiful, large burrowing anemone *Cerianthus loydii*.



Cerianthus loydii by Cat Wilding

Newquay rMCZ and Padstow MCZ

During the mid-summer heat-wave a team of Seasearchers were pleased to cool off in the waters of Padstow Bay, where they collected records for the area, which has since been designated as an MCZ. Intrepid divers also braved the lumpy swell to gather data within Newquay recommended MCZ, which as yet remains undesignated. Our records will strengthen the case for protection of this site, with evidence of rich sponge diversity including large boring sponges, elephant hide sponges, yellow hedgehog sponges and large potato crisp bryozoans. Some lucky divers were also treated to a sighting of a huge bull seal!

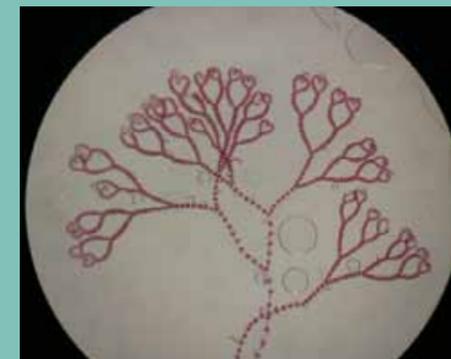


Yellow hedgehog sponge by Cat Wilding



Looe Bioblitz

Seasearch divers joined a host of other conservation organisations to record wildlife at Looe over a consecutive 24 hour period in June. From bats to barnacles, a total of 1,142 species were found, and a dive which took place within the now designated Looe and Whitsand Bay Marine Conservation Zone found a wealth of seaweed species which were identified after the dive in the field laboratory.



Banded pincer weed *Ceramium* spp. Photo by Cat Wilding

Fowey's "Clean Bottom" non-natives survey

The Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS) hosts the Investigate Invasives Project, which aims to find out more about which non-native species have colonised our waters, and to monitor their spread around our coastlines. Non-native species can potentially be a big problem if they become "invasive"- spreading uncontrollably when they arrive in a place with no natural predators to keep them in check. This can have dire environmental and economic consequences, as native species may be out competed, vulnerable prey stocks may be depleted, fisheries and aquaculture damaged, and as in the case of the prolific carpet seasquirt (*Didemnum vexillum*) entire pontoons sunk by the mass of the organisms!

Seasearch divers have continued their involvement with this important project, by completing surveys of pontoons in the Fowey estuary, supported by the Fowey Harbour Commissioners. A total of 5 different non-native species were found, including the compass seasquirt (*Asterocarpa humilis*) which is a recent arrival not previously recorded at Fowey.

The data collected will be used to broaden our knowledge and help to reduce their spread by raising awareness. For more information on the project visit www.ercis.org.uk/invasivespecies.



Double invasion: an orange tipped seasquirt growing on a breeding stack of slipper limpets, found in Fowey. Both species are becoming a frequent sight to seasearchers. Photo by Lisa Rennocks.

Hydroid hunting in Falmouth

An advanced level training course attracted Seasearch divers from around the country to survey the current swept reefs of Falmouth Bay, in search of hydroids and their tiny, brightly coloured predators the nudibranches. A total of 14 hydroid and 10 nudibranch species were found, and divers learned which nudibranch species are associated with specific hydroid hosts.



An elegant Antenna hydroid. Photo by Trudy Russell



The nudibranch *Crimora papillata* by Cat Wilding