

Norfolk Seasearch Report Summary 2005

Despite the inclement weather conditions this season due to prevailing northeast winds the third year for Norfolk Seasearch has seen a boost to our marine recordings for Norfolk with an ever increasing species list. Further exploration of the varied marine habitats to be found off our shores include the "chalk gullies" off Sheringham (the only chalk habitat to be found between Flamborough and Kent) and the many wrecks forming artificial reefs at varying depths and distances offshore.

Training

The year started in April with a second "Seasearch Observer" training course taking place at Gildenburg Dive Centre. The course ran by Paul Biggin from the South East Marine Conservation Society covered marine ID and diving survey techniques. Eight divers attended from local dive clubs and together with the eight divers trained through North Norfolk dive club at Holt the year before brings the total number of trained divers to sixteen.

A course ran in Suffolk by Josie Pegg meant a further ten divers from Ipswich carried out their qualification dives on the popular dive sites off North Norfolk this year.

The group plans to run a further observer course and a more in-depth Surveyor course in 2006.

Photographic Display

This year we managed to obtain a display board on loan from MCS head office and were able to put together a photographic selection of marine life to be found on Seasearch dives.

In February the display started its tour at The Green Quay Environment Centre in Kings Lynn, moving in the spring to the Blakeney Point National Trust Centre at Morston. Thanks go to Paul Naylor for the use of his photos from Seasearch dives here last year and to North Norfolk dive club members on Seasearch dives.

With funding in 2004 from English Nature the group were able to purchase a digital underwater camera and housing. This has been of great use in recording and identification on Seasearch dives. With the help of Dr Hamond, the marine recorder for Norfolk we have been able to authenticate our findings and provide information for display use and education.



Long Spined Sea Scorpion - RB

Photos and reports for Norfolk Seasearch have been uploaded onto the group's club page available on-line. Access to the group page can be found on:

www.smartgroups.com/groups/Norfolkseasearch

Norfolk Seasearch Dive Sites

North Norfolk is a much underrated dive location with a rich and abundant diversity of habitats and dive locations to be found close to shore and up to 30 miles offshore from depths of 6metres up to 30 metres on some wreck sites.

There is very little survey recording along the East coast and through the Norfolk surveys we hope to raise awareness of Norfolk as a Marine Site within the SAC (Special Area of Conservation).

This year 15 Observer surveys were completed making a total of 36 since the start of the project. We surveyed 5 wreck sites returning to 2 wrecks throughout the season and continued our exploration of the chalk reef sites.

Wreck Site "Rosalee", Weybourne

52 degrees 57.20 N 01 degrees 08.20 E
Dates: 18/08/05 and 08/09/05

The wreck of the Rosalee is frequently dived by North Norfolk Divers throughout the season on day and night visits and is a popular site for trainees due to the shallow depth and closeness to shore. Lying at 6-10 metres dependant on the state of the tide it lies approx. 400m offshore on a seabed of mainly sand and pebbles.

The wreckage from 7 down to 9 metres is covered predominantly in a layer of red seaweed (*Calliblepharis ciliata*), green seaweed (*Cladophora* spp.) and hornwrack (*Flustra foliacea*). The animal turf dominating on the structure here are plumose anemones (*Metridium senile*), dead men's fingers (*Alcyonium digitatum*) and various species of sponge.

On sheltered surfaces and wreckage close to the seabed can be found large areas of peacock worm (*Sabella pavonina*) and the light bulb seasquirt (*Clavelina lepadiformis*). A brown and white anemone found mainly on the sandy bottom alongside the larger dahlia anemone is *Sagartia troglodytes*.

The area is rich in Crustaceans, edible crab, lobster, velvet swimming crab (mating) squat Lobsters, hermit crabs and a slender spider crab (*Macropodia* spp.)

Common Starfish and both types of prawn, the Common and Northern Prawn were also observed.

The Rosalee seems to be particularly well endowed with the colourful purple nudibranch (or sea slug) *Flabellina pedata*. On previous night dives hundreds can be observed over the survey site clinging to the red seaweeds. As with many wrecks the site attracts a large shoal of bib with solitary adults and groups of juveniles seen. Also seen were ballan wrasse, corkwing wrasse, long spined sea-scorpion and an unidentified species of sand goby. Photographs were taken of and later identified as that of the colourful dragonet.

Wreck Site "The Granta"

53 degrees 14.69 N 01 degrees 19.320 E
Date: 18/08/05

This Second World War wreck is located 17 miles north east of Weybourne and lies at a depth of 27 metres rising to 23 metres on a mainly sandy seabed.

As is typical of these deep wrecks, due to the lower light penetration and the reduced swell, there is a predominance of and huge variety of sponges. Of these could be identified the "golf ball" type of sponge most likely *Suberites carnosus*, the goosebump sponge (*Dysidea fragilis*) and what appears to be shredded carrot sponge (*Esperiopsis fucorum*).

A thick covering of the hydroid *Nemertesia antennina* was present together with the bryozoans sea mat and *Bugula plumosa*. Covering the wreck is a turf of dead men's fingers and plumose anemones.

On the sandy bottom can be found dahlia anemones. Commonly found here as on other deep wrecks is the common sea urchin, bloody Henry and a few common starfish. One sunstar was also discovered on the sandy seabed. Large numbers of velvet swimming crabs, common lobster, edible crabs and painted topshells can be found.

A large shoal of bib and poor cod hovered over the wreck together with a passing shoal of mackerel. On the sandy wreck bottom could be found the long-spined sea scorpion.

Back on the surface a common seal paid a glancing visit close to the RIB!

Sheringham Chalk Reefs

52 degrees 56.968 N 01 degrees 12.263 E

Date: 01/09/05

The chalk reefs at Sheringham run close to shore to half a mile seaward and run in a north/south direction. The ridges vary from less than half a metre to just over 2 metres in height and 1 to 2 metres in width.

They comprise a solid chalk bottom in some and in others, a sand and gravel bottom interspersed with boulders and flint nodules. The top surfaces are covered in a thick layer of red seaweed interspersed with green seaweed and red encrusting coralline algae. The animal turf found along the gullies consists of sponges including mermaids glove (*Haliclona oculata*) and *Dysidea fragilis*. The Cnidaria present include dead men's fingers (*Alyconium digitatum*), plumose anemone (*Metridium senile*) and dahlia anemone (*Urticina felina*) The shallow shore beadlet anemone was also identified.

An unexplained phenomenon was a covering of what appeared to be broken down dark grey sponge fragments, which floated with the swell in the bottoms of the gullies.

This habitat exhibits a rich and diverse range of marine life in a small area of chalk ridge. In a 4 metre length of gully could be found 4 species of Crustacea, the common lobster (especially a large number of juveniles), many squat lobsters (*Galathea squammifera*), spider crabs (*Inachus* sp.) and the pink or northern prawn (*Pandalus*

montagu). The common prawn (*Palaemon serratus*) could be found in small crevices. Peacock worms and common starfish were present in large numbers.

Fish species recorded include:

Bib	(<i>Trisopterus luscus</i>)
Long Spined Sea Scorpion	(<i>Taurulus bubalis</i>)
Corkwing Wrasse	(<i>Crenilabrus melops</i>)
Butterfish	(<i>Pholis gunnellus</i>)
Painted Goby	(<i>Pomatoschistus pictus</i>)
Two Spotted Goby	(<i>Gobiusculus flavescens</i>)
Conger Eel	(<i>Conger conger</i>)
Ling	(<i>Molva molva</i>)
Dragonet	(<i>Callionymus lyra</i>)
Saithe	(<i>Pollachius virens</i>)
Poor Cod	(<i>Trisopterus minutus</i>)
Ballan Wrasse	(<i>Labrus bergylta</i>)

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exploring the undersea world