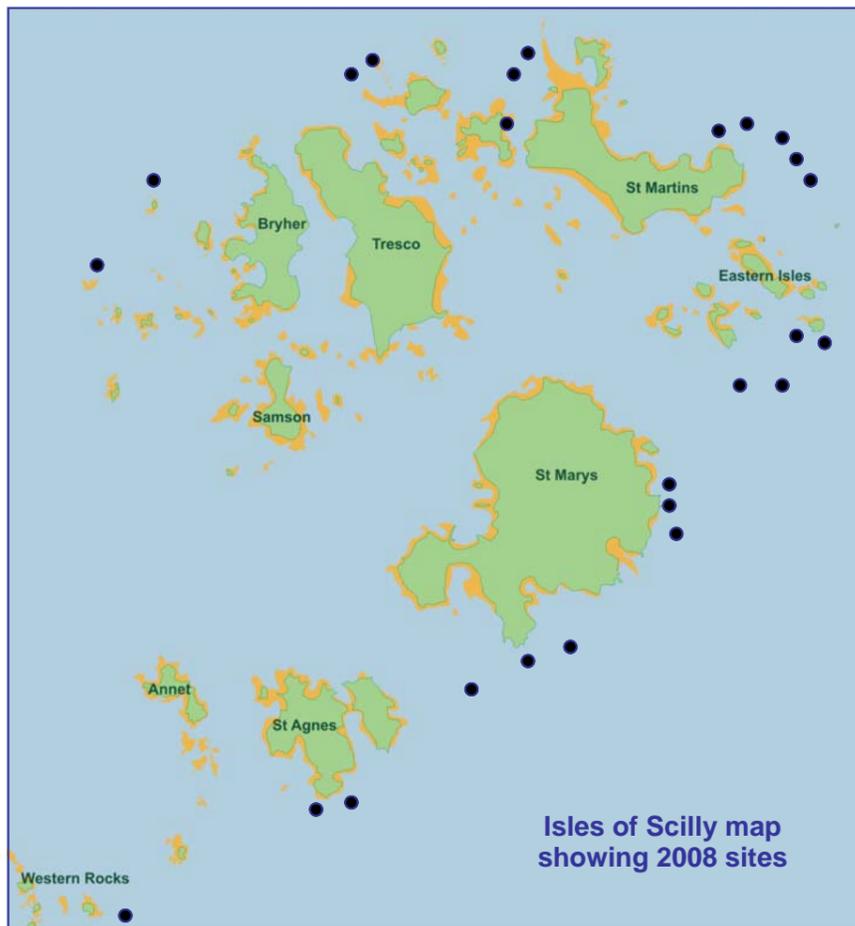


Surveys from recent years have covered a total of 31 sites. In 2008 forms were received from the Seasearch survey week (September) and from individual divers from two other weeks (May & July). This report is compiled using the results from 12 Surveyor forms and 24 Observer forms covering 25 different sites, 11 of which were previously unsurveyed by Seasearch. Sites reflect the prevailing westerly winds with most on the south, east and north of the islands. Underwater habitats were mixed, with rocky reef, boulders, sediments and wrecks all represented.



dictated to some extent the species noted. Most had underwater cameras which proved an invaluable tool in identification of certain species. The table on page 4 shows totals of species recorded.

BAP species were especially targeted - pink sea fan, sunset cup coral and eelgrass sites in particular. The team also recorded several south western species and some rare species. Recorders were Seasearch tutors, experienced Surveyors and Observers with one trainee Observer. Their varied marine biological expertise



BAP species were recorded as follows:

Sunset cup coral was verified at a new site at South Menawethan having been reported earlier in the year by another Seasearch diver and was also recorded at Gap Point and Wingletang Ledges.

Stalked jellies were plentiful on the eelgrass in Tean Sound and at least two distinct species were photographed and recorded.

Eelgrass beds in Tean Sound were thick and healthy despite a coating of sea squirt on many leaves. The eelgrass gave shelter to many small fish including 15 spined stickleback, clingfish and short-spined sea scorpion.

Pink sea fans were recorded from 10 sites, generally as occasional. On



Spanish Ledges below 30m they were both large and frequent. In general the sea fans recorded were healthy. Some had the false cowrie *Simnia patula* on them and several white fans were also seen. Sea fan nudibranchs *Tritonia nilsodnheri* were also recorded on many.

Sea fan anemones were found on fans at 4 sites (photo page 4).

Cod *Gadus morhua* and **anglerfish** *Lophius piscatorius* were each recorded once.

Other species

Seaweeds being seasonal were recorded mostly in May and July. By September they were beginning to die off and identification was more difficult. However golden kelp, *Laminaria ochroleuca*, (a SW species) was recorded on many sites where there was kelp.

Many sponges had a covering of juvenile brittlestars and seven-armed starfish recently settled, many of these tiny starfish also being evident in the water



column whilst divers carried out safety stops. The hedgehog sponge *Polymastia boletiformis* was particularly prevalent amongst sponges. Scarlet and gold cup coral, *Balanophyllia regia*, was recorded at Gap Point, Minihaha and Menawethan. Devonshire cup coral *Caryophyllia smithii* was common on many sites and the variety of sizes points to good recruitment.

By September oaten pipe and other hydroids appeared ragged, having been eaten by predators such as nudibranchs. The nudibranch *Discodoris rosi* was recorded (at two sites) for the first time in the British Isles, previously only known as far north as France. Nationally rare *Doris sticta* was also recorded at two sites. In total 23 nudibranch species were recorded.

Crustacea, as in previous years, were not frequently recorded. Fish were recorded on most sites as occasional or rare. The red blenny *Parablennius ruber* was more plentiful than on previous trips and recorded from 4 sites (picture front page).

Sites surveyed in 2008 are listed here with a brief description and any notable species that were recorded.

•South Gilstone	vertical walls & gullies - one pink sea fan, many football sea squirts, nudibranch <i>Doris sticta</i>
•Peter's Rock	sloping & vertical reef - red blenny, nudibranch <i>Discodoris rosi</i>
•Tean Sound	shallow sedimentary site - eelgrass, stalked jellies, many anemones (photo above), clingfish, 15 spined stickleback (photo front page), short-spined sea scorpion
•Gap Point	silt covered bedrock & boulders - sunset cup corals, scarlet & gold cup corals, Devonshire cup corals
•Ridge High Corner	sheer bedrock wall with boulders at base - football sea squirts, yellow cluster anemones
•Menawethan	bedrock & boulders - scarlet & gold cup corals, Atlantic grey seals
•Trenemene	stepped ledges & steep gullies - jewel anemones abundant
•Plympton	wreck site - pink & white sea fans, sea fan anemones
•Trinity Rock	walls & gullies - pink sea fans
•Flat Ledges	steep sided walls, ledges & deep gullies - anglerfish
•King Cadwallen	wreck site - 5 species of nudibranch
•North Chapel Rock	wreck & reef - wide range of species including white sea fan
•Men-a-vaur	surge gully - wide range of species
•Wingletang	walls & blocks with gullies & crevices - sunset cup corals
New sites	
•Black Rocks	rocky reef - range of algae
•Golden Ball	rocky reef - varied species
•Westward Ledge	rocky reef - many cnidarians
•South Menawethan	vertical wall with crevices & boulders at base - golden kelp, sunset cup corals, nudibranch <i>Doris sticta</i>
•Scilly Reef	wreckage with vertical walls & gullies - red blennies, many species of nudibranch, Atlantic grey seal
•Deep Ledge	walls & pinnacles - golden kelp, 10 species of sponge, cod, red blenny, long gill net set along the reef
•Gall's Stone	rocky reef, sandy gullies & ledges - pink sea fans, sea fan anemones, 14 species of sponge
•Dry Ledge	rocky reef with walls & flat ledges - nudibranch <i>Discodoris rosi</i> (the first British record), snakelocks anemone at depth of 25m, 20 varieties of sponge
•J S Wall	walls, ledges & gullies - nudibranch <i>Favorinus blianus</i> , sea fan, sea fan anemone, slime sponge, red blenny
•Spanish Ledges	steep-sided bedrock pinnacle - large sea fans, sea fan anemone, red blennies, many large potato crisp bryozoans
•Minihaha	steep wall with deep, narrow gully - scarlet & gold cup coral, 6 species of nudibranch



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The table below shows the number of species together with some of the most common, the Biodiversity Action Plan, rare and uncommon species recorded in each phyla.

Phylum	Number of species recorded	Common species	Nationally rare & scarce, BAP & uncommon species
Porifera Sponges	31	Hedgehog sponge Staghorn sponge	<i>Polymastia boletiformis</i> <i>Axinella dissimilis</i> Slime sponge Yellow sponge
Cnidaria Anemones, corals, hydroids	34	Sea beard Dead men's fingers Red fingers Plumose anemone Elegant anemone Jewel anemone Devonshire cup coral	<i>Nemertesia spp</i> <i>Alcyonium digitatum</i> <i>Alcyonium glomeratum</i> <i>Metridium senile</i> <i>Sagartia elegans</i> <i>Corynactis viridis</i> <i>Caryophyllia smithii</i> Pink sea fan Sea fan anemone Sunset cup coral Stalked jelly Stalked jelly Scarlet & gold cup coral Yellow cluster anemone
Annelida Segmented worms	9	Keelworm	<i>Pomatoceros spp</i>
Crustacea Crabs, lobsters, barnacles	12	Velvet swimming crab Amphipod	<i>Necora puber</i> <i>Jassa falcata</i>
Mollusca Shells, sea slugs	36	Nudibranchs	Nudibranchs <i>Discodoris rosi</i> <i>Doris sticta</i> <i>Favorinus blianus</i> <i>Favorinus branchialis</i>
Bryozoa Sea mats	11	Potato crisp bryozoan Sea mat Cellaria White claw sea moss	<i>Pentapora foliacea</i> <i>Membranipora membranacea</i> <i>Cellaria spp</i> <i>Crisia spp</i>
Echinodermata Starfish, sea urchins, sea cucumbers	9	Brittlestars (juvenile) Spiny starfish Seven-armed starfish	<i>Marthasterias glacialis</i> <i>Luidia ciliaris</i>
Tunicata Sea squirts	17	Orange sea squirt Pink sea squirt	<i>Stolonica socialis</i> <i>Sydnium elegans</i> Football sea squirt <i>Diazona violacea</i>
Pisces Fish	19	Pollack Cuckoo wrasse Goldsinny	<i>Pollachius pollachius</i> <i>Labrus mixtus</i> <i>Ctenolabrus rupestris</i> Cod Anglerfish Short-spined sea scorpion Red blenny
Mammalia Mammals	1	Atlantic grey seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>
Algae Seaweeds	26	Cuvie	<i>Laminaria hyperborea</i> Golden kelp <i>Laminaria ochroleuca</i>
Angiospermae Eelgrass	1	Eelgrass	<i>Zostera marina</i> Eelgrass BAP <i>Zostera marina</i>
Total species	206		



Mixed species
Photo Angie Gall



Red blenny *Parablennius ruber*
Photo Tim Allsop



Sea fan anemones
Amphianthus dornhii
SS



Seasearch divers & skipper



Seasearch is a volunteer underwater survey project for recreational divers to contribute to the conservation of the marine environment. Financial support for the project during 2008 and for the production of this report has been given by Natural England and The Environment Agency.



2008 Isles of Scilly Seasearch Surveys Summary Report

Healthy eelgrass *Zostera marina* in Tean Sound with a well camouflaged 15 spined stickleback *Spinachia spinachia*
Photo Angie Gall