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Seasearch Northern Ireland North Coast Report 2012



Volunteer Seasearch divers from the North Coast and Rathlin Hydroid Hunt with Aquaholics.

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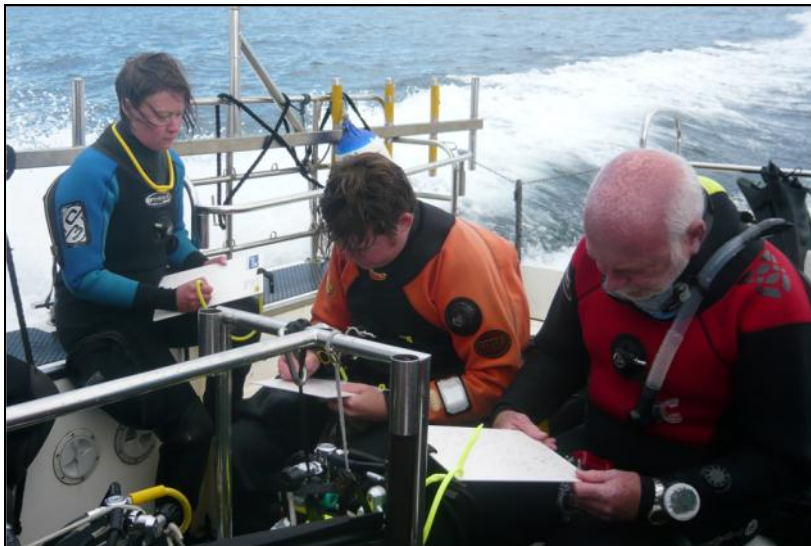
1. Introduction to Seasearch

The aim of Seasearch is to gather information on seabed habitats and associated marine wildlife in Britain and Ireland through the participation of trained volunteer divers and also to raise awareness of marine conservation to the diving community. The scheme is coordinated by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and organised regionally by a series of coordinators in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The objectives of Seasearch are:

1. To encourage the participation of volunteer recreational divers in marine conservation through gathering data, particularly for areas where little data exists or where there is a conservation need.
2. To provide training in recording skills to enable volunteer recreational divers to participate in Seasearch.
3. To make quality assured Seasearch data freely available to partner organisations and the general public.
4. To raise public awareness of the diversity of marine life and habitats in Britain and Ireland through the dissemination of information gathered and the identification of issues arising from it.

Through training and organised dives Seasearch recreational scuba divers are able to survey large areas of the seabed which would otherwise be inaccessible for monitoring authorities. As well as recording marine life and habitats, volunteers record litter or any other man-made impacts that are apparent. All Seasearch Northern Ireland data is deposited at the regional recording centre, CEDAR, at the Ulster Museum (<http://www.nmni.com/cedar>). The data is validated and available freely through the NBN gateway <http://data.nbn.org.uk/>.



Volunteers recording on dive slates following a Seasearch dive.



2. North Coast Survey 2012

The north coast of Ireland is a popular location for recreational scuba diving due to superb marine life, varied geology, visibility and also ship wreck sites. Ecologically it is an important region with diverse marine life due to the geographical position and mixing of cold water from the sub-arctic boreal and warmer southern regions supporting Lusitanian species, giving a great range of species and species which can indicate changes in climate. The region has high economic value to the Northern Irish tourist economy both with national and international visitors. Dive tourism is a valuable component of this with many divers travelling from the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland to dive on the north coast and Rathlin Island.

There are numerous conservation designations within the region, though many are limited to terrestrial or intertidal zones; Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and World Heritage Site (WHS).

Many locations for diving are well-known sites which Seasearch has collected data from for over a ten year period. These records provide a valuable time series of data. Popular sites such as the Blue Pool in Portrush and Portnahapple are excellent places for volunteers to enhance their recording experience as well as providing important temporal data. The Skerries, which are a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), were also surveyed by divers and are a popular recreational diving area. During 2012 many new or previously unrecorded dive sites were targeted by Seasearch to fill gaps in the existing data held for Northern Ireland, these included Boheeshane Bay near Ballintoy, Foul Grounds in Portstewart, Carrickmannon Rock and 1nm north of Pans Rock. In addition The Storks was re-surveyed as it had not been recently recorded.

During August 2012 the Ulster Museum ran a specialist taxonomic workshop on Bryozoans and Hydroids to coincide with the production of the new photographic Seasearch guide for divers. Many experts from the United Kingdom and Ireland attended and also participated in Seasearch diving prior to the course which led to exceptionally high records of invertebrates being recorded at some sites due to the skill level of recorders.

A total of 59 recording forms were received in 2012 for the North Coast area of Northern Ireland.



Dive briefing from local skipper Richard Lafferty from Aquaholics.



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3. Dive sites

Portnapple—Portstewart, 55° 10.833' N, 06° 43.490' W: A sheltered narrow inlet popular for dive training. Kelp dominated with rich algal life, *Sargassum muticum* present. Litter present but this area is regularly cleaned by divers including Aquaholics dive school.

Ramore Head—Portrush, 55° 12.270' N, 06° 39.330' W: Rocky outcrop with a boulder slope, kelp dominated in shallow areas. Good algal list recorded from this site. Some lobster pots were present in the area and discarded fishing line.

Black Rocks—Portrush, 55° 12.000' N, 06° 40.290' W: Rocky seabed covered with kelp and marine life adjacent to sandy area where no life was recorded.

The Skerries (Special Area of Conservation), numerous dives recorded. Small rocky islands close to Portrush rich in marine life.

Ballintoy Harbour, 55° 14.735' N, 06° 22.055' W: Rocky reef and cavern surveyed.

Storks, Dunluce, numerous dives recorded: Exposed rocky outcrops with gullies and large boulders. Dominated by kelp and gullies with abundant squirts and fish species.



The Armed Bullhead/Pogge, *Agonus cataphractus*, photographed by Gavin Maguire at The Storks.

Foul Grounds, Portstewart Bay, numerous dives recorded: Dive over mixed boulder and gravel bottom, rich in marine life. Dominated by hydroids and bryozoans.

Blue Pool, Portrush, 55° 12.516' N, 06° 39.186' W: Rocky overhangs, reef and boulders but significant quantities of marine litter recorded.

The Sard wreck, 55° 11.720' N, 06° 41.703' W: intact wreckage, rocky reef and boulders surveyed, litter recorded.



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Boheeshane Bay, Ballintoy, 55° 14.542' N, 06° 21.067' W, numerous dives recorded: This area was targeted following investigation of seabed mapping data (Joint Irish Bathymetry Survey) which showed potentially interesting underwater features for marine life. Kelp park dominated with rich algal life on rocky limestone. Many areas of the dive had a thin sand covering over a limestone bedrock. The stalked jellyfish priority species *Haliclystus auricular* was recorded.

Carrick-a-rede, 55° 14.524' N, 06° 20.016' W: This is a popular dive site with rocky reef and a rock wall. Rich algal and invertebrate life recorded.

1nm north Pans Rock, 55° 13.037' N, 06° 12.686' W, numerous dives recorded. This area was targeted following investigation of seabed mapping data (Joint Irish Bathymetry Survey) which showed potentially interesting underwater features for marine life. Dominated by mixed hard substrate of boulders, cobbles and coarse gravel. Clumps of *Vesicularia spinosa* and patches of reproductive *Aglaophenia tubulifera*. Good species records from this survey due to experienced volunteers participating and laboratory examination of specimens.

Carrickamannon Rock, 55° 14.070' N, 06° 16.833' W, numerous dives recorded. This area was targeted following investigation of seabed mapping data (Joint Irish Bathymetry Survey) which showed potentially interesting underwater features for marine life. The site is extremely exposed to tidal streams and the rock descends to about 90m on the northern side. The rock slope with kelp descends with abundant byozoan and hydroid turf with seaweeds, sponges and anemones. Good species records from this survey due to experienced volunteers participating and laboratory examination of specimens.

4. Summary

The Seasearch North Coast survey for 2012 has produced a valuable dataset both in the quantity of records and also the quality of the data with detailed and verified species records. Many new sites were targeted which has great value to conservation management of the region. All data is freely available through the National Biodiversity Network <http://data.nbn.org.uk/>.

5. Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to all volunteers and the dive community who have contributed to the Seasearch scheme for Northern Ireland in 2012 and provided the largest number of recording forms to date. Thanks to Aquaholics who supplied boat charters and local knowledge for this survey which has greatly assisted us in assessing new dive sites. Many thanks to Dr Claire Goodwin who has continued to tutor, marshal dives and provide taxonomic expertise to support the programme and the volunteers. We thank NIEA grant aid for its continued financial support for Seasearch which also subsidises some boat costs to volunteers in exchange for their recording forms.



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APPENDIX 1. Summary of forms for the North Coast 2012 Survey.

NI12/003	28/03/2012	Portnhapple, Port-stewart	55° 10.833' N	06° 43.490' W	Charmaine Beer	Survey Form
NI12/025	03/06/2012	Back of Ramore Head	55° 12.270' N	06° 39.330' W	Allison Cartright	Observation Form
NI12/027	04/07/2012	Back of Little Skerrie	55° 13.230' N	06° 38.170' W	Allison Cartright	Observation Form
NI12/028	08/07/2012	Black Rocks, Portrush	55° 12.000' N	06° 40.290' W	Allison Cartright	Observation Form
NI12/029	27/06/2012	Back of The Skerries	55° 13.230' N	06° 38.150' W	Allison Cartright	Observation Form
NI12/035	22/07/2012	Between the 2 Skerries	55° 13.240' N	06° 38.190' W	Allison Cartight	
NI12/042	24/05/2012	Ballintoy Harbour	55° 14.735' N	06° 22.055' W	Darren Johnson	Observation Form
NI12/055	12/08/2012	Storks, Dunluce, Co Antrim	55° 13.225' N	06° 35.475' W	Timothy Tynan	Observation Form
NI12/056	12/08/2012	Foul Grounds, Port-stewart Bay	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.682' W	Timothy Tynan	Observation Form
NI12/057	12/08/2012	Foul Grounds, Port-stewart	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.682' W	Sinead Coll	Observation Form
NI12/058	12/08/2012	Storks, Portstewart Bay	55° 13.255' N	06° 35.424' W	Sinead Coll	Observation Form
NI12/059	12/08/2012	Foul Grounds	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.682' W	Melvyn Heath	Observation Form
NI12/060	12/08/2012	The Storks, Dunluce, Co Antrim	55° 13.245' N	06° 35.278' W	Melvyn Heath	Observation Form
NI12/061	12/08/2012	Fould Grounds, Port-stewart	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.682' W	Gavin Maguire	Observation Form
NI12/062	12/08/2012	The Storks, Dunluce, Co. Antrim	55° 13.245' N	06° 35.278' W	Gavin Maguire	Observation Form
NI12/063	12/08/2012	Foul Grounds, Port-stewart	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.682' W	Padraig Keane	Observation Form
NI12/064	12/08/2012	Foul Grounds, Port-stewart	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.682' W	Simon Johnson	Observation Form
NI12/065	12/08/2012	The Storks, Dunluce	55° 13.255' N	06° 35.424' W	Simon Johnston	Observation Form
NI12/066	12/08/2012	Fould Grounds, Port-stewart Bay	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.682' W	Liz Russell	Observation Form
NI12/067	12/08/2012	The Storks, Dunluce	55° 13.255' N	06° 35.424' W	Liz Russel	Observation Form
NI12/068	12/08/2012	Fould Grounds, Port-stewart Bay	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.682' W	Lorrain Russell	Observation Form
NI12/069	12/08/2012	The Storks, Dunluce, Co Antrim	55° 13.255' N	06° 35.424' W	Lorrain Russell	Observation Form
NI12/070	12/08/2012	Foul Grounds, Port-stewart Bay	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.682' W	Marbeth McKeown	Observation Form



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NI12/071	12/08/2012	The Storks, Dunluce, Co. Antrim	55° 13.255' N	06° 35.424' W	Padraig Keane	Observation Form
NI12/072	12/08/2012	The Storks, Dunluce, Co. Antrim	55° 13.183' N	06° 35.492' W	Michael Chambers	Observation Form
NI12/073	12/08/2012	The Storks	55° 13.183' N	06° 35.492' W	Marbeth McKee-own	Observation Form
NI12/074	12/08/2012	Foul Grounds, Port-	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.368' W	Anne Cummings	Observation
NI12/075	12/08/2012	Storks, Dunluce, Co	55° 13.225' N	06° 35.472' W	Anne Cummings	Observation
NI12/076	12/08/2012	Foul Grounds, Port-stewart Bay	55° 11.445' N	06° 43.682' W	Michael Chambers	Observation Form
NI12/078	12/08/2012	The Storks, Dunluce	55° 13.255' N	06° 35.424' W	Bertie Gault	Survey Form
NI12/081	22/08/2012	Blue Pool, Portrush	55° 12.515' N	06° 39.182' W	Melvyn Heath	Observation Form
NI12/082	22/08/2012	Blue Pool, Portrush	55° 12.515' N	06° 39.182' W	Anne Cummings	Observation Form
NI12/088	16/08/2012	1nm north Pans Rock	55° 13.037' N	06° 12.686' W	Frances O'Sullivan	Observation Form
NI12/089	16/08/2012	1nm north Pan's Rock	55° 13.037' N	06° 12.686' W	Tim Mackie	Survey Form
NI12/090	16/08/2012	1nm north Pans Rock	55° 13.037' N	06° 12.686' W	Emily Priestly and Noel Black	Survey Form
NI12/091	16/08/2012	1nm north Pans Rock	55° 13.037' N	06° 12.686' W	Joanne Porter	Survey Form
NI12/094	16/08/2012	Carrickamannon	55° 14.070' N	06° 16.833' W	Joanne Porter	Survey Form
NI12/095	15/08/2012	Carrickamannon Rock	55° 14.070' N	06° 16.833' W	Emily Priestly and Noel Black	Survey Form
NI12/096	16/08/2012	Carrickamannon	55° 14.070' N	06° 16.833' W	Frances O'Sullivan	Observation
NI12/097	16/08/2012	Carrickmannon	55° 14.070' N	06° 16.833' W	Tim Mackie and Ronnie Snyder	Survey Form
NI12/100	24/08/2012	The Sard, Portrush	55° 11.720' N	06° 41.703' W	Gavin Maguire	Observation Form
NI12/101	27/08/2012	Port-na-happle, Port-stewart	55° 10.857' N	06° 43.416' W	Gavin Maguire	Observation Form
NI12/106	02/09/2012	Boheeshane Bay, Ballintoy	55° 14.542' N	06° 21.067' W	Padraic Kenny	Observation Form
NI12/107	02/09/2012	Boheeshane Bay, Ballintoy	55° 14.542' N	06° 21.067' W	Melvyn Heath	Observation Form
NI12/108	02/09/2012	Boheeshane Bay, Ballintoy	55° 14.569' N	06° 21.293' W	Gavin Maguire	Observation Form
NI12/109	02/09/2012	Boheeshane Bay, Ballintoy	55° 14.557' N	06° 21.034' W	Marbeth McKee-own	Observation Form
NI12/110	02/09/2012	Boheeshane Bay,	55° 14.557' N	06° 21.034' W	Simon Johnston	Observation



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NI12/118	17/06/2012	Carrick-a-rede	55° 14.524' N	06° 20.016' W	Deirdre Greer	Observation
NI12/119	16/08/2012	Carrickamannon	55° 14.070' N	06° 16.833' W	Deirdre Greer	Survey Form
NI12/120	16/08/2012	1 nm N Pans Rock	55° 13.037' N	06° 12.686' W	Deirdre Greer	Survey Form
NI12/125	22/08/2012	Blue Pool, Portrush	55° 12.516' N	06° 39.186' W	Allison Cartright	Survey Form
NI12/126	26/08/2012	Between the Skerries	55° 13.187' N	06° 39.325' W	Allison Cartright	
NI12/127	02/09/2012	Boheeshane Bay,	55° 14.557' N	06° 21.034' W	Sinead Coll	Observation
NI12/131	02/09/2012	Boheeshane Bay, Ballintoy	55° 14.542' N	06° 21.067' W	Deirdre Greer	Survey Form
NI12/139	26/08/2012	Small Skerrie, Por-	55° 13.224' N	06° 39.134' W	Melvyn Heath	Observation
NI12/149	02/09/2012	Boheeshane Bay, Ballintoy	55° 14.542' N	06° 21.067' W	Allison Cartright	Survey Form
NI12/150	30/09/2012	Front of the Skerries	55° 13.351' N	06° 38.451' W	Allison Cartright	Survey Form

