

The table to the right shows the number of species recorded in each taxonomic group and some of the most widely distributed species.

### Sponges

A variety of sponges of different shapes and sizes were recorded, including the large boring sponge *Cliona celata*, the encrusting sponge *Halichondria panicea* and the cup-shaped sponge *Axinella infundibuliformis*.



Sponge, *Cliona celata* RH

### Anemones, corals, hydroids and jellyfish

The most common species in this group was the soft coral *Alcyonium digitatum*, which is found on bedrock and boulders. Anemones were also common, including the dahlia anemone *Urticina felina* and the colourful elegant anemone *Sagartia elegans*.

### Crabs and lobsters

The velvet swimming crab *Necora puber* was found at many of the sites surveyed. Other crustaceans included



Phylum	Common Name	Number of Species	Common species
Porifera	Sponges	25	Elephant's hole sponge <i>Pachyramphus johnstonii</i> Boring sponge <i>Cliona celata</i>
Cnidaria	Anemones, hydroids, corals, jellyfish	42	Dahlia anemone <i>Urticina felina</i> Dead man's fingers <i>Alcyonium digitatum</i>
Nemertea	Ribbon worms	2	Boothace worm <i>Lineus longissimus</i>
Annelida	Segmented worms	18	Sand mason worm <i>Lanice conchilega</i>
Chelicerata	Pycnogonids	1	Velvet swimming crab <i>Necora puber</i>
Crustacea	Lobsters, crabs, barnacles	38	Edible crab <i>Cancer pagurus</i> Swimming crab <i>Libinia depressa</i>
Mollusca	Shells, sea slugs, cuttlefish, octopus	53	Small mussel <i>Musculus discors</i> Octopus <i>Octopoda</i>
Bryozoa	Sea mats	18	Finger bryozoan <i>Alcyonium digitatum</i>
Echinodermata	Starfish, urchins, sea cucumbers	28	Edible urchin <i>Echinus esculentus</i> Common starfish <i>Asterias rubens</i>
Tunicata	Sea squirts	20	Lightbulb sea squirt <i>Cavelina lepadiformis</i>
Pisces	Fishes	42	Dragonet <i>Callionymus lyra</i> Balan wrasse <i>Labrus bergylla</i>
Algae	Seaweeds	32	Encrusting coralline algae <i>Corallinales</i> Kelp <i>Laminaria hyperborea</i>

squat lobsters and, at just two sites, the crawfish *Palinurus elephas*.

### Molluscs

More mollusc species were recorded than any other group. These included bivalves buried in sediments, such as the Arctic quahog *Arctica islandica* which can live for over 100 years. Several areas of rocky seabed were colonised by dense mats of the small mussel *Musculus discors*. Octopus were also seen at several sites.



Sea slug LK

### Echinoderms

The most frequently observed echinoderm was the sea urchin *Echinus esculentus*. The effects of grazing by this species were apparent at many sites. The red and purple sunstars *Crossaster*

*papposus* and *Solaster endeca* were also often seen.

### Fishes

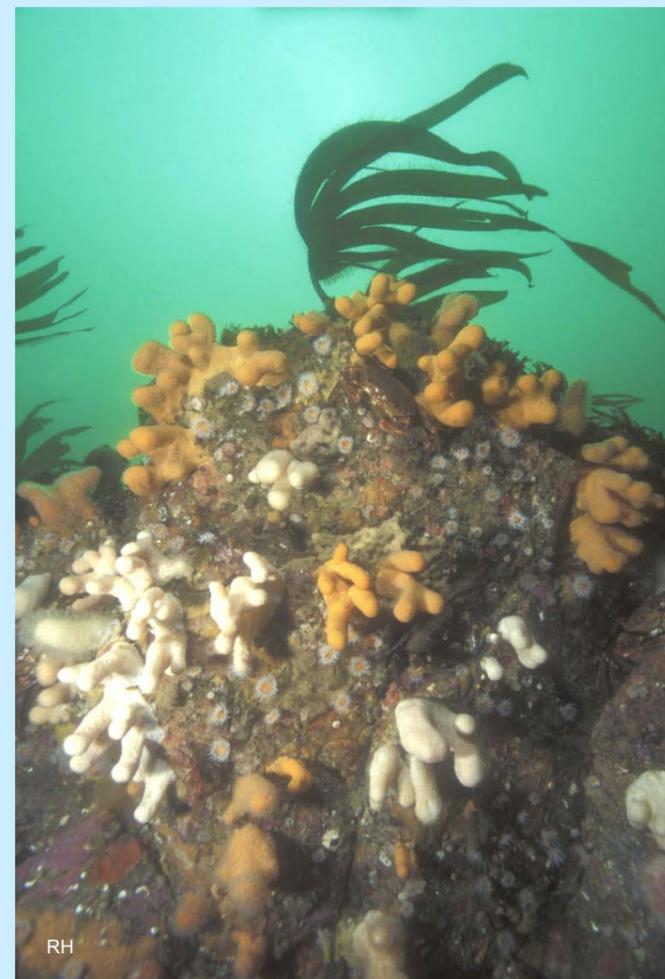
Several fish species were recorded, including wrasse, butterfly, gobies and gadoids.

### Algae

The most common algal species was the encrusting pink alga that thrives in areas affected by urchin grazing. Kelp forests were found in shallow waters, with red algal turfs in slightly deeper water. Maerl (a calcareous pink alga) was found at several sites to the south of the island.



Kelp RH



RH



RH

## Islay Seasearch Survey July/August 1999 Summary report



RH



RH

This Seasearch survey was organised as a part of the Marine Conservation Society's Member's Dives Programme.

Surveyors taking part were: Vicki Billings, Graham Day, Gwen Edwards, Joe Foxcroft, Melanie Harding, Rohan Holt, Lucy Kay, Paul Kay, Michelle Leslie, Brod Mason, Morag McDonald, Kirsten Ramsay, Bill Sanderson, Liz Sides, Dave Trimble, Chris Turkentine, Paul Turkentine, Ben Wells, Chris Wood, Liz Wood, Mark Woomb. We would also like to thank Ian, Gus and Mrs Newman at Dive Islay for looking after all our diving and accommodation needs.

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 2003 and 2004 and for the production of this summary report has been given by:



This report has been prepared by Kirsten Ramsay (February 2004). Photographs are by Rohan Holt, Lucy Kay, Paul Kay and Chris Wood. Data from the survey have also been entered into the Marine Recorder database by Kirsten Ramsay.

In Loch Indaal the arms of many burrowing brittlestars could be seen sticking out of the sand. There were also many razor shells buried in the sand.



Edible crab *Cancer pagurus* RH

Between July 25<sup>th</sup> and August 6<sup>th</sup> 1999 21 divers took part in a two week long Seasearch survey of Islay in the Inner Hebrides. A total of 22 sites were surveyed, mainly around the southern end of the island. This summary report describes some of the sites surveyed and the plants and animals found.

The survey would not have been possible without the help of Ian and Gus Newman and we would like to dedicate this report to the memory of Ian Newman.

Reproduced from Admiralty chart (2168) by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the UK Hydrographic Office (www.ukho.gov.uk). Not to be used for navigation.

The fast currents in the Sound between Islay and Jura give divers an exciting drift dive. The seabed here was colonised by kelp and fairly dense horse mussels *Modiolus modiolus*. Divers also spotted a John Dory *Zeus faber* at this site.



Dense brittlestar beds were found off Knockangle Rock in Laggan Bay.



Dogfish amongst brittlestars CW



RH

Areas of bedrock show a clear zonation in relation to water depth. In shallow water kelp plants predominate, below which there is an area of red algal turf. Below this, light levels are too low for algae to photosynthesise, so the rock is covered by animals such as the soft coral *Alcyonium digitatum*, anemones and hydroids.

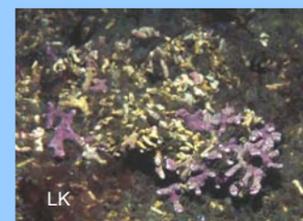
At the site west of Orsay there were deep gullies, the walls of which were colonised by the baked bean sea squirt *Dendrodoa grossularia* and sponge *Clathrina coriacea*. The rarely recorded hydroid *Candelabrum phrygium* was also found here.

Near the Mull of Oa the seabed was colonised in some areas by dense mats of the small mussel *Musculus discors*. This is thought to be a relatively rare habitat in UK waters. In some areas the mussels had attracted large numbers of the common starfish *Asterias rubens*.



RH

To the south of Port Ellen large areas of the seabed consisted of gravel composed of a mixture of live and dead maerl (a hard free living pink alga that forms 'twiglets'), empty shells and stony gravel. This creates a habitat for species such as the burrowing sea cucumber *Neopentadactyla mixta*, the burrowing anemone *Cerianthus lloydii* and the swimming crab *Liocarcinus depurator*.



LK



RH

The site just south of Port Askaig was also influenced by the strong tides. The seabed here was a steep bedrock and boulder slope, extending down to depths of over 40m. The walls in deeper water were covered in a rich variety of animal life, including dead man's fingers *Alcyonium digitatum*, boring sponges *Cliona celata*, elephant's hide sponge *Pachymatisma johnstonia*, with patches of the antenna hydroid *Nemertesia antennina* and the oaten pipe hydroid *Tubularia indivisa*.

Many of the sites dived around Islay showed signs of having been heavily grazed by sea urchins *Echinus esculentus*. This leads to a reduction in cover by the usual animal and plant species, which tend to be replaced by large areas of pink encrusting algae.



PK