

Dorset Seasearch: Annual summary report 2012



The Living Seas team bade farewell to Kathryn Dawson at the start of the year after more than 5 years of sterling work as the DWT Seasearch co-ordinator. She was replaced on a caretaker basis for the season by local diver and ecologist Nick Owen, who has logged hundreds of dives around our local coast and will continue to be spotted in and on the water at Dorset Seasearch events. Seasearch regulars Matt Doggett, Polly Whyte and James Lucey also helped out with the marshalling duties. A new Marine Survey and Data Officer, Charlotte Bolton, was appointed in November 2012 and immediately set to work organising the 2013 Dorset Seasearch programme, full details of which are now available on the national Seasearch website (www.seasearch.org.uk).

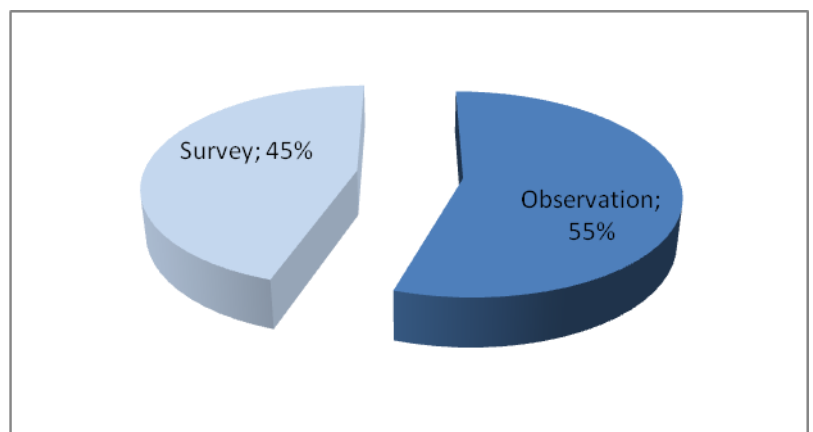
The weather was equally uncertain this summer and resulted in the loss of some of the planned diving days due to high winds. In particular, it was impossible to survey the Boscombe surf reef on any of the scheduled (and repeatedly re-scheduled) dates. However, our intrepid volunteers still managed to dive throughout the Dorset region and we received over one hundred forms as a result, covering specific targets in the recommended MCZ areas as well as the ever-popular and accessible sites such as Swanage Pier and the Lyme Bay wrecks.

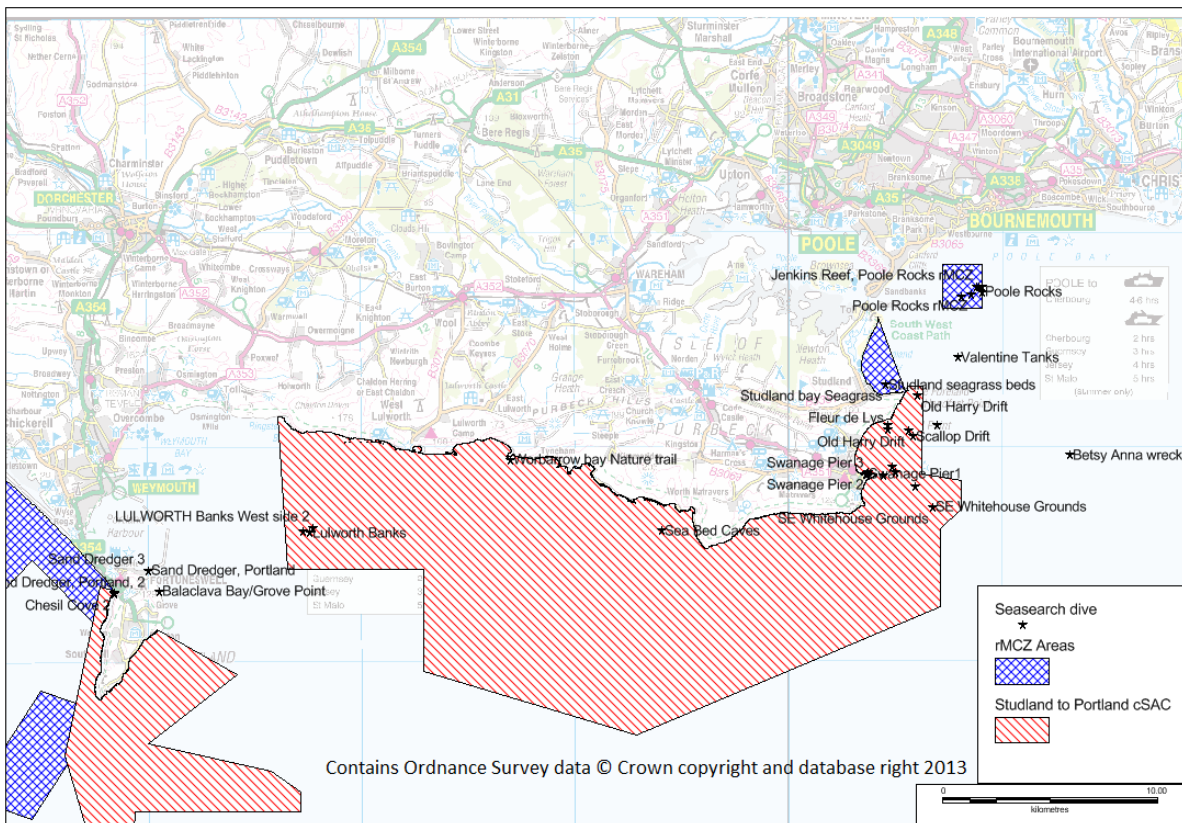
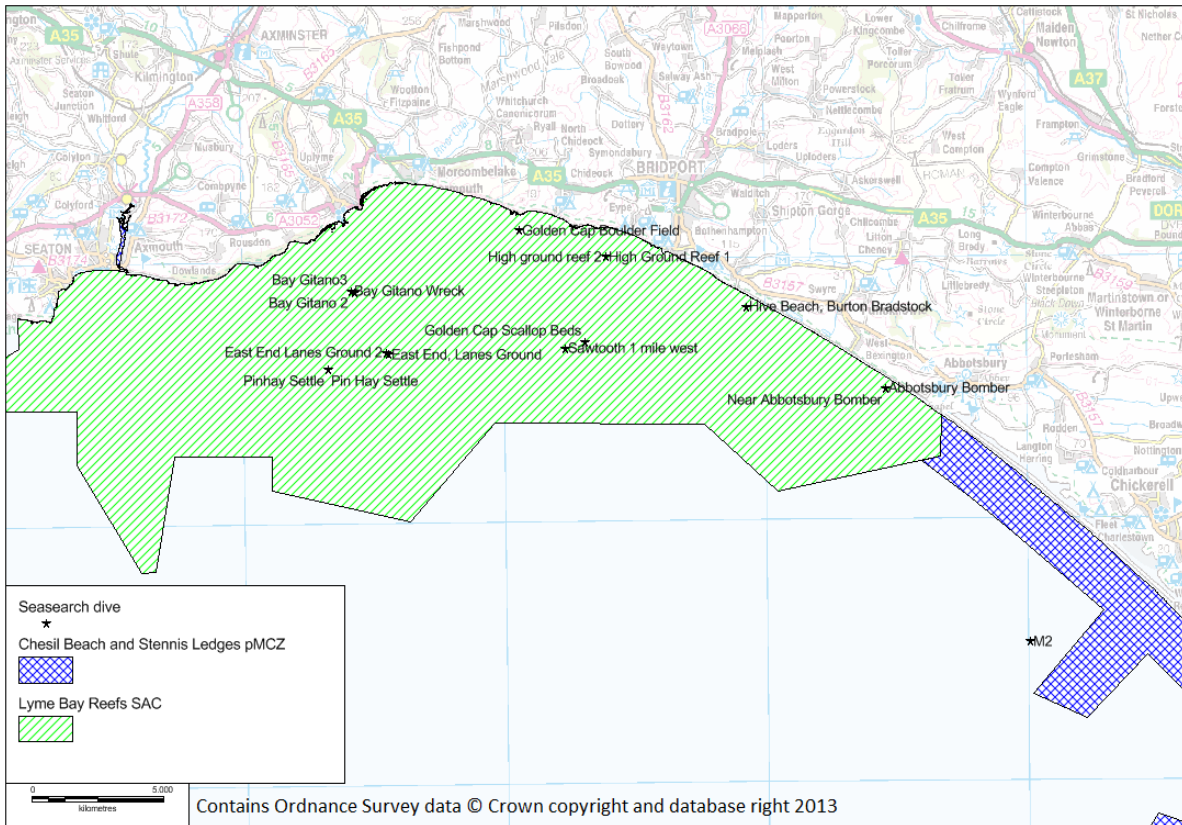
We were all disappointed at the relative lack of progress and ambition of the MCZ designation process, but are investigating how the usefulness and impact of Seasearch data can be maximised to support those MCZs requiring further work before designation. Remember you can become an MCZ friend and make your views heard at www.wildlifetrusts.org/MCZfriends. As in recent years we will be targeting our survey efforts with the help of the DORIS map to identify potentially interesting sites.

For the next couple of years Dorset Wildlife Trust are involved in a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)-supported project known as PANACHE – *Protected Area Network Across the Channel Ecosystem* - taking a leading role in the areas of citizen science and public engagement, which encompasses Seasearch activities.

Recording

A total of 109 forms (60 Observation and 49 Survey) were completed by more than 30 divers during 2012. This led to 59 survey events (created by combining forms when pairs or groups of divers carry out their surveys in essentially the same location) logged in 28 separate locations. The dive locations are plotted on the maps below which also show the boundaries of the marine protected areas (SAC/cSAC/pMCZ).





Training

Despite the uncertainty over personnel, Dorset Seasearch was involved in two Observer courses in April and October 2012 (the latter organised by local Portland dive centre Underwater Explorers). Unfortunately the more advanced

Surveyor course planned for the end of May 2012 had to be cancelled. Charlotte Bolton and Nick Owen are both going through the accreditation process to become Observer tutors in 2013 and will hopefully soon join the existing Dorset tutor tribe of Peter Tinsley, Kathryn Dawson, Josie Pegg and Nick Reed.

2012 Summary

Highlights of the 2012 season included the successful attempts to sample bryozoans for later identification on the July trip out of Weymouth and the sound of pea-sized hailstones at the surface whilst at 19m on the April trip to Lyme Bay!

Interesting species spotted this year included:

- Europe's smallest marine fish, Guillet's goby (*Lebetus guilleti*) – well done to Matt Doggett for spotting that one off Old Harry's Rocks!



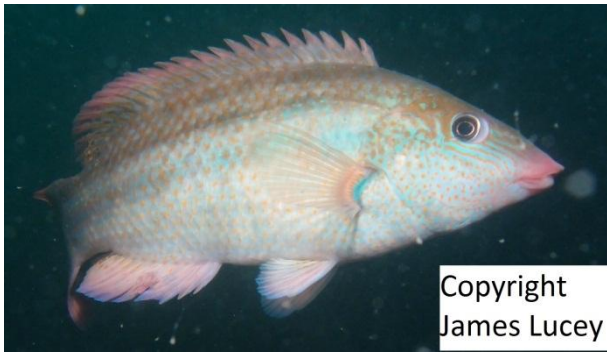
- the policeman anemone (*Mesacmaea mitchellii*) photographed by Polly Whyte at Lulworth Banks



- a probable *Simnia hiscocki* – the false cowrie that lives on pink seafans – at Sawtooth Ledges in Lyme Bay (Matt Doggett's photo was sent to Keith Hiscock for validation)

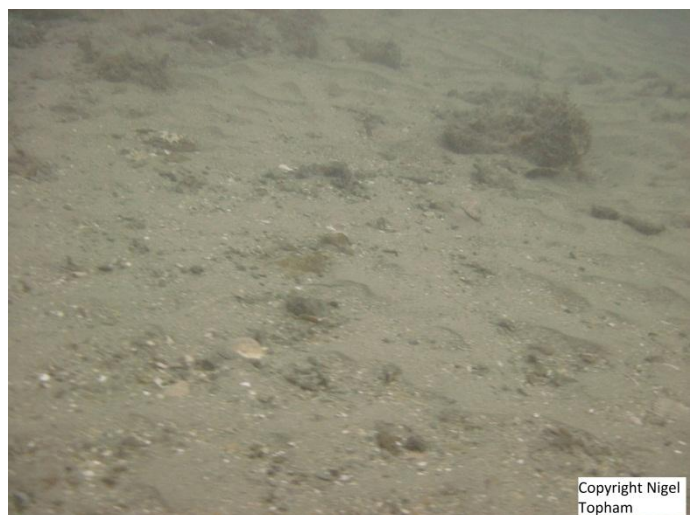


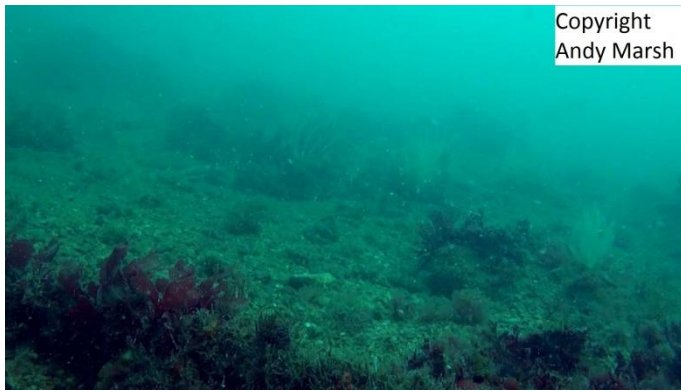
- sightings of Baillon's wrasse (*Symphodus balloni*) (below) at Pinnacle Rock in the Poole Rocks rMCZ area, along with their nests (right).



Using the MNCR 04.05 key (available on the JNCC website at jncc.defra.gov.uk/marinehabitatclassification) the total number of biotopes assigned was 105, of which 47 (44.76%) were identified as circalittoral rock (CR), 22 (20.95%) as infralittoral rock (IR) and 36 (34.29%) as sublittoral sediment (SS). Overall, 99 biotopes (94.29%) were keyed out to Level 3 or greater, of which the five most commonly occurring were CR.HCR.XFa (Mixed faunal turf communities; 16 occurrences), SS.SCS.CCS (Circalittoral coarse sediment; 14), IR.MIR.KR.XFoR (Dense foliose red seaweeds on silty moderately exposed infralittoral rock; 7), CR.HCR.XFa.ByErSp (Bryozoan turf and erect sponges on tide-swept circalittoral rock; 6) and CR.HCR.XFa.ByErSp.Eun (*Eunicella verrucosa* and *Pentapora foliacea* on wave-exposed circalittoral rock; 5). We're very grateful to Lin Baldock for her expertise and assistance in this area.

In addition to the fantastic species images recorded, we received lots of very useful habitat shots (see below for a small selection) that supplement the information received on the forms and can help to assign a biotope (well, a picture is supposed to be worth a thousand words and there isn't an enormous amount of room on the forms!) We use the sketches on the forms in the same way and are now scanning in the sketches to augment the image catalogue.





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Summary of the groups, species and records of conservation interest recorded in Dorset during 2012

N.B. Counts for species numbers includes groups of genera where sightings were not recorded to species level.

Phylum/subphylum	Count of species recorded	Most frequently recorded species (count)	Rare, declining, Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) species
Porifera (sponges)	54	<i>Dysidea fragilis</i> (48), <i>Hemimycale columella</i> (42), <i>Amphilectus fucorum</i> (35)	Nationally scarce species: <i>Adreus fascicularis</i> (1)
Cnidaria (corals, anemones, hydroids)	58	<i>Actinothoe sphyrodeta</i> (35), <i>Alcyonium digitatum</i> (35), <i>Nemertesia antennina</i> (33)	BAP/WCA species: <i>Eunicella verrucosa</i> (12)
Annelida (segmented worms)	23	<i>Bispira volutacornis</i> (46), <i>Pomatoceros</i> sp. (37), <i>Lanice conchilega</i> (13)	
Nematoda (ribbon worms)	1	<i>Trissonchulus</i> sp. (1)	
Arthropoda (crustaceans)	34	<i>Necora puber</i> (42), <i>Cancer pagurus</i> (34), <i>Maja squinado</i> (25)	
Platyhelminthes (flat worms)	1	<i>Prostheceraeus vittatus</i> (1)	
Mollusca (snails, bivalves, sea slugs)	50	<i>Calliostoma zizyphinum</i> (42), <i>Crepidula fornicata</i> (30), <i>Pecten maximus</i> (27)	BAP species: <i>Ostrea edulis</i> (16) Nationally rare/scarce species: <i>Trapania maculata</i> (1), <i>Trapania pallida</i> (4), <i>Tritonia nilsodhneri</i> (2), <i>Simnia hiscocki</i> (1)
Bryozoa (seamats)	41	<i>Flustra foliacea</i> (39), <i>Alcyonidium diaphanum</i> (27), <i>Pentapora foliacea</i> (26)	
Echinodermata (starfish, sea cucumbers)	15	<i>Asterias rubens</i> (11), <i>Henricia</i> sp. (7), <i>Neopentadactyla mixta</i> (5)	
Tunicata (sea squirts)	45	<i>Botryllus schlosseri</i> (38), <i>Phallusia mammillata</i> (20), <i>Styela clava</i> (16)	Nationally scarce species: <i>Phallusia mammillata</i> (20), <i>Pycnoclavella aurilucens</i> (4)
Pisces (bony fish & elasmobranchs)	49	<i>Ctenolabrus rupestris</i> (44), <i>Trisopterus luscus</i> (35), <i>Labrus</i>	BAP species: <i>Molva molva</i> (1), <i>Pleuronectes platessa</i> (3), <i>Raja</i>

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		<i>bergylta</i> (33)	<i>undulata</i> (1)
Algae (seaweed)	90	Coralline algae (various; 40+), <i>Calliblepharis ciliata</i> (19), <i>Plocamium cartilagineum</i> (17)	BAP species: <i>Phymatolithon calcareum</i> (2) Nationally scarce species: <i>Zanardinia typus</i> (1)
Marine plants (angiosperms)	1	<i>Zostera marina</i> (4)	BAP habitat: <i>Zostera marina</i>

Algae continue to be the most widely recorded phylum (in terms of number of species) and notably the generic '(foliose) red algae' is no longer the commonest record in this area, signifying the success of the specialist courses held here in recent years. There has also been a large increase in the number of bryozoan species recorded, reflecting the concerted efforts to collect and identify specimens. We will continue to focus on turf species (bryozoans, hydroids, tunicates) in 2013.

Finally, a big thank you to all the divers, skippers and volunteers who contributed to Dorset Seasearch in 2012: Lin Baldock, Phil Beale, Alison Bessell, Gordon Bird, Andrea Brown, Emma Collins, Matt Doggett, Cara Gammage, Nina Hukkanen, Izzy Imset, Kevin Jones, Cheryl Lombardo, James Lucey, Tim and Carole Mapstone, Mike Markey, Andy Marsh, Mark Ninnim, Jackie O'Dowd, Martin and Sheilah Openshaw, Nick Owen, John Parkin, Fiona Ravenscroft, Sally Sharrock, Dominic Smith, Rod Sterland, Sally Stewart-Moore, Nigel Topham, Terry Walker, Richard White, Polly Whyte, Bob Wiles, Andrew Woods, Richard Yorke, Paula Young. Apologies to anyone whose name has been inadvertently omitted from this list. **We hope to see you again in 2013!**

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Seasearch is a national project involving volunteer sports divers in marine biological surveys. The project is co-ordinated in Dorset by DWT and nationally by the Marine Conservation Society on behalf of the Seasearch Steering Group. For more information on Seasearch and to see all of the partners involved nationally, please visit www.seasearch.org.uk or email info@seasearch.org.uk DWT would like to acknowledge the support and funding received for Dorset Seasearch from the Marine Conservation Society.