

Sussex Seasearch

Summary Report 2021



Above:
Seasearch volunteers on board Mulberry Diver, June 2021

Right:
A Greater Pipefish spotted at the Far Mulberry, October 2021





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2021 was somewhat of a ‘recovery’ year from last years’ lockdown, with many dive operators reducing numbers on boats and other precautionary measures put in place. It’s great that we managed to get some diving in this year - thanks to all that participated!

A total of 12 forms were received for Sussex, all off the West Sussex coast. Across these forms, a total of 193 taxa were recorded from 476 separate records; although this is fewer than previous years, it is still a great number of records for relatively few surveys!

Most sites this year were shallow (<20m), the deepest being Dan’s Reef which reached 25m.

This year, the most commonly recorded species was the painted top shell, *Calliostoma zizyphinum*. This species is nearly always in the top three, and seems to be present on nearly every Sussex Seasearch form received!

Other commonly recorded species were eyelash weed, *Calliblepharis ciliata*, ballan wrasse, *Labrus bergylta*, common starfish, *Asterias rubens*, and brown crab, *Cancer pagurus*.



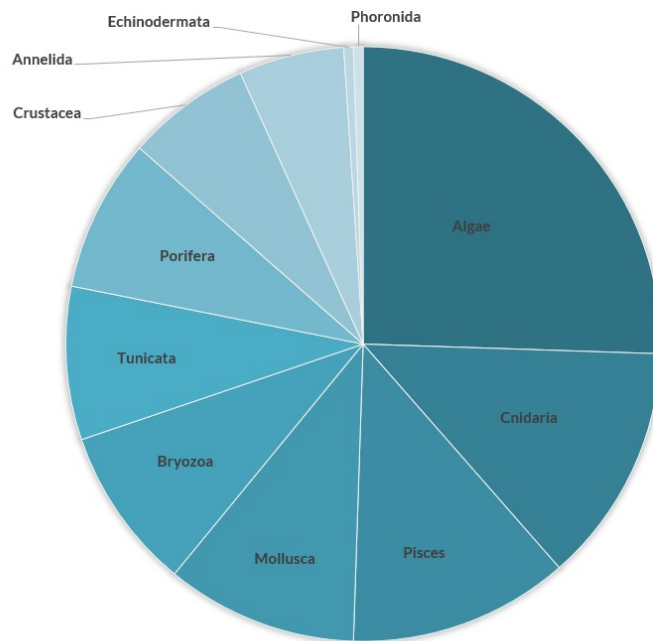


Chart illustrating the proportions of species in each taxonomic grouping.

Algae: ~49 species (133 records), including eyelash weed, *Calliblepharis ciliata*, sea oak, *Halidrys siliquosa*, and red rags, *Dilsea carnosa*.

Cnidaria: ~25 species (46 records), including feather hydroid, *Aglaophenia pluma*, snakelocks anemone, *Anemonia viridis*, and dahlia anemone, *Urticina felina*.

Pisces: ~23 species (65 records), including ballan wrasse, *Labrus bergylta*, tompot blenny, *Parablennius gattorugine*, and pouting, *Trisopterus luscus*.

Mollusca: ~20 species (50 records), including painted top shell, *Calliostoma zizyphinum*, slipper limpet, *Crepidula fornicata*, and grey top shell, *Steromphala cineraria*.

Bryozoa: ~17 species (50 records), including frosted sea mat, *Electra pilosa*, Ross coral, *Pentapora foliacea*, and hornwrack, *Flustra foliacea*.

Tunicata: ~16 species (33 records), including star sea squirt, *Botryllus schlosseri*, leathery sea squirt, *Styela clava*, and club sea squirt, *Morchellium argus*.

Porifera: ~16 species (36 records), including shredded carrot sponge, *Amphilectus fucorum*, breadcrumb sponge, *Halichondria (Halichondria) panacea*, and purse sponge, *Sycon ciliatum*.

Crustacea: ~13 species (38 records), including edible crab, *Cancer pagurus*, common spider crab, *Maja brachydactyla*, and velvet swimming crab, *Necora puber*.

Annelida: ~11 species (14 records), including twin fan worm, *Bispira volutacornis*, coral worm, *Salmacina* sp., and keel worms, *Spirobranchus triqueter*.

Echinodermata: 1 species (8 records), common starfish, *Asterias rubens*.

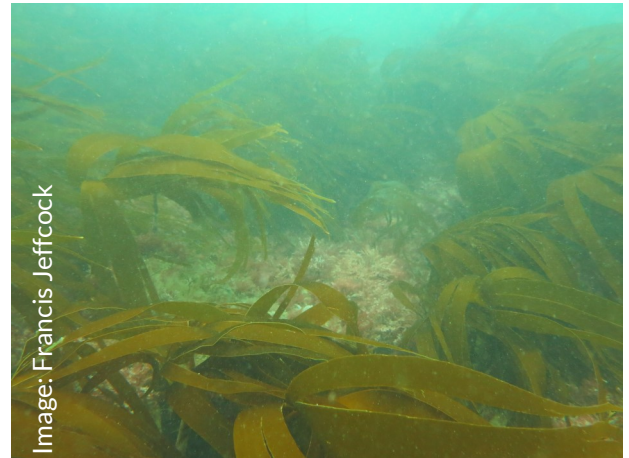
Phoronida: 1 species (2 records), white shoehorse worm, *Phoronis hippocrepi*.

Pullar Bank

50°40.57N, 00°40.25W

This site is bank of mixed sandstone and limestone strata, raised from the seafloor at just 5-6m deep.

The bank proved an interesting site with mixed animal and algal turf and a beautiful kelp park, which is very important for this area. Lots of animals inhabited the area, including a variety of gastropods, fishes, and cuttlefish.



Jenny Grounds

50°49.21N, 00°11.94W

A wide area of mixed ground including boulders, cobbles, pebbles, gravel and sand with broken shell, overlying the bedrock.

Black sea bream could be seen defending their nest sites.

Worthing Lumps

50°44.00N, 00°24.83W

One of the areas that the Kingmere MCZ is reknown for, consisting of chalk outcrops supporting a variety of life. The chalk cliff face is massively perforated by piddocks and the upper surfaces are dominated by mixed red seaweeds.

Nests of breeding black sea bream can be seen around the outcrops on areas of exposed bedrock - but the bream themselves are not seen.

Right: A twin fan worm growing on the underwater chalk cliff.



East Beach, Selsey

50°44.03N, 00°46.25W

This coastal site consists of a gently sloping seabed with mostly mixed sediments and some areas of exposed clay.

The area had rich algal cover of mixed reds and browns, notably sea oak and mermaid's tresses. A few small fish were using the area.

Dan's Reef

50°38.94N, 00°23.74W



A hidden gem of a dive site discovered by the Brighton BSAC Club. The site consisted of outcrops of chalk bedrock exposed between patches of sand and gravel. Short animal turf dominated the hard surfaces, including lots of Ross coral, hornwrack and other species of bryozoan and sponge.

Left: Ross coral, *Pentapora foliacea*

Below (left): Leopard-spotted goby, *Thorogobius ephippiatus*

Below (right): Compass jellyfish, *Chrysaora hysoscella*
(all images Chris Bohea)



Looe Channel

50°42.28N, 00°48.47W

A shallow seabed consisting of a mixture of limestone boulders, areas of exposed reef, and patches of gravel / sand. Algae dominated, including some kelp growth.

Some areas of limited animal turf were also present.

Bognor Rocks

50°46.26N, 00°40.15W

This shallow sandstone reef system is dominated by algal turf. The physical environment is predominantly bedrock but boulders, cobbles and gravels are also present.

The animal turf consists of various sea squirts, sponges, hydroids and bryozoans; algae dominates on some of the upper surfaces, notably sea oak and other foliose and filamentous species.

Splash Point, Seaford

50°45.82N, 00°06.58W

A coastal site on the chalk wave-cut platform where gullies, overhangs and fissures are present. Mixed seaweeds dominate the upper surfaces with animal tuft present on vertical slopes and overhangs.

A huge variety of life inhabits this near-shore area.

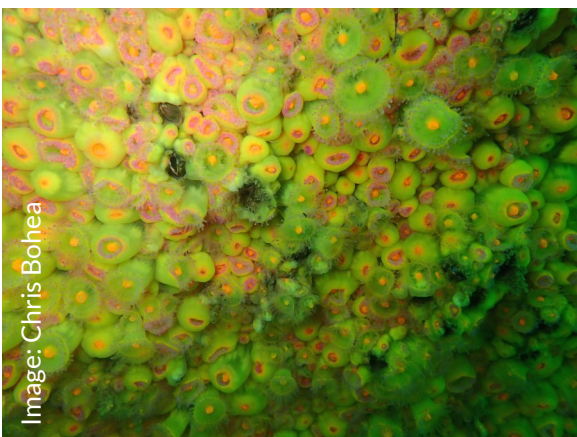
Far Mulberry

50°44.60N, 00°43.64W

The remains of one of the Mulberry Harbours, this reinforced concrete wreckage is covered in a huge variety of life, including a mix of anemones, cup corals and dead man's fingers.

Mobile species were also seen here, including various crabs, European lobster and a number of fishes.

Right: Jewel anemones, *Corynactis viridis*



A Huge Thank You...



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Image: Chris Bohea

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Seasearch is a partnership between the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), The Wildlife Trusts, statutory nature conservation bodies and others, co-ordinated nationally by MCS and co-ordinated and delivered locally in England by Wildlife Trust and MCS local co-ordinators. Seasearch in Sussex is coordinated by Sussex Wildlife Trust.

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