

Seasearch Project Newsletter

Date: Winter 2014



The 2014 Seasearch season was an interesting one across the south coast but particularly in the Solent area. Our main difficulty was the visibility which was really terrible this year (worse than usual Solent vis!). This was a problem in other areas too and was probably largely due to the severe winter storms we experienced with exceptionally high winds and rainfall. We also had a new boat operator on the eastern side of the Solent who unfortunately wasn't able to be as reliable as we would have liked. With this, the usual problems finding good weather windows for diving and Dave's boat almost breaking (which turned out to be a false alarm), it's been hard to organise this season so thank you to all of you for bearing with us! We've had **41 volunteers** who submitted a total of **75 observer and surveyor forms** from 6 dive days and 13 sites.

In this issue:

- Data from this year
- Highlights and your photos
- Local marine conservation news
- Update on the Panache project
- Plans for next year

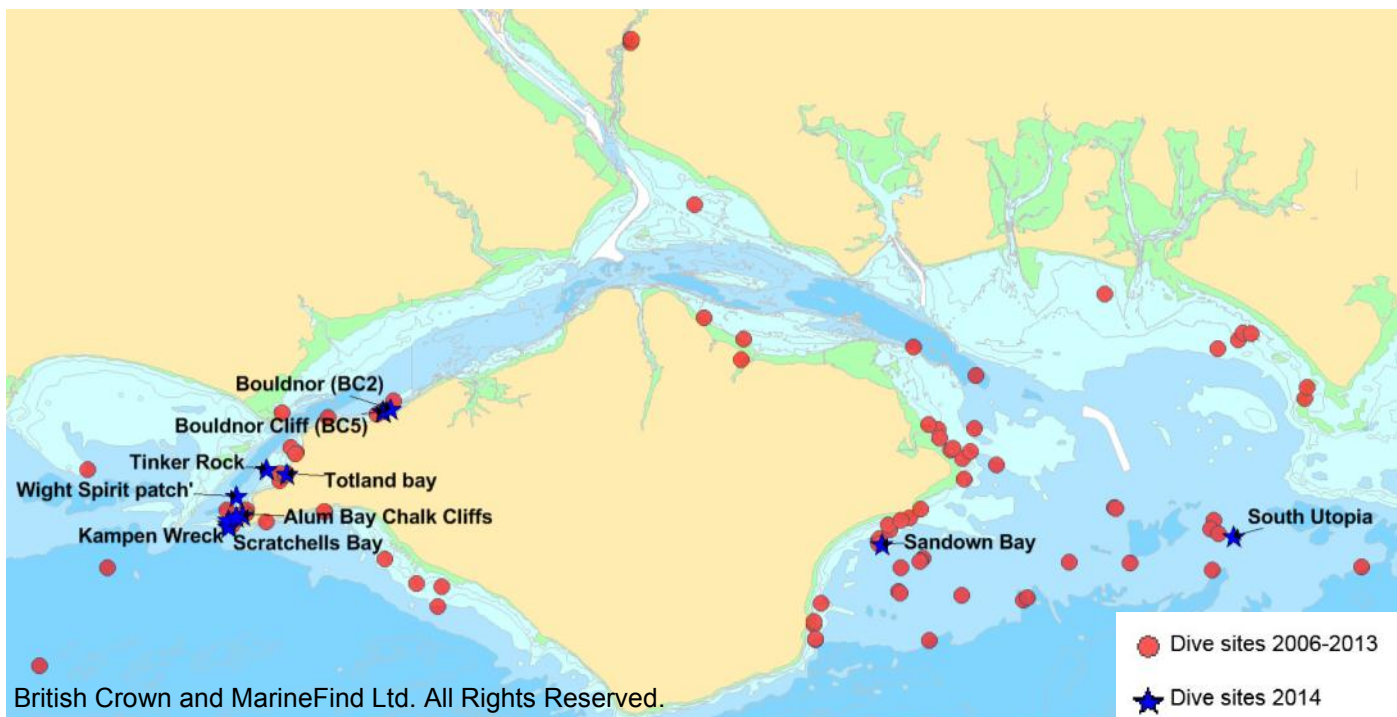


Your data



Native oyster at Bouldnor copyright Roland Brookes

Over the last few months we have been busy entering the data you have provided and looking through all of your photos. This data has all been biotope coded which means a habitat type or types have been assigned to it based on species list, site descriptions and photos. This gives a bit more information about the area as a whole and helps identify vulnerable habitats. The data will be sent to Natural England in January 2015 and will help to inform the public consultation on the second tranche of Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) designation which will take place early in 2015. See the following pages for more information about which local recommended MCZs were surveyed this year and what we recorded.



Dive sites

In 2014 our surveys were focused in **recommended Marine Conservation Zones (rMCZs)** to try and boost the evidence ahead of the public consultation in 2015. Most of the dive days departed from Lymington which is why the dive sites are concentrated on the west side of the Island, mainly within the Needles rMCZ, though we did also survey Yarmouth to Cowes, Bembridge and Utopia rMCZs.

Sea Changers dive day

This year we were fortunate enough to receive some extra funding from Sea Changers to run an additional dive day with a **group of experts**, concentrating on rMCZ sites which would benefit from more detailed surveys. The sites dived were Bouldnor and 'Wight Spirit patch', see the following pages for more details about these. One of the most interesting discoveries from the day was a sample taken of the tubes on the soft rock at Bouldnor, these tubes look like worm tubes but a sample showed they were actually built by amphipods (from the family Corophiidae). It may be that there are some worm tubes here too but we will have to take some more samples if we return to the site to be totally sure. A couple of rMCZ Features of Conservation Interest (FOCI) were recorded on the day **native oysters** (species FOCI) and **peat and clay exposures** (habitat FOCI).



Species recorded in 2014

Phylum		No. species recorded	Most frequently recorded species	Importance*
PORIFERA	Sponges	26	<i>Dysidea fragilis</i> - goosebump sponge <i>Amphilectus fucorum</i> - shredded carrot sponge	Common in British waters
CNIDARIA	Hydrozoans	25	<i>Kirchenpaueria</i> sp. <i>Nemertesia antennina</i> - antenna hydroid	Common in British waters
	Anemones/corals	11	<i>Anemonia viridis</i> - snakelocks anemone <i>Actinothoe sphyrodeta</i> - white striped anemone	
	Scyphozoa	1	<i>Rhizostoma pulmo</i> – barrel jellyfish	
PLATYHELMINTHES		1	<i>Prostheceraeus vittatus</i> - candy striped flatworm	Common in British waters
ANNELIDA	Worms	13	<i>Pomatoceros</i> sp.– keel worm <i>Salmacina</i> sp./ <i>Filograna</i> sp.– coral worms	Common in British waters
PHORONIDIA	Horseshoe worms	1	<i>Phoronis hippocrepia</i>	Common in British waters
CHELICERATA	Sea spiders	2	<i>Ammothea hilgendorfi</i> - Japanese sea spider <i>Achelia</i> sp.	Invasive non-native Common in British waters
CRUSTACEA	Barnacles	5	<i>Balanus</i> sp.	Some <i>Balanus</i> species are non-native or climate change indicators.
	Shrimps/prawns/lobsters/crabs	22	<i>Cancer pagurus</i> - brown/edible crab <i>Necora puber</i> - velvet swimming crab	Common in British waters
	Mantis shrimp	1	<i>Rissoides desmaresti</i> - Mantis shrimp (moult)	Nationally rare
MOLLUSCA	Gastropods	21	<i>Calliostoma zizyphinum</i> - painted top shell <i>Crepidula fornicata</i> - slipper limpet Pholadidae- piddocks	Climate change indicator Invasive non-native
	Bivalves	7	<i>Ostrea edulis</i> - native oyster	Oysters are an MCZ habitat FOCI
BRYOZOA	Bryozoans	26	<i>Flustra foliacea</i> - hornwrack <i>Bugula plumosa</i>	Common in British waters
ECHINODERMATA		2	<i>Antedon bifida</i> - rosy feather star <i>Ophiura ophiura</i> - sand brittlestar	Common in British waters
ASCIDIACEA	Sea squirts	19	<i>Morchellium argus</i> - club head sea squirt <i>Botryllus schlosseri</i> - star sea squirt	Common in British waters
PISCES	Bony fish	17	<i>Pomatoschistus</i> sp.- common/sand goby <i>Parablennius gattorugine</i> - tompot blenny	Common in British waters
ALGAE	Red	37	<i>Calliblepharis ciliata</i> - red fringe weed Pink encrusting algae	Common in British waters
	Brown	7	<i>Laminaria hyperborea</i> - forest kelp <i>Halidrys siliquosa</i> - pod weed	<i>H. siliquosa</i> is a climate change indicator.
	Green	4	<i>Ulva lactuca</i> - sea lettuce <i>Cladophora</i> sp.- green branched weed	On the WFD reduced algae list
PLANTAE	Seagrass	1	<i>Zostera marina</i> - common eelgrass	MCZ habitat FOCI and BAP species
TOTAL		249		

* **MCZ FOCI (Marine Conservation Zone Features of Conservation Importance)** - These are species or habitats which are threatened, rare or declining and should be protected by MCZs.

BAP species (Biodiversity Action Plan species) - Species and habitat types of conservation concern.

WFD species (EU Water Framework Directive species) - Algae species used as indicators by the Environment Agency to assess water quality.

Highlights from this year



Sandown Bay copyright Mike Markey

Our first dive day of the year took place in April, we attempted to dive **Utopia** (a rMCZ off the east coast of the Isle of Wight) but unfortunately the poor visibility meant that only one pair of divers made it to the sea bed. In the afternoon we were looking for black bream nests in **Sandown Bay**, unfortunately we didn't find any nests but there was a rocky reef to survey.

The next dive site we visited was **Scratchell's Bay** on the south side of the Needles (but still within the Needles rMCZ). We hadn't visited this site before but we surveyed it twice this year along with another site nearby called the **Kampen wreck**. Scratchell's Bay had large lumps of rock with plenty of attached life and some big edible crabs hiding under the rocks. Lin sampled a piece of seaweed from the site and found this sand smelt egg attached. One group dived the Kampen wreck which lies in between the Needles as an extra dive, the visibility improved and lots of interesting species were recorded including a large lobster, however no wreckage was seen!



Sand smelt egg under microscope
copyright Lin Baldock

© Lin Baldock



Kampen site copyright Roland Brookes



Totland copyright Gordon Bird

Totland pier and the adjacent seagrass bed is an interesting site as there's always plenty of attached life on the pier legs and larger animals hiding in the seagrass bed. This violet sea slug was spotted close to the pier where there are plenty of hydroids on which it likes to feed. There were a few different species of anemone in the seagrass bed, both attached to the seagrass blades and burrowing into the sandy seabed.

Alum Bay is also within the Needles rMCZ and it's another site we visited a couple of times to survey slightly different areas. There's a huge variety of seaweed and attached life growing on the soft chalk cliffs and boulders at the bottom and because the rock is so soft there are plenty of animals living inside it too.



Brown crab at Alum Bay copyright James Lucey



Bouldnor copyright Kerry Evans

Bouldnor is another site we dived a few times this year. It's within the Yarmouth to Cowes rMCZ and is archaeologically very interesting as it's a site of early human habitation. It is a soft mud and clay cliff covered in many small tubes which may belong to amphipods or tube worms, or possibly both are present! Piddock burrows were frequently found in the soft rock. A good number of native oysters were recorded here which is important as oysters are a feature of conservation interest for MCZs. Very few fish were seen at this site but Kerry did spot this greater pipefish at the bottom of the slope.

We picked a couple of new sites within the Needles rMCZ using the chart and selecting areas which looked like rocky outcrops. The first of these we named '**Wight Spirit Patch**' as it was found by Wight Spirit skipper Dave. It was an area of boulders, cobbles and pebbles with lots of attached life – mainly sponges and hydroids. Few mobile species were spotted but this large sole was photographed by Amy.



Wight Spirit patch copyright Amy Marsden



Tinker Rock copyright Justin Evans

The second new site also within the Needles rMCZ was **Tinker Rock**, another rocky outcrop with some large boulders. The species recorded here differed dramatically depending on the direction in which the surveyors swam. Some reported a dominance of sponges, hydroids and ascidians while others saw mostly branching bryozoans. Both of these new sites provided valuable information for areas we haven't previously visited and we recorded native oysters (which are important for MCZ designation) in both.

Local marine conservation news

Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs)

The next few months will be very important for local marine life as the government starts to consider whether to designate any of the 37 recommended Marine Conservation Zones (rMCZs) put forward for consideration in tranche 2. Unfortunately in this area no MCZs were designated in tranche 1, but we have **6 MCZs on the list for consideration in tranche 2**. Four of these are coastal sites (The Needles, Yarmouth to Cowes, Norris to Ryde, and Bembridge) while two are further offshore (Utopia and Offshore Overfalls). If these zones are designated they will not be 'no take zones' but would instead balance economic needs with protection of vulnerable wildlife and habitats. If these zones are not designated in tranche 2 we won't have another opportunity to get them protected under this legislation so we are hopeful a strong showing of public support along with all the data we have already provided will convince the government to protect our local waters.

Sign up as a Friend of MCZs!

To stay up to date on the campaign to get more MCZs designated you can sign up as a friend on our [website](#). You will get two monthly emails - one with national news and another local email. These will tell you when and how to respond to the MCZ consultation early next year.

Save our Ocean Giants



The Wildlife Trusts have launched a national campaign for protection of **17 'megafauna hotspots'**. These are areas where dolphins, whales and sharks come to breed and socialise. There are **29 species of whales, dolphins, porpoises and basking sharks** which can be regularly found around UK coasts. Although none of the 'hotspots' are in Hampshire or the Isle of Wight, they would help to protect the dolphin species which are often spotted in this area. You can find out more about this campaign and sign

the petition on the Wildlife Trusts' website (www.wildlifetrusts.org/oceangiants). Next year the signatures will be taken to government to call for action for ocean giants.

Marine Charter

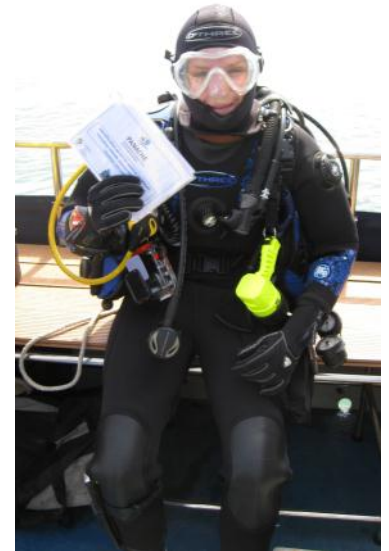
On 19th November Wildlife and Countryside Link organisations including the Wildlife Trusts presented the Marine Charter to MPs at Downing Street. The Charter calls for the swift designation of a representative and well managed Ecologically Coherent Network of Marine Protected Areas in UK seas by 2016. This includes further tranches of MCZs alongside wider protected networks. So far **over 130 MPs have signed up**, a full list can be found here: www.wcl.org.uk/marinecharter.asp. If your local MP hasn't signed up yet it's not too late so do write to them and ask why they haven't signed. We have written to all local MPs making them aware of the Charter and asking them to sign up - but it's the views of their constituents that might help to change their minds!



Panache update



Our European project, Panache, has been supporting Shoresearch and Seasearch along much of the south coast for the past two years. It will be coming to an end next March but we will continue to run Shoresearch and Seasearch. It's been a really good opportunity to collaborate and share ideas with other Wildlife Trusts and help our French partners to try and set up similar projects. The project has other work packages running alongside the citizen science element which study marine protected areas in the Channel and you can find out more about these on the Panache website: www.panache.eu.com/.



Making Waves interactive maps



Our Making Waves project works to educate children and adults about local marine life and marine protected areas. There is a **new interactive map** on the website with photos and videos of local marine life which you may find interesting. It features a few of the more unusual species which you may not be aware live in local waters.

You can find the map on the Making Waves website: www.makingwavesproject.org.uk/hampshire-and-the-isle-of-wight-interactive-map/.

There's also a **beach treasures gallery** where you can post photos of any interesting items you find washed up on the strandline after storms.

Next season

So far we have four dive days booked for next year, we are hopeful that we might be able to get some surveys booked for the east side of the Island but we will keep you posted via the mailing list. We will be running at least one Seasearch Observer course and possibly some specialist courses but again these will be advertised via the mailing list and on the Trust/Seasearch website.

Date	Boat	Departure Location	Price
Friday 8th May	Wight Spirit	Lymington	£35
Saturday 18th July	Wight Spirit	Lymington	£35
Saturday 12th September	Wight Spirit	Lymington	£35
Friday 9th October	Wight Spirit	Lymington	£35

Note Pick up from Yarmouth may be possible - please enquire.

Thank you!

A huge thank you to everyone who has come along on a Seasearch survey this year, your data and photos are really valuable! We would like to extend a special thanks to James Lucey (Seasearch tutor) for his assistance in running an Observer course. A big congratulations to Emma Christison who came on an Observer course in June and was qualified by October- great work! Some people have been to more than one dive day this year (despite all the cancellations and rearranging!) so thank you to; Dawn Biggs, Derek Watson, Emma Christison, James Lucey, Justin Evans, Karen Dunford, Kerry Evans, Lin Baldock, Matt Doggett, Mike Markey, Polly Whyte, Roland Brookes and Sue Meakin.



Sign up to the mailing list

If you picked up a printed copy of this newsletter and you would like to be kept up to date on the project you can sign up to the Seasearch mailing list, just send me an email requesting to be added (email address below). You can also subscribe to the marine team blog on the web page so that you get an email each time we publish a new entry, we are updating the blog regularly so do subscribe or keep checking the website!



Thanks again to all our volunteers, I hope you have enjoyed being part of the project and I hope to see you diving next year.

Abbi Scott (Assistant Marine Officer)

Please contact Abbi Scott (Assistant Marine Officer) for more information about Seasearch
Telephone: **01489 774439**
Email: **Abbi.Scott@hiwwt.org.uk**



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Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Beechcroft House, Vicarage Lane, Curdridge, Hants SO32 2DP. tel 01489 774400 email feedback@hiwwt.org.uk web www.hiwwt.org.uk

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