The Pink Sea Fan

The beautiful pink sea fan (Eunicella verrucosa) is in the Cnidaria group of animals (things with stings!) and therefore related to animals like jellyfish, sea anemones, hydroids, and sea pens. Sea fans are a type of coral and are characterised by a central skeleton, with its polyps arranged in repeatedly dividing branches, usually orientated at right angles to the preceding corner.

During 2004 Seasearch, the pink sea fan has been recorded at "The Fields" (South of Du Point, South East Cornwall), Princess Royal (Newquay Bay) and on Bawden Rock (St Agnes). We intend to do more survey work on these delicate fans during 2005, but we need your help.

Sea Fan Anemone

There is a tiny species of anemone that is only found on pink sea fans. It is extremely rare, only occurring on about 1% of all fans. Why not take a closer look to see if you can spot one?

Previous sightings include Land's End, The Muracles and off Plymouth.

The Wreck of HMS Scylla

The Scylla is a 113m Leander class frigate, built in 1968. In 1970 and 1971 it was part of the Western Fleet in the Mediterranean and Far Eastern fleet, respectively. Between 1973 and 1976 the ship played a key role in the Cold War as a Fast Intercept Squadron. It then went on to act as a naval auxilia for British Merchant Ships in the Persian Gulf. The Scylla was finally decommissioned in 1993.

HMS Scylla was sunk on the 27 March 2004 and now lies in 32m of water. It holds a record dive route in the Scylla Wreck Scuba Dive Guidebook. HMS Scylla has been confirmed by the Ministry of Defence as a controlled wreck and permission is necessary to dive on the wreck.

Eelgrass

There are three species of eelgrass found in the British Isles. They are not seaweed but an underwater flowering plant. Flowers are small and occur at the base of the blade like fronds. Eelgrass accrues on sand/gravel/mud seabeds, in shallow water (less than 10m deep), that is sheltered from strong tides and currents. The plant is nationally scarce, with populations still recovering from a disease that affected numbers in the 1920s and 30s.

Eelgrass, or Zostera, increases rates of sedimentation and decreases coastal erosion because the roots and stolons of the plants hold the substrate, as plants do on land. They also act as vitally important spawning and nursery grounds for a host of fish species, including many commercially important groups. They are great habitats for seeing invertebrates, like crabs, sea hares and sea squirts, offering individuals security and a source of food.

Although difficult to find, eelgrass meadows are a unique habitat that offers a different diving experience for the recreational diver, with many species not found in the usual rocky dive sites. If you dive on any eelgrass beds, or come across any new patches, please let us know so we can try to build up a map of the abundance of this habitat in Cornwall.

Websites and Forms

More information on all aspects of Seasearch, including forthcoming training courses, specific survey dives that have been organised and downloadable forms can be found on the website at: www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk

Happy Diving!
Porthgwarra. The bottom topography consisted of large granite boulders with sandy channels in-between them. The solid substrate was covered with species of algae (Laminaria sp.) and an array of red algae species. A rich diversity of invertebrates were noted within this survey area, including brittlestars, crabs and anemones.

A more remote survey dive was carried out at Wolf Rock, half way between Penzance and Lands End and the Isles of Scilly. The site boasts an abundance of colourful organisms including different species of crustacean (crabs, lobsters and prawns), mollusc (such as cowries, nudibranchs and cuttlefish) and fish (dogfish, rays, wrasse, groupers, to name just a few). A popular dive in this area is off the shore at Castle Beach is an easily accessible shore dive which has both rocks and sand, along with the remains of a World War 1 U-boat. The usual suspects were recorded in Seasearch 2004, though with far fewer different species being reported. Many of the common species were the same, but there were far fewer of the smaller, or less easily recognised species reported.

The Lizard and Manacles
Drumros rocks, off Porthkarra, were investigated on various occasions, giving a complete picture of the topography and marine life of the rocks. There was a profuse amount of fish life, including the usual rockfish, (Citharichthys sordidus), red mullet, (Mullus surmuletus), and several species of wrasse, (Coryphinae viridis). Chapters Beach is an accessible shore dive with both rocks and sand along with the remains of a World War 1 U-boat. Surveys in Falmouth 2004 centred around Pencol Point, a rocky headland at the entrance to the harbour and Fal Estuary. The Seasearch dives described a rocky reef leading to a sandy bottom with boulders. A substantial quantity of horse mussels were recorded on some shallow areas. The area is an ideal habitat for sedentary animal colonisers. These included the nationally scarce pink sea fan (Sagartia elegans) and the most surveyed crustacean in 2004. Far fewer different species were recorded. Bawden Rock (Agnes) and Castle Beach (Paul Naylor) were recorded on three occasions. The bloody baby squid (SepioteuthisThunkia) was recorded within an area of rock at the top of the reef. The survey area was named after a incident involving a small sea fan species (SepioteuthisThunkia) and a large number of young squid.