The table to the right shows how many species in each Phylum were found and what the most common species were. Listed below are records of particular interest.

**Seaweeds**

- Common species (number of records in brackets)
  - *Cancer pagurus* (Shells, sea slugs)
  - *Calliostoma zizyphinum*

**Fishes**

- 73 records

**Sponges**

- Anemones, *Chaetopterus variopedatus*
- *Cliona celata*
- *P. pollachii*
- *Necora puber* – Velvet swimming crab
- *Corystes cassivelaunus* – masked crab

**Segmented**

- *Crisia*
- *Delesseria sanguinea* (7) – Sea mats
- *65 records*

**Cuttlefish**

- *Echinus esculentus*
- *Caryophyllia smithii*

**Total records**

- *Clavelina lepadiformis* (11) – Lightbulb sea squirt
- *573 records*

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**Echinoderms**

In Church Bay we recorded the sea cucumber *Labioplax digitata*. This worm-like cucumber feeds on detritus scraped from the surface of the sand around it's burrow. This makes a star shape of grooves around the burrow entrance. Several records were made in Church Bay of the Northern Ireland Conservation Priority Species the sand star *Astropecten irregularis*. This common dragonet *Callionymus lyra* and the reticulated dragonet *Callionymus reticulata* were recorded on sandy areas in Church Bay. Wrasse were common on rocky areas and near wrecks, particularly the cuckoo wrasse *Labrus mixtus*. *Seasquirts* the lightbulb seasquirt *Clavelina lepadiformis* was common on rocky areas.

**Seaweeds**

kelp forest was common in rocky areas and on wrecks. On sandy areas there were patches of red weed including red fringe weed *Calliblepharis ciliata* and the branching weed *Calliophila lacina*. *Echinoderms* record at several sites in Church Bay. This is a Northern Ireland Species of Conservation Concern.

**Molluscs**

we went back to monitor a fan mussel *Atrina fragilis* which was first recorded earlier in the season - it appeared to be in good condition.

**Worms**

the sea mouse *Aphrodita aculeata* was recorded. This attractive inedect worm is named after Aphrodite the Greek goddess of love (well it is quite pretty for a worm!). The name sea mouse derives from the dense layer of hairs which cover its body.

**Surveyors taking part were:**

- Lin Baldock, Graham Day, Sharon Doake, Colin Ferguson, Claire Goodwin, David Goodwin, Alasdair Kennedy, Paul McIlwaine, Julia Nunn, Mark Patton, Franklyn Riemann, Ronnie Snyder, Chris Wood. Thanks to Aquaholics, who were used for boat cover and supplied site info.

Seasearch is a volunteer underwater survey project for recreational divers to actively contribute to the conservation of the marine environment (see www.seasearch.org.uk for more information). Financial support for the project was given by the Environment and Heritage service Northern Ireland. This report was written by Claire Goodwin (thanks to Julia Nunn and Chris Wood for editorial comments). Photos are by Claire Goodwin and where specified Chris Wood and Andrea Graeb.
The wreck of the ‘HMS Drake’

Wreck of the ‘HMS Drake’, lying on the east side of Church Bay Rathlin Island. The wreck was quite broken up, and lay on fine sand. The topside of wreck was densely covered in kelp and red weeds. Shaded wreck surfaces were dominated by cup corals Caryophyllia smithii, white claw sea moss Crisia spp. and other bryozoans, and the light bulb sea squirt Clavelina lepadiformis. Soft rippled sand surrounded the wreck - this had a brown algal mat on its surface. The sand was scoured deeper close to wreck. The slender sea pen Virgularia mirabilis was present in the sand.

Damicornis Bay

Little south facing slope of small boulders with kelp forest to 15m, red algal zone to 25m, and faunal turf below 25m. Kelp forest Laminaria hyperborea and saccharina, dog fish egg cases were frequent on kelp. Below 25m, the boulders were dominated by sponges and cup corals. Axinellid sponges including the crumpled duster sponge Axinella damicornis and the prawn cracker sponge Axinella infundibuliformis were common below 25m. The boulder slope continued beyond depths surveyed to 70m+.

White Cliffs

South facing boulder slope, fairly flat at top covered in kelp forest (14-4m) then dropping steeply, up to 25m surveyed. Lower areas of slope were dominated by red seaweeds and hydroids (antenna hydroid Nemertesia antennis, branched antenna hydroid Nemertesia ramosa and herring bone hydroid Haleciunum halicenum all common).

Church Bay

Level sandy seabed (approx 15m). Ripples of fine sand with sparse shell fragments and small pebbles. Virgularia mirabilis and Astropecten irregularis were recorded (NI Conservation Priority species). The area was dived as a drift dive. Divers drifted approx. 500m from the entry point: as the current was relatively strong and visibility quite poor it was not possible to record some things to species level (e.g. red weeds).

A second habitat was encountered by some surveyors. This was an area of gravel waves, very unusual for Church Bay. It looked very silty, as if it may have been recently disturbed, possibly by the recent installation of a pipeline in the bay.

‘The Lochgarry’

Dive on port (east) side of ‘Lochgarry’ wreck, a large upright wreck on the eastern side of Rathlin Island. Level seabed on east side of wreck (33-33.8m below chart datum), composed of sand, gravel, cobbles, pebbles and scattered small boulders. Some fauna on the pebbles but mostly present on boulders, including sponges, hydroids and anemones. On a dive later in the year, the wreck itself was surveyed. The deck is at approx. 25m. A very large shoal (>100) of pollack was observed. There was much evidence of angling at the site: sinkers, lures and monofilament were present on the wreck and tangled in the shot line.

Rathlin Survey

This was a largely opportunistic survey. Church Bay provided a sheltered alternative site when poor weather prevented diving at the intended survey sites on the North Coast. Three days diving took place, and in total seven sites were surveyed.

One fan shell Atrina fragilis was recorded (from a secret location!). This is the only living individual known from Northern Ireland and was first discovered on an EHS/Ulster Museum dive earlier in the month. It appeared to have been disturbed when found - the purpose of the Seasearch dive was to check its current status. Divers observed that it appeared to be healthy and had re-buried itself well.

Some of the survey team on Rathlin. Photo: Andrea Graeb

Masked crab Corystes cassivelaunus.

Burrowing anemone Edwardsia claparedii CW

Pollack Pollachius pollachius

South of ‘HMS Drake’ Cardinal Mark

On gently sloping sandy seabed in Church Bay (13-16m). A diatom mat was present on the surface of the sand. There were many sea cucumber burrows (Labidioplex digitata). This cucumber uses its tentacles to scrape food from the sand surface, leaving a star shaped pattern around its burrow. The solitary stalked hydroid Corynoma nautilus was also present, with the nudibranch Eubranchus farrani feeding on it. Many echninoderms were present including the NICP species Astropecten irregularis. Other interesting species were the slender sea pen Virgularia mirabilis and the masked crab Corystes cassivelaunus. The worm anemone Edwardsia claparedii was also sighted.

The worm anemone Edwardsia claparedii was also sighted.

Church Bay

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Inshore of the ‘Lochgarry’ wreck

Mainly bedrock reef (5-15m in depth), with kelp and red weeds such as the toothed weed Odonthalia dentata on upper faces. Sand patches between bedrock ridges with occasional king scallops (Pecten maximus).