

North West England

Seasearch Site Surveys 2022

This report summarises the activities of Seasearch Northwest England including results of surveys carried out during 2022.

Training

We were able to deliver the first course for 2 years post Covid, for NW England in person. This was very welcome and held at Chester SAC's terrific City centre venue. Eleven very enthusiastic students enjoyed a day of presentations, ID exercises and dry video dives. I was helped out by budding tutor Matt Green who expertly lent a hand particularly when I accidentally turned off my pc during one presentation! The course was supposed to have been supplemented with a dive at Duke's Dock but we were unable to gain access despite having booked the date. This was offered later on in the year when we had access again.





Surveys



Duke's Dock Liverpool

Since the opening of The Albert Dock complex for leisure purposes in 1986, the marine life has taken hold and continues to flourish. The main features of the habitat are silt seabed and stone dock walls. Water quality is paramount as this is a public place thus the marine life is very important in helping to achieve this. Diving is restricted to November – March inclusive, as there is an Aqua Gym in place during the summer months.

The year started with the first visit to Duke's Dock in January on a very cold but clear and dry Saturday morning. We had a good turn out with 8 divers including 3 surveyors. The usual suspects were seen – the dock walls are dominated by *Mytilus edulis* (blue mussels), *Ciona intestinalis* (yellow fluted sea squirts), *Diadumene cincta* (orange anemone) and sponges (*Halichondria bowerbanki*). *Ficopomatus enigmaticus* (Australian tubeworm) was seen again as this INNS continues to take hold. On the lower dock wall, every crack seemed to harbour *Aurelia aurita* scyphistoma – it looks like it is going to be a bumper year for jelly fish!

The dock bottom saw *Gobius niger* (black goby) plus some smaller gobies (undetermined) and *Syngnathus acus* (greater pipefish). Another new species was also spotted – *Atherina presbyter* (sand smelt) – in quite large quantities as were *Gasterosteus aculeatus aculeatus* (3 spined stickleback). *Mytilus edulis* (edible mussels) and cockles were also seen.

Our second visit to the docks was in December with a small group of divers joined by PhD student Erika Neave. Erika is working on passive sampling techniques for collection of fish DNA and was keen to use Seasearch divers in a citizen science capacity. The technique involves attaching a peach sized open ball to the divers' kit. It was very unobtrusive – we were able to conduct the dive and not know it was there! At the end of the dive, the balls were unclipped and returned to Erika for sampling.

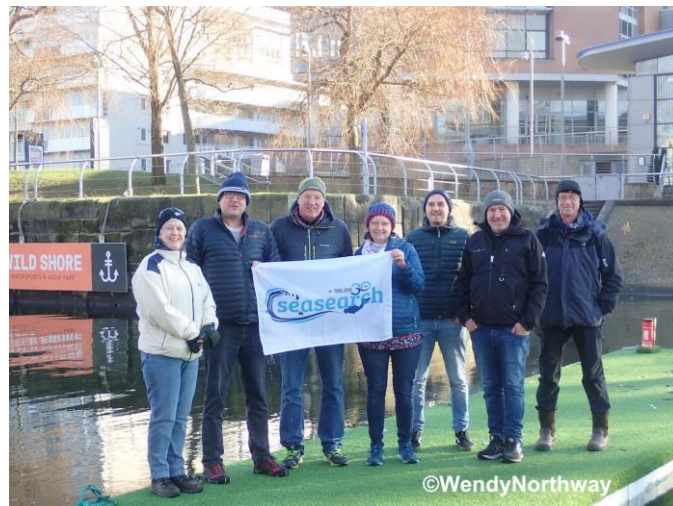


Bottom left of the diver shows the passive sampling device.

The Aqua Gym had been permanently removed this time. All mooring buoys and lines had been taken out from the sea bed. This resulted in a heavy silting of the water below about 3.6m and hence the seabed had not been surveyed. We recorded *Mytilus edulis* (blue mussels), *Gasterosteus aculeatus aculeatus* (3 spined stickleback) and *Gobius niger* (black goby). A small blue green worm was also noted – we need to get further photos of this for identification. What was apparent was the absence of *Ciona intestinalis* (yellow fluted sea squirts).

Photos





Summing up

It has been a quiet year for North West England but we have continued to monitor the docks when we have been able to dive there. It will be interesting to see if the Aqua Gym had any long-term impact on the marine life.

Species List

| Scientific Name | Common Name | Duke's Dock |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| Porifera | | |
| <i>Halichondria bowerbanki</i> | | C |
| | Encrusting orange sponge | R |
| Cnidaria | | |
| <i>Aurelia aurita</i> | Moon jelly | R |
| <i>Aurelia aurita scyphistoma</i> | Juvenile moon jellies | A |
| <i>Diadumene cincta</i> | Small orange stalked anemone | O |
| <i>Obelia</i> | Kelp fir | C |
| Crustaceans | | |
| <i>Mysid shrimp</i> | | R |
| <i>Carcinus maenas</i> | Shore crab | O |
| <i>Palaemon serratus</i> | | R |
| <i>Balanus sp</i> | Barnacles | R |
| <i>Liocarcinus depurator</i> | Harbour crab | R |
| Molluscs | | |
| <i>Mytilus edulis</i> | Edible/common mussels | A |
| <i>Cerastoderma edule</i> | cockle | R |
| Ascidian | | |
| <i>Ciona intestinalis</i> | Yellow ringed sea squirt | C |

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| <i>Botryllus schlosseri</i> | | O |
| <i>Botrylloides spp</i> | | O |
| <i>Styela clava</i> | Leathery seasquirt | O |
| | | |
| Fish | | |
| <i>Gobius niger</i> | Black goby | O |
| <i>Gobiusculus flavescens</i> | 2 spot goby | R |
| <i>Gasterosteus aculeatus aculeatus</i> | 3 Spined Stickleback | F |
| <i>Syngnathus acus</i> | Greater pipefish | R |
| <i>Pomatoschistus sp</i> | Goby | R |
| <i>Atherina presbyter</i> | Sand smelt | A |
| | | |
| Algae | | |
| | Non-calcereous red algal mat | A |
| <i>Heterosiphonia</i> | | C |
| <i>Cladophora</i> | | O |
| <i>Chaetomorpha spp</i> | | O |
| <i>Rhizoclonium riparium</i> | | R |
| | Feathery red seaweeds | R |
| | | |
| Worms | | |
| <i>Ficopomatus enigmaticus</i> | | R |
| <i>Lineus spp</i> | | R |
| | Blue/green worm | R |
| | | |
| Bryozoans | | |

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Crisia spp</i> | | R |
| <i>Conopeum reticulum</i> | | R |

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all who have the tenacity to dive NW England. It is a challenging area but one which has a rich variety of life and we have been rewarded with some interesting dives.

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This report has been compiled by Wendy Northway, based on Seasearch survey records made by Wendy Northway and observer reports from Duncan Scott and Rosie Horner.

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. 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

