



Seasearch East Anglia - 2009

East Anglian Seasearch – 2009 Report

Seasearch East in 2009

A total of 11 sites were surveyed between 13/06/09 and 27/09/09 in a year where diving was once again severely curtailed by uncooperative weather. As usual we managed quite a variety of dives to suit all comers, depths ranged from 2.8m at Sheringham to 24.1m on the Alto off Lowestoft. Dives took place from 07.25 in the morning to 19.15 in the evening, with sighs of relief when the 03.30am dive out of Lowestoft was blown out! Visibility ranged from 0.3 to 8.0m, with most dives averaging 4.0m. An East Anglian record of 61 forms were returned, 22 surveyor and 39 observer, up 50% on 2008.

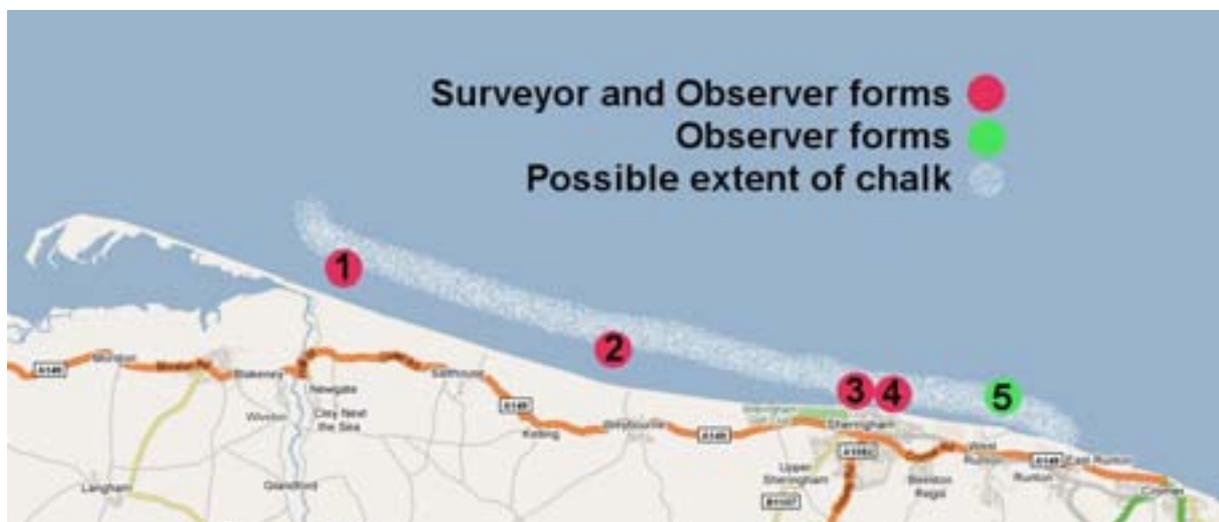
A total of 150 species were recorded (up from 114 in 2008), with highlights including *Liparis liparis* (Striped Sea Snail), *Eubranchus farrani* and tricolour nudibranchs, *Sepiolo atlantica* (Little Cuttlefish), *Echiichthys vipera* (Lesser Weever fish) and *Trachinus draco* (Greater Weever fish). Plumose anemones were again the most commonly recorded species, followed by the region's signature edible crabs and common lobsters.



This year, we managed to spread our wings a little, so diving took place from Cley in the North of Norfolk to Dunwich in the East of Suffolk. While a large number of boat dives were cancelled due to weather (predictably) and skipper failure (unexpected) we did manage two from both Dunwich and Lowestoft, three from Sea Palling and one from West Runton. Once again, the majority of dives were shore dives in North Norfolk, with two new sites off Sheringham added to the ever popular wrecks off Cley and Weybourne.

Although the amount of boat activity in 2009 was very disappointing we have benefited in the longer term by building up good relations with reliable boat options in Lowestoft and Sea Palling and, finally, sorted out a small boat for our own inshore program next year. We hope this might prove an interesting option for other Seasearch regions, allowing access to inshore sites which can only be reached by boat but where launching a RIB is impractical – on a non commercial basis of course.

Dive Sites – North Norfolk



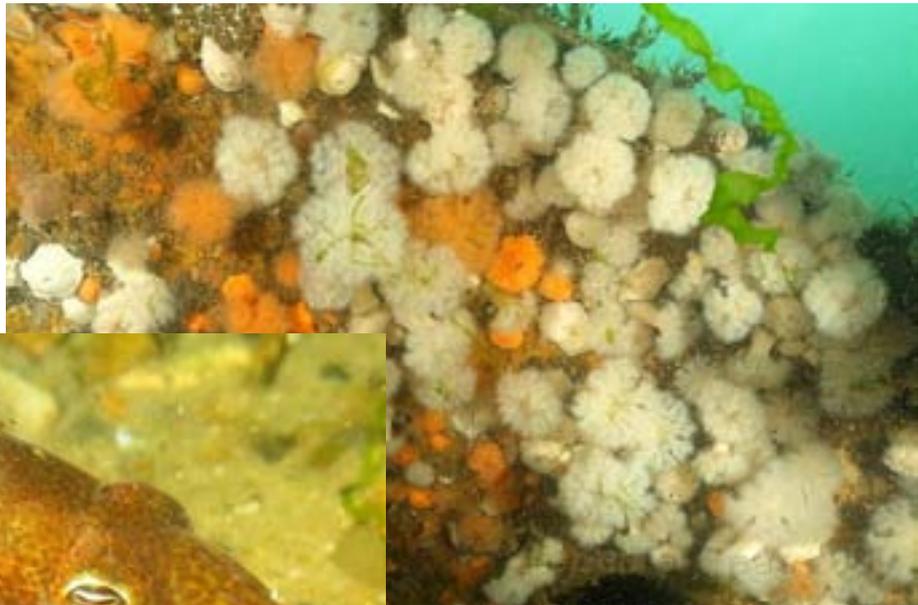
1. Wreck of the Vera, Cley, North Norfolk

Shore Dive 52 57.968N, 01 03.236E

The Vera is the wreck of a WW1 steam collier lying within 100m of the shingle beach at Cley. The iron hull plating of the wreck has been torn away and the remaining ribs, fallen platework and mechanical structure enclose a flinty scour surrounded by constantly shifting sand. The upper structure provides a stable and varied habitat but the lower structure is being constantly buried or sand blasted. The wreck is home to a large shoal of bass and was surrounded by a very large, very dense bed of sandmason worms this year. There is a long term community of unusually large peacock worms in a protected area beneath the prop shaft which have resident for at least the last 3 years.

The problem of lost nets continues to dog this site with large quantities still caught on the wreckage despite ongoing efforts to clear it. These appear to be carelessly placed, weighted nets which are set to catch the bass too close to the wreck. Another large section was removed.

Plumose anemones
- *Metridium senile*



Little Cuttlefish – *Sepioloidea atlantica*

Common Lobster
- *Homarus gammarus*

2. Wreck of the Rosalie, Weybourne, N. Norfolk

Shore Dive 52 57.101N, 01 07.997E

The Rosalie is another WW1 steam collier, lying 200m off the beach at Weybourne. She is much more intact than the Vera with plating still present around most of the hull and the 120m long outline intact from bow to stern. The top of the wreckage stands nearly 10m off the silty bottom. She forms a very significant artificial reef

A crawfish was reported by several members of a local diving club, we were unsurprised but disappointed not to confirm the sighting. It may be that there is an unusual colour variant of common lobster on the wreck. There are many other large crustaceans living within the wreckage. Fish life is good with large wrasse as well as several common eels.



3. The Esplanade, Sheringham, North Norfolk

Shore Dive 52 56.832N, 01 12.534E

This is a new site for 2009 and is the place where the chalk gullies can be most easily accessed from the shore. In contrast to most other East Anglian sites, there are at least twenty species of algae present here, some of which have yet to be identified. The habitat is mostly areas of chalk, flint and sand, becoming more rugged as you travel away from the beach. Several large plaice and many squat lobsters are present.

Sheringham
- about to be Observed



Common Prawn– *Palaemon serratus*



4. Cliff Road, Sheringham, N. Norfolk

Shore Dive 52 56.741N, 01 12.861E

This site is less than a mile from the previous one, but has a different underwater landscape, with large areas of open sand dotted with large (up to 2m high) lumps of chalk. The open sand is home to little cuttles, both species of weever fish and the chalk has a large community of crustaceans, sponges, squirts and cnidarians.



Chalk reef – Sheringham

Little Cuttlefish
- *Sepioloa atlantica*



5. Chalk gullies, West Runton, N. Norfolk

Inflatable boat 52 93.947N, 01 25.283E

This is an area of much more rugged chalk gullies. Unfortunately due to boat problems, we only obtained one Observer form from this site in 2009. We will return in 2010 to confirm that it is an area rich in algae and crustacean species with 2m deep steeply sided gullies.

Dive Sites - East Norfolk

6. Mussel bed, Sea Palling, Norfolk

RIB From 52 48.843N, 01 35.361E
to 52 49.568N, 01 34.103E (drift)

Another new site for 2009, a previously unknown area of BAP habitat, with a community quite different from the surrounding sandy seabed and shallow wrecks. The seabed here is stabilised by a dense bed of Edible mussels and *Molgula spp* sea squirts. Occasional large boulders are colonised by hornwrack and antenna hydroids. Common whelks, common starfish and common brittlestars are abundant and the area appears to be a nursery bed for common sunstars. There were numerous nudibranchs and sponge spider crabs.

This site was discovered quite by accident, a spot picked at random when weather forced the boat inshore. A return visit still didn't find the end of the mussel bed which must be in excess of 2.5km long.



Edible mussel bed
– Sea Palling

7. Wreck of the Ilse, Sea Palling, Norfolk

RIB 52 49.424N, 01 39.589E

This wreck lies close to the mussel bed, but has a distinctly different community, much more similar to the Vera at Cley. It is a broken wreck on mixed ground. Only two Observer forms were received for this site and no photographs. We will return to it in 2010.

8. Wreck of the King Egbert, Sea Palling, Norfolk

RIB 52 55.124N, 01 30.939E

This site was dived by a visiting club from Bedford, who then filled in a joint form. The community is similar to that of the Ilse. The wreck had an usually large amount of boating litter – ropes, anchors, fishing gear, etc. This part of the coast is popular amongst boat anglers and amateur fishermen.

Dive Sites - North Suffolk

9. Wreck of the Alto, Lowestoft, Suffolk

Hardboat 52 25.33N, 01 48.92E

Due to a year of mostly Easterly winds, this was the only site we dived off Lowestoft in 2009. The wreck stands 10m off the bottom and is densely covered in short animal turf. Unusually, there were no sponges, sea squirts or algae seen. The latter was due to the low light levels, but the lack of sponges and squirts was a surprise, the wreck didn't seem overly silty. Two striped sea snails (a small fish) were seen and there was an abundance of the small crustaceans *Caprella spp* and *Jassa falcata*.

10. Seabed near the Alto, Lowestoft, Suffolk

Hardboat 52 25.33N, 01 48.92E

Our first dive had missed the wreck and we were able to observe the surrounding sandbanks. The sand was very well sorted, with sharply defined peaks of large grains. There were several large hermit crabs and common starfish present.



Striped Sea Snail - *Liparis liparis*

11. St Peter's church, Dunwich, Suffolk

RIB 52 16.598N, 01 38.260E

Dunwich is very rarely dived, due to the usually non-existent visibility and the protected status of this archaeological site. A period of very calm weather and contact with a local commercial survey combined to give us two dives during one of our Observer courses. We dived on the remains of St Peter's church, an area of 1m high stone and flint walls with short and tall animal turf. The seabed between the walls was very fine silt, which kept divers as far apart as possible. A common cuttlefish was seen in the silt, but most life was concentrated on the walls. Again, no sponges, squirts or algae were present, probably due to the lack of light and silty conditions.

Other achievements

Training in 2009

This year, we ran three Observer courses in Lowestoft, Sea Palling and Sheringham, with a total of 28 students, 5 of which are now qualified Observers. We also ran an early season Fish ID course with Frances Dipper at Yarmouth Sealife Centre, which was hugely popular. We also tutored on 3 other Observer courses for other regions, developing a simple Photography for ID module for the first Observer course in the Scillies.

Media

We managed to mention Seasearch on BBC and ITV television and in interviews for Radio Suffolk and Norfolk during a surreal frenzy when local Marine Week photos suddenly crept into the national press.

That overshadowed the fact that the marine events that the photographs publicised in the local papers received more press and publicity for The Norfolk Wildlife Trust than all their other events. They were delighted.



Tabloid Surprise at UK Marine life!



**Norfolk Wildlife Trust
- Spreading the Marine Message**

Chalk Reef Surveys 2010

After discussions with local council biodiversity departments we have received grant funding for a thorough survey of the Sheringham chalk gullies. This has been promised by the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) and Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership (NBP). The aim is to map the extent and diversity of the chalk reef system. This is a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitat and the council were very responsive to suggestions that this could be an ideal project for Seasearch recording. We are also discussing similar projects on seagrass, sabellaria worm reefs and mussel beds. Our fingers are crossed for calm weather.

Seasearch East Website

We now have a distinct Seasearch East website – www.seasearcheast.org.uk – to complement the Seasearch NE website, so that googlers find the region they want.

Wildlife Trust Marine Campaign

We did lots of work with Norfolk Wildlife Trust – unexpectedly picking up quite a bit of diving interest generally and even interesting the chairman and president of the NWT in possibly diving their own coast when we spoke at the Trust's AGM.

NWT made marine activities the centre of their program over the summer, highlighting marine life and habitats. They organised events, talks and show stands, culminating in Marine Week during August. They also commissioned a marine DVD and waterproof guide to local sealife for their reserves.

Appendix - Species list

Sponges

crusts

Scypha ciliata
Amphilectus fucorum
Halichondria panicea
Haliclona oculata
Leucosolenia spp
Dysidea fragilis
Clathrina coriacea
Cliona celata
Polymastia penicillus

Cnidarians

Aurelia aurita
Chrysaora hysoscella
Cyanea lamarkii
Tubularia indivisa
Tubularia larynx
Hydractinia echinata
Eudendrium spp
Eudendrium ramosum
Feathery hydroids
Nemertesia antenina
Alcyonium digitatum
Sargatia troglodytes
Sargatia elegans
Urticina felina
Urticina eques
Diadumene cincta
Metridium senile
Actinia equina

Worms

Filograna implexa
Salmacina dysteri
Lanice conchilega
Sabella pavonina
Pomatoceros spp
Unknown white tube worm
Polydora ciliata
Unknown large tube worm
Unknown scaleworm
Eulalia viridis

Crustaceans

Barnacle spp
Balanus crenatus
Unknown copepods in *Tubularia*
Jassa falcata
Idotea spp
Caprella spp
Mysid spp
Pisidia longicornis
Unknown shrimp in *Tubularia*
Humpback prawn spp
Crangon crangon
Pandalus montagui
Palaemon serratus
Homarus gammarus
Galathea squamifera
Pagurus spp
Pagurus bernhardus
Inachus spp
Macropodia spp
Hyas araneus
Necora puber
Liocarcinus depurator
Carcinus maenas
Cancer pagurus

Molluscs

Chiton spp
Gibbula cineraria
Calliostoma zizyphinum
Nucella lapillus
Buccinum undatum
Crepidula fornicata
Archidoris pseudoargus
Acanthodoris bilamellata
Janolus cristatus
Facelina auriculata
Facelina bostoniensis
Goniodoris nodosa
Eubranchus farrani
Eubranchus tricolour
Aeolidia papillosa
Flabellina pedata
Doto spp
Dendronotus frondosus
Cadlina laevis
Coryphella spp
Mytilus edulis
Sepiolo atlantica
Loligo spp
Sepia spp



Bryozoans

crusts
Electra pilosa
Celaria spp
Crisia spp
Unknown branching spp
Unknown branching clustered spp
Bugula purpurea
Bugula flabellata
Bugula spp
Flustra foliacea
Alcyonidium diaphanum

Echinoderms

Crossaster papposus
Asterias rubens
Henricia spp
Ophiothrix fragilis
Ophiura albida
Echinus esculentus

Sea squirts

Clavelina lepadiformis
Clavelina spp 'pinhead'
Sidnyum turbinatum
Molgula spp
Asciidiella aspersa
Unknown solitary silted
Unknown white solitary
Morchellium argus
Didemnum maculosum
Diplosoma spongiforme
Unknown pale pink colonial

Fish

Anguilla anguilla
Liparis liparis
Pholis gunnelus
Syngnathus acus
Pomatoschistus pictus
Pomatoschistus minutus
Callionymus lyra
Echiichthys vipera
Trachinus draco
Taurulus bubalis
Trisopterus luscus
Dicentrarchus labrax
Chelon labrosus
Labrus bergylta
Crenilabrus melops
Pleuronectes platessa

Algae

Pink encrusting
Corallina officianallis
mixed green
Enteromorpha linza
Chondrus crispus
Ulva lactuca
mixed red
Palmaria palmata
Blepharis ciliata
Drachiella spectabilis
Cladophora rupestris
Polyides rotundus
Ceramium spp
Heterosiphonia plumosa
Bryopsis plumosa
Polysiphonia lanosa
Plocamium cartilaginium
Scytosiphon lomentaria
Dictyota membranica
Dictyota dichotoma



Written by Dawn Watson and Rob Spray with many thanks for the data collected by all Seasearch East's volunteers.



With special thanks to:

Rick Southwood for masterminding the return to the mussel bed
Great Yarmouth BSAC for saving our Sea Palling surveys.
Learn Scuba in Lowestoft for the chance to dive Dunwich
Christal Seas in Norwich for their help promoting Seasearch in Norfolk
Olympus for supporting our photography

To find out more about Seasearch East please visit www.seasearcheast.org.uk

If your dive club or group would like a visit to explain about how they can get started helping with Seasearch or see more of the amazing wildlife off the East Anglian coast please get in touch. There's lots more pictures of marine wildlife from the East, the rest of the UK and even worldwide in our gallery pages www.1townhouses.co.uk

If you're a non-diver there's still plenty you can do. Please, please get in touch with the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) and/or your local Wildlife Trust. The Trusts also have a website to highlight the wildlife of the North Sea and events promoting it.

www.mcsuk.org
www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk
www.suffolkwildlife.org

www.essexwt.org.uk
www.northseawildlife.org.uk

The MCS are running a project at the moment to highlight important and interesting marine sites. If you want to nominate your favourite, vote for one of the many already nominated or just look for new places then visit www.yourseasyourvoice.com



www.seasearch.org.uk

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