

## Seasearch Cornwall 2022

It has been another successful and busy year for Seasearch Cornwall. A major help this year has been provided by Seasearch Volunteer Mary Ledlie who has volunteered each week helping with the data input and helping with teaching and mentoring Seasearch observers. Two Seasearch observer courses were carried out and one surveyor course was held online for the SW region. Seasearch freedivers have continued to be a big help and our star volunteer of the year, Keith Raven a freediver from Newquay completed a total of 31 Observer forms to a very high standard. This summer we received a high number of seahorse sightings and Matt has applied for a licence for CWT staff and volunteers to survey seahorses next year.

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Number of Seasearch forms:   | 216 |
| Number of divers/recorders:  | 56  |
| Number of species recorded:  |     |
| Number of species records:   | TBC |
| Number of biotopes recorded: |     |
| Number of biotope records:   |     |

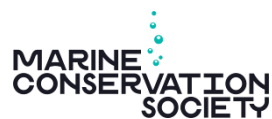
Massive thanks to all our volunteers and to our funders for making this another great Seasearch year!

Matt Slater, Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Facebook group  
Seasearch Cornwall



These Survey dives were conducted as part of the national Seasearch programme. Seasearch is a volunteer underwater survey project for recreational divers to actively contribute to the conservation of the marine environment. For details of Seasearch in Cornwall visit [www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/seasearch](http://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/seasearch)



| Group              | No of Species |
|--------------------|---------------|
| cnidarian          |               |
| red alga           |               |
| mollusc            |               |
| sponge             |               |
| bryozoan           |               |
| tunicate           |               |
| crustacean         |               |
| bony fish          |               |
| brown algae        |               |
| annelid            |               |
| echinoderm         |               |
| cartilaginous fish |               |
| sea spider         |               |
| green algae        |               |
| fungus             |               |
| marine mammal      |               |
| flatworm           |               |

Data not available yet — coming soon



**Cornwall**  
Wildlife Trust

## Seasearch Cornwall - Summary Report 2022



Furbelows kelp at the Manacles, Matt Slater



Mounds bay seagrass—Matt Slater



Octopus vulgaris, Porthkerris- Shannon Moran



Rainbow seaslug Babakina anodoni— Allen Murray



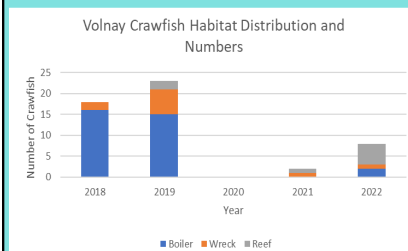
Comber —John Blackwell, the Bizzies



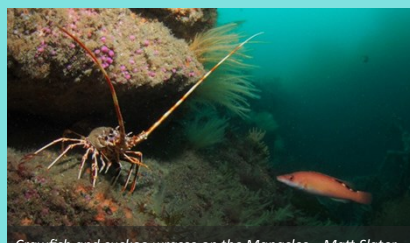
Spiny Seahorse— Fal SAC, Matt Slater

## Crawfish survey report

In spring our annual crawfish survey dives were carried out on the wrecks of the Volnay and the Mohegan both a short distance from Porthkerris dive centre. This was the first year that very small crawfish have been seen in the



boilers tubes at the Volnay since 2018, a positive sign that crawfish are reproducing. Overall numbers however are lower than they were in 2019 and there are fears that uncontrolled netting for crawfish may be affecting the population. Landings of crawfish to Cornish ports by commercial fishers have doubled between 2015 and 2020 from 10 to 23 tonnes (MMO data).



Crawfish and cuckoo wrasse on the Manacles—Matt Slater

## Octopus vulgaris invasion and an increase in seahorse records

In May and June 2022, CWT were alerted to high numbers of *Octopus vulgaris* being caught in fishermen's pots along the south coast from Newlyn to Mevagissey. Around the same time sightings of these large octopus increased around Porthkerris in particular and in Falmouth bay. Shannon Moran was able to get a series of amazing photos. The numbers being caught were huge with one fisherman reporting 150 octopus caught in his pots in one day. Another fisher from Mylor reported that one pot had 6 common octopus in it!

There has been an increase in 2022 in seahorse records coming in to CWT via Seasearch divers and members of the public. Matt Slater of CWT was lucky to see 8 on one dive in the summer and has applied for an MMO seahorse license to carry out survey dives in 2023.



Octopus vulgaris —Shannon Moran

## ReMEDIES

Three successful ReMEDIES subsidised dive expeditions were carried out this year, one from Porthkerris where we surveyed Helford estuary, one at Plymouth where we dived on the seagrass restoration site at Jennycliff, in Cawsand bay, at Drakes Island and higher up the estuary off Mashfords. And in September we held a two day expedition from Mylor where we surveyed maerl on the St Mawes bank, and seagrass at Penarrow point. A detailed report on the findings of each dive expedition has been produced. Of concern is the amount of epiphytic algae encountered at Jenny cliff (the non native *Antithamnionella ternifolia*) and on maerl beds at St Mawes. Good density of maerl was documented in Falmouth bay around the bizzies and in 2023 we want to further explore the outer Fal bay maerl sites.



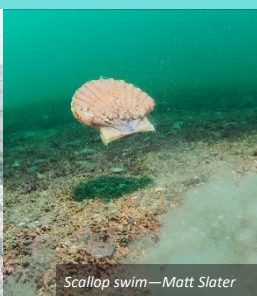
Seagrass overgrown with algae, Jennycliff —Matt Slater

## G7 Blue carbon surveys St Austell Bay

Four days of diving funded by the G7 legacy fund was carried out as part of the CWT St Austell bay blue carbon mapping project which has uncovered one of the UKs largest seagrass beds! The area of seagrass is 4 times the area previously recorded in St Austell bay, at 888 acres! Surveys were carried out assessing the health and biodiversity of the seagrass and maerl beds in the bay, an area with important and fragile blue carbon habitats that currently have no protection. A report has been published by CWT and is available [here](#).



G7 Seasearch Dive team—Matt Slater



Scallop swim—Matt Slater



## Fal harbour and Mounts bay seagrass surveys

Seasearch divers surveyed the scours left by moorings at Falmouth harbour. The data collected in this the second year of the project shows that seagrass is quick to recover if mooring chains are removed. A snorkel survey was also carried out in Mounts bay visiting the newly discovered seagrass beds there.



Algae growth on maerl bed, St Mawes —Matt Slater



Edible crab in seagrass, Cawsand bay—Matt Slater