

Seasearch Cornwall 2023

Another busy year! 2023 saw a total of 69 volunteers contribute Seasearch forms. 2 observer courses were held that trained 33 new volunteers. A brand new snorkel survey methodology was devised and tested using Seasearch snorkellers to monitor kelp and seagrass using GPS referenced photo transects.

A specialist course in fish Identification was held and an online surveyor course gave experienced observers a chance to continue their progression. A great programme of dives was run through various projects including ReMEDIES, and G7 funding. Another new initiative was a collaboration between Seasearch Cornwall and Fathoms Free who took us out in their rib. On one dive on seagrass beds off Newlyn we found a huge ghost net which was retrieved by Fathoms Free net removal divers later in the season. An excellent result. We look forward to more diving with them in 2024.

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

Data not available yet - coming soon

Number of Seasearch forms:	276
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! Particular shout out to our volunteer of the year Jenny Kent! And to Mary Ledlie for all she does helping run Seasearch Cornwall.

Matt Slater, Cornwall Wildlife Trust



These Survey dives were conducted as part of the national Seasearch programme. Seasearch is a volunteer underwater survey project for recreational divers and snorkellers to actively contribute to the conservation of the marine environment. www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/seasearch



Seasearch Cornwall - Summary Report 2023



Charlotte Cumming and crystal jelly, Matt Slater



Edible Crab Cancer Pagurus, Matt Slater



Form filling after diving, Porthkerris Matt Slater



Slipper lobster, Scyllarus arctus, Falmouth bay, Sean Dixon



Cuttlefish under the mussel farm, St Austell bay, Sean Dixon



Jewel anemones Corynactis viridis, Sean Dixon

Lands End SAC and Padstow MCZ

This summer we managed to dive the extremely exposed reefs off the Longships, within the Lands End SAC, and off Padstow MCZ. Two days of diving aboard Harlyn Divers Rib *Pressure Seeker* was funded by Natural England and with these we dived one day in Lands end SAC and one day off Padstow in the Padstow MCZ. We returned later in the summer with Skipper Luke Bullus (Fathoms Free) aboard the *Captain Paul Watson Foundation Rib*. The MCZ hasn't be surveyed by Seasearch for many years. Notable was the lack of plumose anemones – a common feature there in the 80's and 90's but now very rare. Crawfish love this area and several were seen by Lucy and Ellie, walls covered in jewel anemones were everywhere and of course we also had some encounters with the local seals who came to check us out! Also noted were many chains of salps in the oceanic water – it was a good year for these strange drifting seasquirts.



Sponge and jewel anemones, Matt Slater

Nudibranch Bonanza

2023 was another good year for nudibranch records. Of note was a high number of reports of *Discodoris rosi*, recorded off Padstow, Newquay and Lands end by seasearchers. The tiny white nudibranch *Colpodaspis pusila* was seen on the Bizzies reef by Sean Dixon. Joe Gurney captured a stunning image of *Polycera quadrilineata*, the orange lined nudibranch, while taking part in our Land's End survey. Shortlis in the Cornwall Wildlife Trust Wildlife photography Competition. Another rare species *Pruvotfolia pselliotes* was found eating a crystal jelly on maerl beds off Stack point, Falmouth Bay. Yvonne Oates got a lovely record of *Babakina anodoni* at Porthkerris.



Pruvotfolia pselliotes, Sean Dixon



Discodoris rosi, Matt Slater



Lined polycera, Joe Gurney



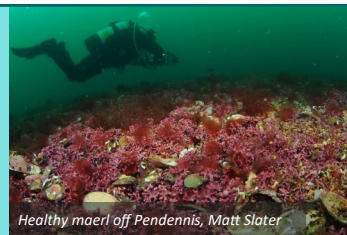
Colpodaspis pusila, Sean Dixon



Cornwall 2023

ReMEDIES dive expeditions

Six days of subsidised diving was carried out in 2023 as part of the EU Life ReMEDIES project. A total of ten locations were surveyed and a total of 53 Seasearch forms were completed capturing a total of 342 hours of volunteer time (not including travel time). The aim of the survey dives was to investigate historical and recent records of maerl in Falmouth bay, to record detailed information on the habitats and species encountered and to ground truth drop down camera surveys carried out in 2021 by Cornwall IFCA. Detailed information on live and dead maerl percentage cover, size of nodules, presence of 3d structure and other substrates was recorded using an additional maerl survey form that was completed after each dive by each buddy pair. The result is an improved level of detail on the nature of the Fal bay maerl beds and associated biodiversity plus some interesting insight including concerns posed by overgrowth of filamentous algae and non-native kelp, *Undaria pinattifida* (wakame) which was seen growing on maerl beds south of St Mawes Castle a worrying new observation. A positive thing noted by divers on all dive sites was an abundance of king scallop, *Pecten maximus*. The Fal SAC has a ban on bottom towed fishing gear which was brought in in 2009 and scallop and maerl appears to be benefiting.



Healthy maerl off Pendennis, Matt Slater



Young Protula sp (lots seen), Sean Dixon



Wakame growing directly on maerl, Matt Slater

Fish ID course

A two day specialist course on fish identification, led by Lin Baldock, co author of the new Seasearch Fish book, was held at Mylor Yacht Club. A snorkel survey was held at Prisk Cove and a dive on the second day visited the Bizzies. I was delighted to show Lin a large number of Stevens Gobies! This year we have had several rare fish species records including a seahorse in St Austell bay seen by Jenny Kent, a Norwegian topknot seen by Matt Slater near the wreck of the Epsilon and juvenile Couches bream and scad seen under the St Austell mussel farm.



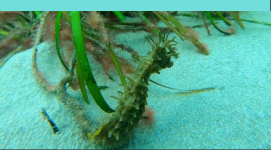
Norwegian topknot, Matt Slater



Couches bream, Becky Gill



Lin at the bizzies, Matt Slater



Spiny seahorse, Jenny Kent

St Austell bay dive surveys

Three days of dive surveys were carried out in St Austell bay. Healthy maerl was recorded at three sites and of interest was a large number of cuttlefish recorded on these dives. Muddier areas were also surveyed between the mussel farms and in the middle of the bay.



Cuttlefish, Matt Slater