

Sussex Seasearch

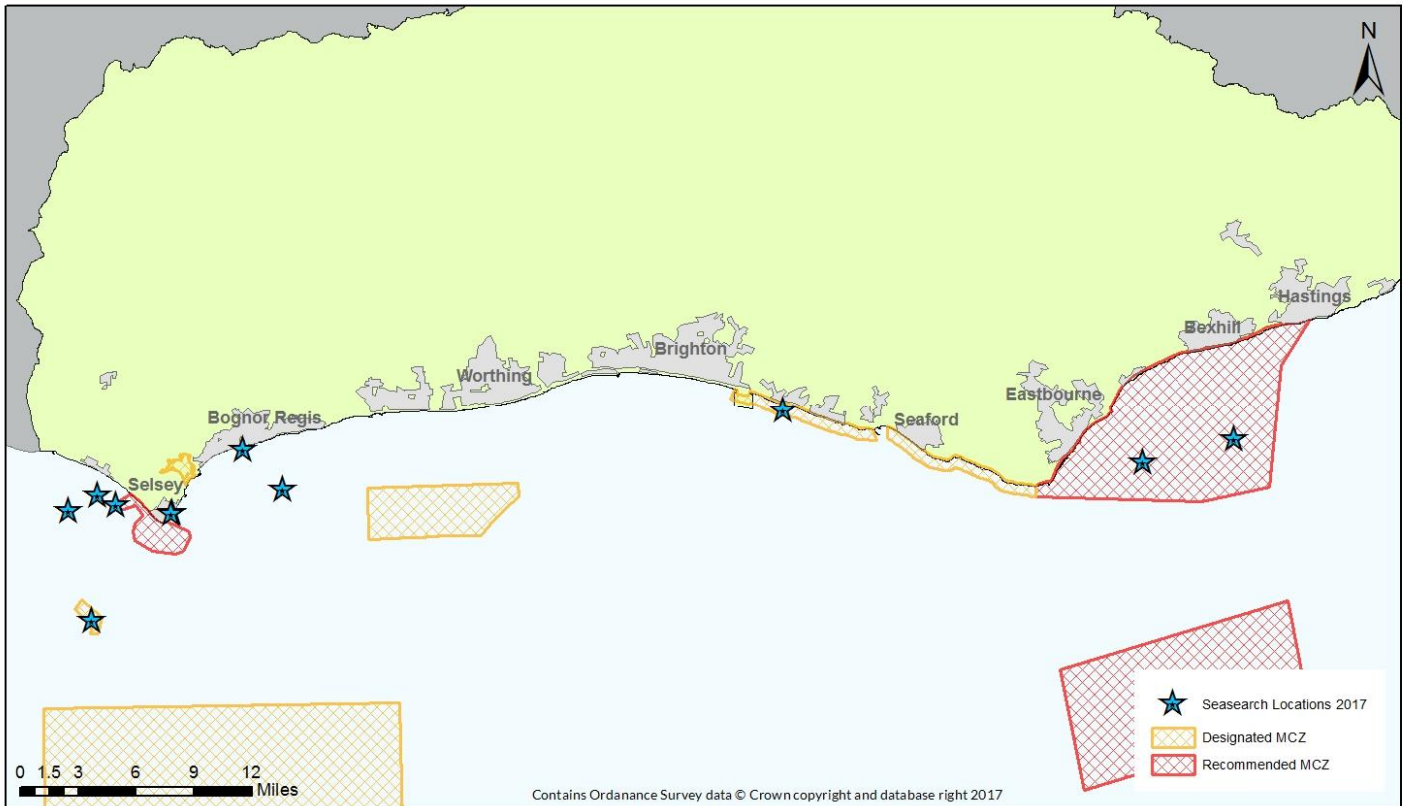
Summary Report 2017



A shallow survey at Bognor Rocks

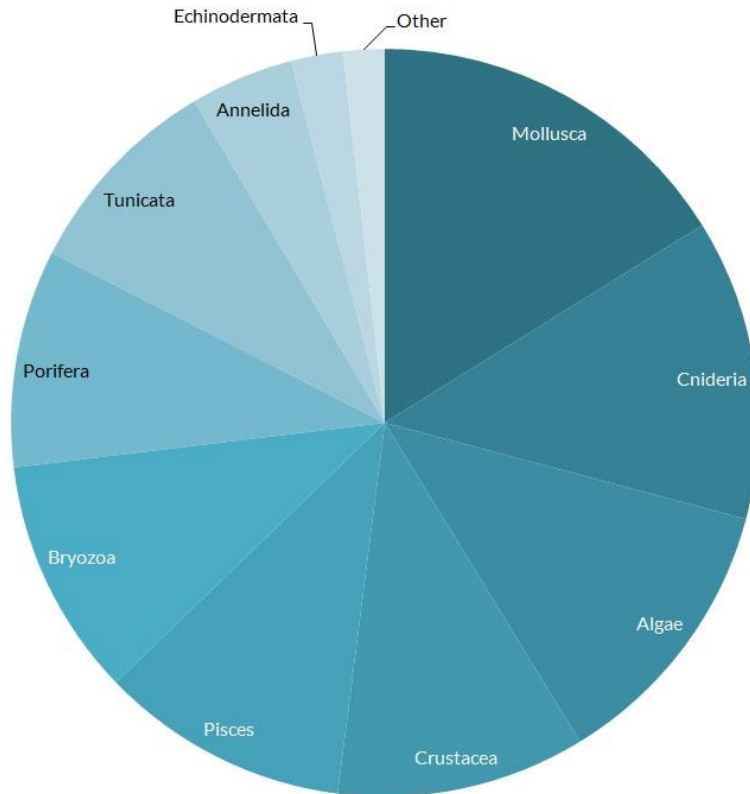


Blue mussels, *Mytilus edulis*, at Bexhill Mussel Garden



A total of 21 forms were received for the Sussex Seasearch region, covering depths between 2.5 and 16 metres. Two diving days were organised: one in Beachy Head East recommended Marine Conservation Zone (rMCZ) and one in Utopia Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) - unfortunately the dive in Utopia MCZ needed to be relocated to Waldrons Reef due to poor sea conditions.

Approximately 220 taxa were identified from a total of 734 records. The most commonly recorded species was the painted top shell, *Caliostoma zizyphinium* (19 records), followed by hornwrack, *Flustra foliacea* (18 records), and dead man's fingers, *Alcyonium digitatum* (16 records).



Mollusca: Approximately 36 species, including painted top shell, *Calliostoma zizyphinum*, blue mussel, *Mytilus edulis*, and queen scallop, *Aequipecten opercularis*.

Cnidaria: Approximately 29 species, including dead man's fingers, *Alcyonium digitatum*, sandaled anemone, *Actinothoe sphyrodeta*, and dahlia anemone, *Urticina felina*.

Algae: Approximately 27 species, including eyelash weed, *Calliblepharis ciliata*, the red seaweed, *Rhodomenia holmesii*, and forkweed, *Dictyota dichotoma*.

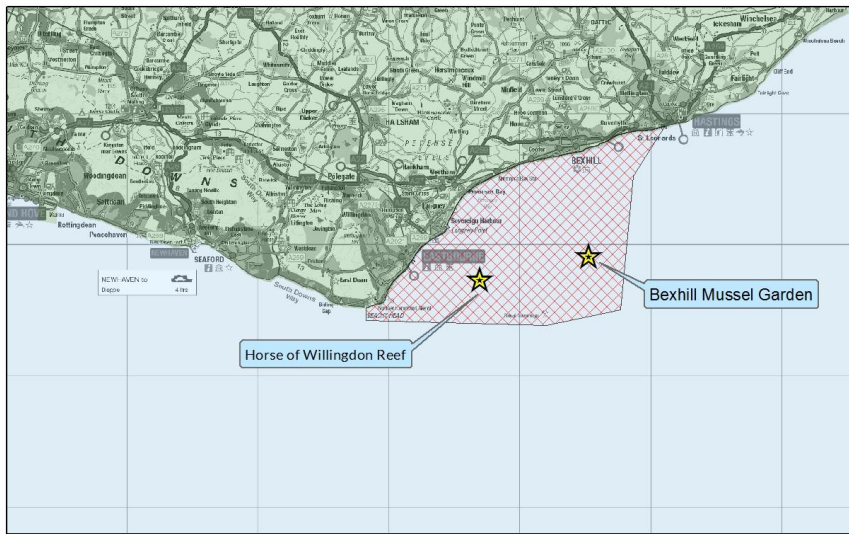
Crustacea: Approximately 24 species, including velvet swimming crab, *Necora puber*, common spider crab, *Maja brachydactyla*, and common hermit crab, *Pagurus bernhardus*.

Pisces: Approximately 24 species, including bib, *Trisopterus luscus*, goldsinny wrasse, *Ctenolabrus rupestris*, and tompot blenny, *Parablennius gattorugine*.

Bryozoa: Approximately 23 species, including hornwrack, *Flustra foliacea*, *Bugula plumose* and ross coral, *Pentapora foliacea*.

Porifera: Approximately 21 species, including shredded carrot sponge, *Amphilectus fucorum*, goosebump sponge, *Dysidea fragilis*, and breadcrumb sponge, *Halichondria (Halichondria) panicea*.

Tunicata: Approximately 20 species, including light bulb sea squirt, *Clavelina lepadiformis*, *Ciona intestinalis* and *Diplosoma spongiforme*.



Two dives were arranged within the Beachy Head East recommended Marine Conservation Zone in August. This site has been put forward as a candidate for the Government's upcoming third tranche of MCZ designations. The site was therefore targeted by Sussex Seasearch to provide up-to-date species and habitat data.

A full report on these surveys is available [here](#).

0 2 4 8 12 Miles

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2017

Bexhill Mussel Garden

50°45.96N, 00°29.10E

Mostly fine undulating sand with patches of blue mussels, *Mytilus edulis*, and some areas of more mixed grounds with cobbles and pebbles.

Frequently observed species included blue mussels, *M. edulis*, dead man's fingers, *Alcyonium digitatum*, and ascidian (*Molgula*) turf. Keel worms, *Spirobranchus* sp., were also frequent on cobbles and pebbles.



Above: Large cobble with many encrusting animals, including keel worms, *Spirobranchus* sp., and white-striped anemones, *Actinothoe sphyrodeta*.

Left: Blue mussels, *M. edulis*, and dead man's fingers, *A. digitatum*, on sandy bottom.



Horse of Willingdon Reef

50°44.03N, 00°22.31E

A rocky reef habitat which features flattened rocky outcrops with gullies and overhangs. Vertical faces up to 0.5m in height are present.

Red algae and mixed animal turfs dominated the top surfaces of the reef, which had a fine covering of silt. The reef walls and deeper surfaces were dominated by dense animal turf of various sponges, hydroids, sea squirts and bryozoans; notably *Chartella papyracea* and *Scrupocellaria* sp. Some flat areas of reef had pockets of pebbles, allowing keel worms, *Spirobranchus* sp., to colonise.

Other frequent or interesting species encountered at this site included the candy-stripe flatworm, *Prostheceraeus vittatus*, common starfish, *Asterias rubens*, and a number of fish species.



Photo: Francis Jeffcock

Above: Candy-stripe flat worm, *P. vittatus*.

Left: Red seaweed, *Rhodomenia holmesii*, amongst short animal turf on the top surfaces of the reef.

Below: Happy divers after a fantastic day with two successful dives!



Photo: Bryony Chapman



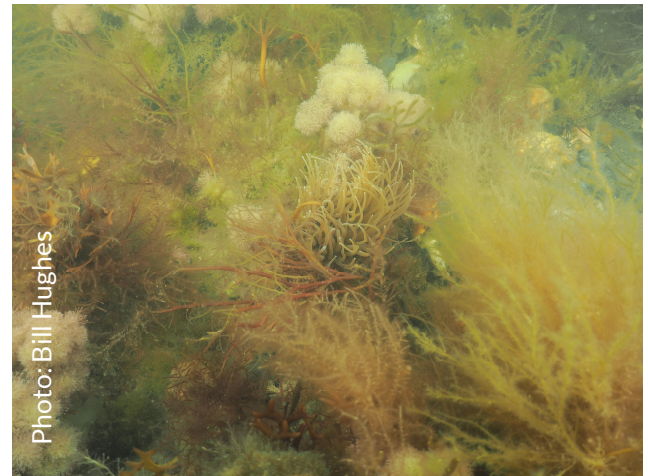
Photo: Sarah Ward

East Beach, Selsey

50°43.77N, 00°46.56W

A shallow shore dive over mixed ground which included cobbles, pebbles, boulders, and mixed seaweed and animal turfs.

Right: A snakelocks anemone, *Anemonia viridis*, nestled among a variety of seaweeds.



Hopper Barge, Bracklesham Bay

50°43.96N, 00°53.85W

The wreck lies at between 10 and 13m depth on a seabed of mixed ground.

The wreckage itself is home to a mixed animal turf of hydroids, bryozoans, sea squirts and sponges. A number of molluscs, fish and crabs were also present, including bib, *T. luscus*, dragonette, *Callionymus lyra*, whelks, *Buccinum undatum*, hermit crabs and spider crabs.

Bracklesham Balls

50°44.61N, 00°51.76W

The 'balls' are boulders of up to 1.5m in diameter; the seabed type of the survey site was categorised as both 'boulders' and 'sand and gravel'.

The boulders were colonised by animal turf, including hydroids, bryozoans, sponges. Slipper limpets, *Crepidula fornicata*, velvet swimming crabs, *Necora puber*, and bib, *Trisopterus luscus*, were also common.

The sandy area showed signs of life, such as worm casts and razor clam shells.

Saltdean Cannons (Beachy Head West MCZ)

50°47.80N, 00°03.08W

The site featured two main habitats: sandy sea bed with a few signs of life and chalk reef with protruding rocks (some as large as 1m in height). A large cannon, approximately 3m in length, is present at this site.

Species of interest encountered at this site included a European eel, *Anguilla anguilla*, juvenile bib and a large thornback ray, *Raja clavata*.

Left: Thornback ray, *Raja clavata*.



Bognor Rocks

50°46.57N, 00°41.40W

A shallow shore dive over amongst the sandstone rocky outcrops breaking out of the sandy bottom. The outcrops range from 1 to 6m across and up to 1.5m in height.

The boulder tops were dominated by various red algae; the steeper sides and overhangs were covered by animal turf.

Right: Mixed seaweeds covering a sandstone rocky outcrop.



The Hounds Reef, Selsey (Selsey Bill & The Hounds rMCZ)

50°44.16N, 00°50.52W

The bedrock is composed of limestone, with boulders providing plentiful recesses and overhangs. The site had dense coverings of mixed algae, sponges and sea squirts.

Any dive can be a Seasearch dive!

A Huge Thank You...



Many thanks to all those who took part in Seasearch in Sussex in 2017:

Chris Bohea, Charlotte Bolton, Bryony Chapman, Bill Hughes, Daniel Ingrey, Francis Jeffcock, Gerald Legg, Liz Lumb, Jess Mead, Ryan Mowat, Rob Spray, Dawn Watson, Neil Watson and Chris Williams.

Additional thanks to all those who kindly shared their images and footage.

Many thanks to skippers Steve Johnson (Channel Diving) and Steve Frampton (Mulberry Divers) for their help, knowledge and expertise - and for their support of the project.

Sussex Seasearch 2018...

Wednesday 11th April	Waldrons Reef The Hounds Reef	FULLY BOOKED
Saturday 28th & Sunday 29th April	Seaweeds course	FULLY BOOKED
Saturday 12th May	Seasearch Observer course	
Sunday 13th May	Far Mulberry The Hounds Reef	Qualifying dives for Observer course
Friday 20th July	Beachy Head East rMCZ (two dives)	

Keep in touch...

Sarah Ward - Living Seas Officer

sarahward@sussexwt.org.uk

01273 497572

07717 835039

[@SussexSeas](#)

www.seasearch.org.uk

www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk

[Facebook Group - Sussex Seasearch](#)

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. Seasearch in Sussex is coordinated by Sussex Wildlife Trust.

Registered charity number 207005

Registered in England, company no.698851



Sussex
Wildlife Trust