

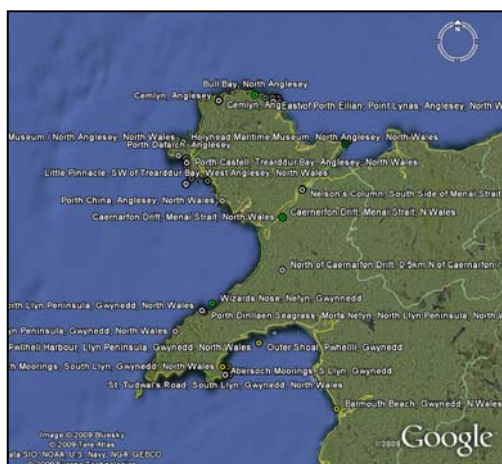
2008: Seasearching in North Wales

and here's to more in 2009!....



Hello everyone,

Thank you to everyone for all your Seasearch records last year. Despite what some are dubbing 'the worst diving year on record' it was a record breaking year for North Wales Seasearch, with lots to be seen beneath our local waves. We managed 13 days of Seasearch diving (including lots of skate and ray eggcase hunting, helping CCW with seagrass surveys and some club dives). In total we have now counted 162 Seasearch forms submitted for the local area – that's nearly 3 times the number submitted for last year! That is excellent news ☺ 34 of these are very valuable Surveyor forms, adding a lot of new information to areas where previously there has been very little information. In 2009, we're hoping to see more of these from new Surveyors that trained at Porth Ysgadon in 2008.



Not only did we all make a valuable contribution to the knowledge of the Welsh seabed, but we also helped break the UK National Seasearch record for the total number of Seasearch records ever! If you are interested in seeing information on all the Seasearch sites dived this year in the whole of the UK, go to the 'Achievements page' on the Seasearch Website and click on Seasearch on Google Earth. <http://www.seasearch.org.uk/>. You can also check out summaries of weekends around the country via the website, which is a good idea if you're going somewhere new this year.

On a less positive note, despite 32 specific eggcase hunt forms handed in 2008 not one Seasearch diver spotted a live skate or ray eggcase. In 2007 only one live thornback ray eggcase was spotted on Seasearch / Shark Trust Funded Eggcase Dives (headed by local tutor Lucy Kay). On an upside, many greater and lesser spotted dogfish eggcases have been spotted, and we are learning more about the distribution and nurseries of these species. Although the project has as yet yielded few positive results, it is proving very worrying news for Welsh skates and rays, and highlighting the need for more information and recording schemes, so do keep your eyes peeled in 2009. There is one more year of funding to try to identify when and where these elusive creatures lay their eggs, so do join us on an eggcase weekend. The method of recording is similar to a Seasearch Observation Form: recording the habitat and attachment method of any live eggcases. Forms are available from me of request.

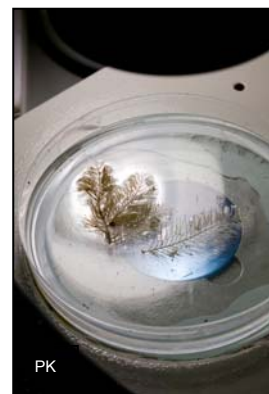


A breadcrumb sponge and spider crab typical of the Menai Strait (Richard Yorke); Greater Dogfish / Catshark Eggcases, South Llŷn (Liz Morris); The unusual White Lace Sponge, *Clathrina coriacea*, on Porth Ysgadon Outer Reef (Paul Kay); Another typical Menai Strait scene, Dahlia anemones and spider crab (Richard Yorke); Big Seasearch Weekend BBQ, Porth Ysgadon, North Llŷn (Liz Morris).

Everyone seems to have also been busy training in 2008. 62 new members attended Observer courses in Bangor, Menai, Southport and Chester. Welcome! 6 people also partook in the Seasearch Surveyor's course on the Llŷn. Congratulations to 14 of you who all completed their Observer qualification dives too (sorry, there's too many to name in the newsletter this year, but you know who you are!).



In addition to standard Seasearch courses, we also hosted a Bryozoan and Hydroid specialist course in North Wales in 2008. Visiting Seasearch tutor, bryozoan taxonomist and lecturer from Aberystwyth University, Dr Joanne Porter, came up to introduce us all to some of the smaller things we might see diving, and give us an insight into how to identify these otherwise indistinct little critters. 13 Seasearchers and university students joined the 2 day course, and between us we battled with microscopes to identify 22 species of bryozoan and 14 hydroids from the Church



Island gullies of the Menai Strait and Seasquirt Reef on the North Llŷn. Thanks very much to Jo for all her effort. We look forward to seeing her Seasearch ID guide to bryozoans and hydroids sometime this year, and seeing her again for the Marine ID course later this year.

2009 is going to be yet another dive packed year, with some more courses too. I have attached dates and details for you in the document that accompanies this. If you can, it will be great to see many of you at the refresher days, and at the Fish or marine ID courses, which are going to be great ways of getting back into Seasearch this year, and good fun too.

So, thanks again for a brilliant 2008 and we look forward to seeing you 'diving into Seasearch' soon!

Best Wishes,

Liz & all the North Wales Seasearch team.

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With thanks to all the North Wales Seasearchers.

Thank you to Paul Kay, Liz Morris & Richard Yorke for use of their Seasearch pictures
Produced by Liz Morris on behalf of Seasearch for the Countryside Council for Wales on 24 February 2009