



WEST WALES SEASEARCH DIVING
April to June 2008
Kate Lock

26th April 2008 St Brides Bay

Calm seas rewarded the 16 divers that gathered at St Brides Haven at the end of April.



Three RIBs with Bruce, Mark (West Wales Diving School) and Dai Love took the divers to the Hen & Chicks and Nabs Head. The plan at Hen & Chicks was to build on the data collected in 2007 - to sketch, record species and take video that could then contribute to the development of a local dive guide to the site. Despite very low visibility the team managed 2 dives at the site and Vicky Swales is transforming the data into beautiful 3-D sketches. Further dives with better vis are needed to complete the project.

Divers: Kerry Lewis, Vicky Swales, Scott Tompsett, Simon Ward, Ian Goddard, Rebecca Gaille, Winter Doto, Janina Henly, Carolyn Waddell, Steve Bound, Glyn Powell, Jon Moore, Ed Male, Andrew Everett, Paul Meredith, Ceri Jones, Hilary Dibdin, Mena Evans, Emma Rodgers. Shore support: Kate Lock and Jen Jones.

12th May 2008 Newquay, South Cardigan Bay

9 divers met at Newquay harbour to join the team from Cardigan Bay Marine Life Centre on board Steve Hartley's boat *Sulaire*. The CBMLC team complete Bottle nosed dolphin surveys in the local area and our aim was to dive sites that they have identified a 'hot spots' for dolphin foraging.

Mirror calm seas and light sea fog greeted the day.....first site Newquay Head.....but despite calm weather the divers were limited to less than one metre visibility! However Seasearch forms were completed - a sandy rippled seabed was found with a few worm

casts and an occasional masked crab. We concluded that the dolphins must be feeding on migratory fish!

The second dive was at Ynys Lochtyn, the divers were rewarded with a massive two metres vis - a sand rippled seabed led to a shallow reef near shore with a mussel *Mytilus edulis* bed, and mixed red seaweeds, large dahlia anemones, *Urticina felina* were found with both spiny spider crabs *Maja squinado* and velvet swimming crabs *Necora puber* common.

Divers: Jo Porter, Alex Burton, Georgia Robson, Sarah Lister, Ian Williams, David Kipling, Sarah Bowen, Howard Manning, Carolyn Waddell. Surface cover: Kate Lock Boat: Steve Hartley, Sarah Perry, Janet Baxter.

13th May 2008 Aberystwyth, Cardigan Bay

Jo Porter organised shore diving in Aberystwyth, supported by Phil Hughes with the small RIB belonging to Friends of Cardigan Bay. Dives were completed at Castle Rocks and Tan y Bwlth.

Divers: Sarah Bowen, David Kipling, Howard Manning, Alex Burton, Sarah Lister and Georgia Robson...with Alex, Sarah and Georgia all completing their Seasearch Observer qualifications.

14th & 15th June 2008 Abercastle, North Pembrokeshire

Sunny and calm seas...and yes finally between 5-8metres visibility allowing the team to survey some sites on the southern side of Strumble Head. 3 RIBs helmed by Bruce, Jen and Mark of West Wales Diving School and Dave Stephens allowed the team to spread out at each site.

Dive 1. Pen Brush A rugged rocky reef with steep cliff walls and deep gullies. The rocks were dominated with a high diversity of sponge species with 20 species recorded, particularly common were *Homaxinella subdola* and *Axinella damicornis*. Patches of yellow cluster anemone, *Parozoanthus axinellae* were found on the walls and on exposed areas mussel beds mixed in with kelp park. Unusual crabs found were the sponge crab, *Dromia personata* and the spider crab, *Hya araneus*. Leading away from the reef was a cobble/gravel slope with occasional potato crisp bryozoan, *Pentapora foliacea* and sightings of the curled octopus *Eledone cirrhosa*.

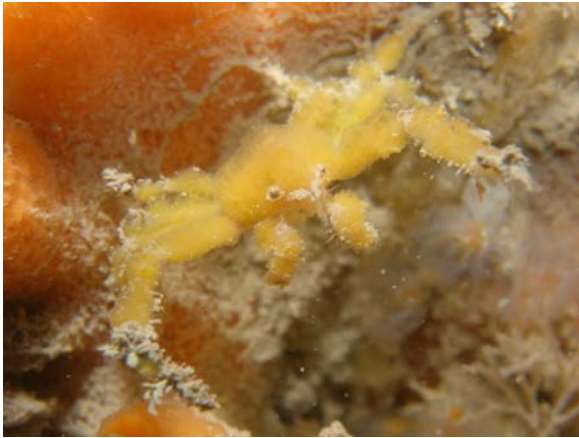


H. subdola & *P. axinellae* Chris Wood



Mussel bed with *E. cirrhosa* David Kipling

Dive 2. Anderson Reef A drift dive across a low-lying rocky reef with shallow ridges around 0.5m high. Running in parallel to the reef were plains of cobble/sand mixed ground covered in brittle star beds and large dahlia anemones *Urticina felina*. The rocky reef area was festooned in sponge fauna with *Tethyspira spinosa*, *Axinella damicornis*, *A. dissimilis* and *A. infundbuliformis* all recorded. Large numbers of crustacea were also recorded including some pretty funky spider crabs, *Hya araraneus* A nudibrach highlight was the sighting of *Doris sticta* - a rare species in UK waters!



Inachus sp

David Kipling



Nudibrach *Doris sticta* Chris Wood

Dive 3. Pwll Arian A magnificent site with steep rock walls and a deep swim through gullies. The site was described as 'a yellow site' as almost everything recorded was yellow! The yellow cluster anemone, *Parazoanthus axinellae* was super abundant carpeting the rocks and again like many of these sites a high diversity of sponges recorded including a large patch of the mashed potato sponge *Thymosia guernei*. Hydroids were also abundant with the common antenna hydroids, *Nemertesia antennina* and *N. ramosa* both present along with *Aglaophenia sp* and the herring bone hydroid *Halecium halecinum*, most notable was patches of the indian feather hydroid, *Gymnangium montagui*. Six species of nudibranch were recorded including two sightings of the rare *Okenia elegans*. The most notable crustacean were several baby crayfish, *Palinurus elephas* hiding in small crevices.



Sponge turf

Chris Wood



Nudibranch *O.elegans*

David Kipling

Dive 4. Aber Mawr Pinnacle Jagged rocky reef at 12m with a rock and boulder slope down to 18m giving way to cobbles and pebbles at 20m below sea level. Sponge turf dominated the rock surfaces especially the shredded carrot sponge *Amphilectus fucorum* and the yellow staghorn sponge *Axinella dissimilis*. Other notable species were the mashed potato sponge *Thymosia guernei*, the chimney sponge *Ciocalypta penicillus* and *Tehyspira spinosa*. Hydroid species were also prolific with an abundance of the antenna hydroid *Nemertesia antennina*. Territorial fish were found around the reef and boulders with ballan, cuckoo, goldsinny and corkwing wrasse all recorded along with tompot blennies and leopard spotted gobies. Conger eel were also spotted lurking in the boulders. Biodiversity Action Plan species recorded included two pink sea fans *Eunicella verrucosa* and sightings of juvenile crayfish *Palinurus elephas*.



E. verrucosa

Chris Wood



Tompot blenny

David Kipling

Divers: Sarah Bowen, David Kipling, Simon Ward, Ian Goddard, Chris Wood, Ruth Sharratt, Winter Doto, Kate Lock, Ian Williams, Scott Tompsett, Vicky Swales, Steve Bounds and Kerry Lewis.

Boat: Jen and Bruce Jones, Mark. Dave Stephens.