

ISLE OF WIGHT MARINE BIOLOGICAL REPORT FOR 2005 AND 2006

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Report for 2005

Algae

In April, a course organised by members of the British Phycological Society visited Bembridge shore finding a large number of species, some of which have not previously been recorded within the area. These will be reported separately. A survey of the marine biotopes within littoral caves on the south coast of the Isle of Wight was carried out in September (Irving, 2006). A total of 17 caves were investigated and 14 biotopes identified, some of which were not possible to classify within existing schemes. Of particular interest, was the re-discovery of an un-described species of encrusting red alga, which had first been found by Ian Tittley in 1986.

Invertebrates

On 30th May, a specimen of the toothed topshell *Osilinus lineatus* was found amongst upper shore boulders on the western side of Freshwater Bay. This was possibly the same individual found in 2003. The species has been increasing in abundance at sites along the Dorset coast however it has not extended its range eastwards as rapidly as the related trochid *Gibbula umbilicalis*. In November the Tainaid *Apseudes talpa* was found amongst other dredged material collected in Osborne Bay by an oyster fisherman. There are relatively few records of this group from off the island coast and none known for this particular species.

Fish

A Boar fish (*Capros aper*) was found stranded on the beach at Compton Bay in February. This was the 9th record from our shores. A Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*) was found washed up dead on the beach at East Cowes in early June. This species has not been recorded very frequently although is known to migrate up mainland rivers (JNCC, 2007). The species is protected under the EU Habitats Directive (Annex II).

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Boat Records

Species	Date	Location	Weight
Garfish(<i>Belone belone</i>)	16 th April	Off Needles	1 lb 11oz
Stingray (<i>Dasyatis pastinaca</i>)	9 th July	Off Nab	51 lbs

Shore Caught

Species	Date	Location	Weight
Red Mullet (<i>Mullus surmuletus</i>)	5 th September	Fort Victoria	2 lb 7oz

Report for 2006

Survey work off the islands NE coast and south of the Needles, with divers and a towed video sledge, did not confirm the presence of mantis shrimp burrows. However a large number of holes and burrows in the sea bed were found in the close vicinity of Peel Wreck Buoy near the entrance to Wootton Creek, where large numbers of the mantis shrimps *Rissoides desmaresti* were dredged up by oyster fishermen during the winter of 2005/2006. As part of a separate project to help young people appreciate underwater life in the mouth of the Medina and West Yar estuary, in July, *Underwater Safaris* were organised from the Needles pleasure boat *Wild Rose*. By deploying a remotely operated video camera images from the camera were projected on a large screen and species that could be identified were recorded. The video recordings, which also include views of the *Zostera* beds off Norton Spit, are available from the County Records Office. Marine species identification courses were organised from the Medina Valley Centre in August yield many records.

Algae

During marine survey training weeks in August a large number of species were recorded at several sites. At Bembridge a survey was carried out to compare the abundance of *Zostera* in the lagoon immediately south of the lifeboat station, with that determined in 1996 (Brenchley *et al*, 1996). Results showed that although still abundant in parts of the lagoon the distribution of *Zostera* is patchy compared to the earlier survey. Of additional interest at Bembridge was the prevalence of the brown thong weed *Himantalia elongata* at ELWS near the lifeboat station. This is primarily a southern species at the edge of its range and may be responding to warming seas.

Invertebrates

In April, a great grey sea slug *Aeolidiella papillosa* was found on the beaches of both Quarr and Bembridge. This species appears irregularly around the coast.

Whilst canoeing up the West Yar estuary on 2nd June a large number of the opisthobranch mollusc *Akera bullata* were seen swimming at the water surface between Kings Manor and the Causeway at high tide. This species has not previously been recorded in the estuary and records for the Island go back to Morey (1909) where it was found in Bembridge Harbour and amongst *Zostera* at St. Helens. It was also recorded from Seaview (Prebble, 1964) however it is uncertain whether these were shells or live specimens.

On September 1st, an examination of the wall on the eastern side of Freshwater Causeway revealed several specimens of the looping sail *Truncatella subcylindrica* at about EHWS. This nationally scarce species has not been seen at the site for about fifteen years since the wall was re-pointed.

In an attempt to locate burrows of the mantis shrimp *Rissoides desmaresti* a video sled was towed at several sites south of the Needles. Whilst no burrows were confirmed other species seen included the sunstar *Crossaster papposus* and starfish *Henricia oculata* and *Asterias rubens*.

Video cameras deployed off Kingston Wharf in the Medina estuary during the *Underwater Safari* revealed several peacock fan worms *Sabella pavonina*, the spider crab *Maja squinado* and sea anemone *Cerianthus lloydii*.

During the marine survey weeks between August 5-19th a large number of species were recorded. Work was carried out in the brackish lagoons at Yarmouth and Newtown, on the shores of

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Osborne Bay, Bembridge, Freshwater Bay and Shanklin, and offshore on the RV *Callsta* and RV *Bill Conway* from the National Oceanography Centre. Off Thorness Bay, the sea slugs *Hermaea bifida* and spectacular *Thecacera pennigera* were found amongst red algae and hydroids. Crustacea included several spider crabs *Liocarcinus arcuatus*, *L. marmoratus* *Inachus dorsettensis* and *Macropodia rostrata*, and hermit crabs *Pagurus cuanensis*, *P. bernhardus* and *P. prideauxii*. Students undertook some mapping of the *Zostera marina* beds south of the lifeboat station at Bembridge and transects across the *Zostera* beds in Osborne Bay and at East Cowes. The *Z. noltii* bed inside the Shrape at East Cowes has developed considerably in the past few years.

At the end of November and in December fierce storms lashed the south coast of the Isle of Wight. A considerable number of goose barnacles (*Lepas anatifera*) and by-the-wind sailor *Velevella velevella* were washed on to beaches off the islands north and south coasts. These were larger individuals, up to 8cm across, compared to those seen in previous years when washed ashore during gales in May and June.

Fish

On 13th September a 'Jack' (Family Carangidae) was caught by Geoff Blake off Sandown. This group are normally found in warmer seas including the Caribbean. The specimen, 37cm in length weighing 650g, was initially thought to be a Lesser Amberjack, however after further investigations at the National Aquarium in Plymouth (Herdson, 2006) it finally turned out to be a Greater Amberjack *Seriola dumerili*. This was the 7th ever recorded in British waters, and only the 2nd to be found east of Devon and Channel Islands. All but two individuals have been caught during the past 12 years which have had exceptionally warm sea temperatures. Several Red Mullet (*Mullus surmuletus*) were caught in the Solent this year and Smooth hounds (*Mustelus* spp.) were particularly prevalent through the autumn.

In the autumn months, several seahorses, (*Hippocampus gutulatus*) were found by local fishermen dredging for oysters off the islands north east coast. In July, one specimen was caught in an eel net set in Osborne Bay and another on 15th October in a trammel net set on the west side of Medina estuary between the Folly Inn and Medham. According to the Seahorse Trust, many seahorses were recorded around the UK during 2006 (Garrick-Maidment *pers comm*).

On 6th December, Geoff Blake caught a Tuna (*Thunnus* sp.) in a net off Sandown. It was about 12 inches (30cm) long and had been partially eaten by a conger eel. It is hoped that the exact species will be determined in due course.

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Boat Caught

Species	Date	Location	Weight
Bass (<i>Dicentrarchus labrax</i>)	19 th November	off Culver	17lbs 6¾ oz
Corkwing Wrasse (<i>Crenilabrus melops</i>)	16 th May	west Wight	9oz

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