

PRESS RELEASE, EMBARGOED UNTIL 28TH JULY 2023

Call for beachgoers to search for seaweed this summer

From 29th July – 6th August 2023, the Marine Conservation Society and the Natural History Museum will be asking people across the UK to head to the coast and record seaweed as part of their joint national community and citizen science project, the Big Seaweed Search.

By taking part in the Big Seaweed Search, volunteers will be helping to map the distribution of specific species. This provides long-term data to illustrate the impact of environmental changes in our seas, including sea temperature rise, ocean acidification and the spread of non-native seaweeds. At a time when seas around the UK are warmer than usual, seaweed reports could be a useful tool in informing scientists about what this means for our shores.

The UK is home to a diverse range of seaweed species, with over 650 different kinds found on UK shores. During Big Seaweed Search Week, beachgoers record up to 14 species of seaweed.

Justine Millard, Head of Volunteering and Citizen Science at the Marine Conservation Society, said, “Anyone can get involved with Big Seaweed Search Week – you don’t need to be a seaweed expert or live near the sea, just one visit to the coast will do. You can use our handy resources to identify and record what you see.

“Seaweed is a real ocean superstar, helping to buffer the effects of climate change, absorbing and storing carbon and protecting our coasts from waves and storm damage. However, populations of kelp – large brown seaweeds that are a vital ‘blue carbon’ store – are reported to be declining around the world, limiting our ocean’s ability to absorb carbon and combat the climate crisis. The more data we gather, the more knowledge we’ll have to protect our ocean, and seaweeds, for the future.”

Together, the Marine Conservation Society and the Natural History Museum, have released results of the Big Seaweed Search from [June 2022 – May 2023](#). During this period, volunteers submitted 470

records of seaweed across the UK, with Bladder Wrack and Serrated Wrack the most frequently identified. Both species can be indicators of sea temperature rise. The third most identified seaweed was Calcified Crusts, which can be an indicator of ocean acidification.

Though the organisations have four years of data on UK seaweeds, more data is needed to get an accurate understanding of how seaweed distribution and types relate to environmental changes.

Juliet Brodie, Merit Researcher at the Natural History Museum, said: “The Big Seaweed Search results, and photos of the species you have recorded for us, are incredibly useful in building a picture of our shores. Analysis from the last four years has already enabled us to develop a baseline on the distribution of the seaweeds in the project and include a thousand data points in the IUCN Red List of British seaweeds.

“I’m hoping that you will be able to take part in the Big Seaweed Search this year. If it is your first time, I trust you really enjoy getting to know the beautiful seaweeds we have on British coasts. Thank you for all your valuable contributions to this project.”

It’s easy to get involved in Big Seaweed Search, and anyone can take part, all year round. Training videos and online resources are available, including a guide which helps beachgoers to identify the seaweed species they’re likely to spot and explains what they need to do.

The survey can be carried out as an individual or in groups, and be completed on a mobile, tablet or computer.

To get involved simply:

1. Register to take part and download your guide and recording form at bigseaweedsearch.org
2. Choose your 5 metres of coastline to survey
3. Fill in your survey form
4. Take LOTS of clear, close-up photographs for your survey to be accepted
5. Submit your survey through bigseaweedsearch.org

You can visit the Marine Conservation Society for all the information you’ll need to get started.

-Ends-

Press Contact

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Images

Please find [images saved here](#)

Notes to editors

June 2022 – May 2023 Big Seaweed Search results

The Natural History Museum is both a world-leading science research centre and the most-visited indoor attraction in the UK last year. With a vision of a future in which both people and the planet thrive, it is uniquely positioned to be a powerful champion for balancing humanity's needs with those of the natural world. It is custodian of one of the world's most important scientific collections comprising over 80 million specimens accessed by researchers from all over the world both in person and via over 30 billion digital data downloads to date. The Museum's 350 scientists are finding solutions to the planetary emergency from biodiversity loss through to the sustainable extraction of natural resources.

The Museum uses its global reach and influence to meet its mission to create advocates for the planet - to inform, inspire and empower everyone to make a difference for nature. We welcome millions of visitors through our doors each year, our website has had 17 million visits in the last year and our touring exhibitions have been seen by around 20 million people in the last 10 years.

The [Marine Conservation Society](#) is the UK's leading ocean charity, fighting for cleaner, better-protected, healthier seas. The charity works to highlight the importance of our ocean, and the life within it, through working with government, industry and education, to take action to restore and protect the marine environment.