



Wolf fish



Devonshire cup coral



Dahlia anemone



Sea slug grazing on sea mat



Local creel fishermen at work

Life, but not as we know it

In deeper water, there is not enough light for plants to survive and a host of out-of-this-world marine animals carpet the reefs. Where the currents are strong, soft corals (eerily named dead man's fingers) and fluffy plumose anemones pack close together allowing just enough space for small prawns and fish to make a home between them. Cracks and crevices make excellent hiding places for crabs and lobsters or even the wolf fish, which is more at home in the Arctic. Dotted here and there are thumb-sized Devonshire cup corals, which are brought here on the Gulf Stream.



Plumose anemone



Dead man's fingers



Ballan wrasse

Rainforests of the sea

In the shallow waters, down to about 8m below low water mark, big brown seaweeds, or kelps, grow in thick forests. Strange animals, called hydroids and sea mats, decorate the leaves and stems and are grazed upon by colourful sea slugs. Large territorial fish, called ballan wrasse, patrol the forest, hunting for food and guarding their territories. On the shaded forest floor purple and pink seaweeds compete for space with creatures like sea anemones and sponges.



Treasure not for plundering

The coastal waters of the area receive both cold Arctic and warm Gulf Stream currents. Being well away from any cities or industrial areas, the sea is clean and clear. With the geology providing a solid base for marine life to attach to, it is not surprising that the sea is teeming with life from warm water corals to Arctic fish.

Tens of thousands of people enjoy these waters every year – people dive, surf, fish, sail or walk. Local fishermen catch crabs and lobsters using traditional creels, or cribs, but mobile gear, like trawls, are banned in the area. In 1984 the Marine Reserve, the first of its kind in Britain, was set up to manage the effect that all this activity has on the marine life.

St Abbs & Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve

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the National Trust for Scotland
a place for everyone



A Wonderful World Beneath the Waves

A Wonderful World Beneath the Waves

St Abbs and Eyemouth VMR extends along 8km of coast from just north of St Abb's Head to Eyemouth. Follow signs on the A1 for St Abbs, Coldingham or Eyemouth.



The Voluntary Marine Reserve is a charity with the aims of conserving marine wildlife, raising awareness and promoting responsible recreation.

We depend on grants and donations to enable us to carry out our work. Our three main funders are the National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and The Crown Estate. You can help support the Marine Reserve by joining the National Trust for Scotland. The National Trust for Scotland for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.

Tel: 0844 493 2256 Website: www.marine-reserve.co.uk

The management of the Marine Reserve is overseen by a committee made up of representatives from the fishing community, the diving community, harbour trusts, conservation organisations and regional and community councils.

Images: Mike Bolam, Ellie Burt, Liza Cole, Peter Davenport, Jim Greenfield, Arthur Kingdon, Peter Ladell, Jack Laws, Anita Marshall, Jane Morgan, Kevin Rideout, Glyn Satterley, S R Warman, Harvey Wood.

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St Abb's Head is renowned for a breathtaking coastline, beautiful flowers and an internationally important seabird colony. Few people realise that the rugged scenery and rich wildlife extends below the surface of the waves where submerged gullies and archways are carpeted with stunningly colourful marine life.





The ebb and flow of life

Not all of the marine life is hidden beneath the waves. An assortment of fascinating plants and animals are uncovered by the ebbing tide each day just waiting to be discovered. Crabs, prawns, winkles, starfish and sea anemones, to name but a few, can be found throughout the year. In the summer months they are joined by creatures that come to the shore to breed. Chains of mating sea hares hide amongst the seaweed and lay pink or orange strings of eggs. A search of large rock pools at very low tide could even turn up a member of the seahorse family, the snake pipefish. As with other seahorses, the males brood the eggs, carrying them stuck to their bellies.



Snake pipefish



Food for thought

The tens of thousands of seabirds that nest on the cliffs at St Abb's Head each summer link the land to the sea. The health of this internationally important seabird colony goes hand-in-hand with the health of the surrounding sea, as this is where the birds find food for themselves and their chicks. In recent years the seabirds have had a hard time of it, struggling to find enough suitable fish, resulting in a decline in breeding success. Although it is hard to pin down the reasons for this, there is evidence that climate change and modern fishing practices are having an effect.



Kittiwake with chick



Guillemots

Playing your part

There are many ways in which you can help the conservation effort within Scotland's only Voluntary Marine Reserve.

- When you are out enjoying the Reserve, stick to the Code of Conduct and encourage others to do likewise
- Help out with marine life monitoring, even if it's just letting the Marine Ranger know if you spot anything interesting or exciting
- Join our volunteer team to record and remove litter from the Marine Reserve's shores
- Once home, think about how you can help the marine environment eg by reducing carbon emissions and buying sustainably caught fish.



Mating sea hares

Things to see and do

Divers are not the only ones who can appreciate the wildlife of the Marine Reserve – there are all sorts of ways to enjoy the marine life.

- Walk the coastal path, which runs the length of the Marine Reserve, looking out for seabirds, seals and even the occasional whale or dolphin
- Explore the fantastic rock pools at Coldingham and Eyemouth
- Go snorkelling to see the marine life of the shallows
- Learn more about the area's marine life on a ranger-led event or visit St Abb's Head Visitor Centre

Code of Conduct

- Leave animals and plants where you find them and take care not to damage them
- Do not tamper with lobster pots – it is illegal and dangerous
- Divers – control your buoyancy and do not use spearguns or hooks
- Take your litter home with you and do not pollute the sea
- Avoid losing fishing tackle by using gear suitable for the ground and an appropriate rig design
- Keep your distance from seabirds, seals and dolphins to avoid disturbing them
- Look out for your safety at all times, check the tides and keep back from the cliff edge



The Voluntary Marine Reserve is part of the wider Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site.



Razorbill



Grey seal pup



Velvet swimming crab