

IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) Marine Species in UK Waters



Produced by Project UK in
collaboration with the Shark Trust













PROJECT UK

DELIVERING FISHERY IMPROVEMENTS
IN THE NORTH EAST ATLANTIC

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to help UK fishers identify vertebrate and invertebrate marine species classified as Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) species in UK waters.

Project UK may periodically update specific species cards in this guide if and when key information such as laws changes.

					
SECTION 1		SECTION 2		SECTION 3	
Elasmobranchs (sharks, rays, and skates)		Mammals, reptiles, and other fish		Invertebrates	
	Animal identification		Animal identification		Animal identification
	Distribution		Distribution		Distribution
	Fishing laws				



Visit linktr.ee/projectuk or scan the QR code to access further information including:

- Digital version of the guide
- Project UK and the Shark Trust websites
- Links to full details of catch and reporting regulations for ETP species
- Photos of invertebrates on-deck

ICON KEY FOR SECTION 1

The following icon key, provided by the Shark Trust, is specific to species in Section 1 of this guide.



PERMITTED



PROHIBITED



RESTRICTED

N/A

NOT APPLICABLE



TARGETING

The action of deliberately targeting a certain species.



CATCH LIMIT

A limit on the quantity that can be retained and landed.



DISCARDING

Carefully returning a species to the sea, if possible alive.



CLOSED SEASON

A period when retaining is prohibited to protect a vulnerable species.



RETAINING

The act of keeping a species that has been caught. Chart colour denotes retaining.



TRANSSHIPPING

The action of transferring catches between vessels at sea.



SIZE LIMIT

A min. or max. size at which a species cannot be retained. Local legislation may apply.



RECORD SEPARATELY

The species must be recorded separately in the vessel's logbook.



SELLING

Selling or offering for sale a species caught in this area.

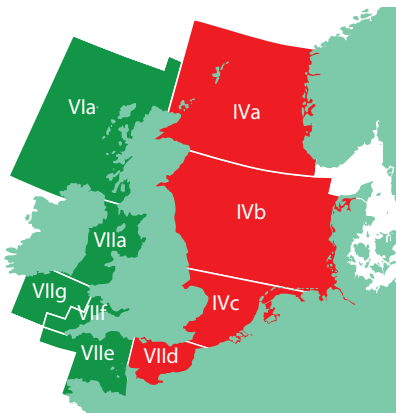
MAP KEYS

*As species distributions can change and species travel between areas, these maps act as a guide as to where species are most likely to occur or interact with gear. Distribution maps are based on observations on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas: <https://nbnatlas.org/>.

The following map key is specific to species in Section 1 of this guide.

Can be retained

Cannot be retained



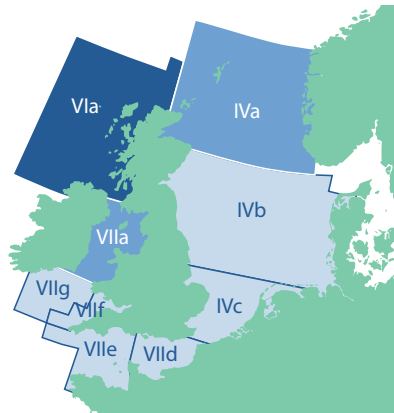
The following map key is specific to species in Sections 2 and 3 of this guide*.

Common/frequent

Sometimes seen

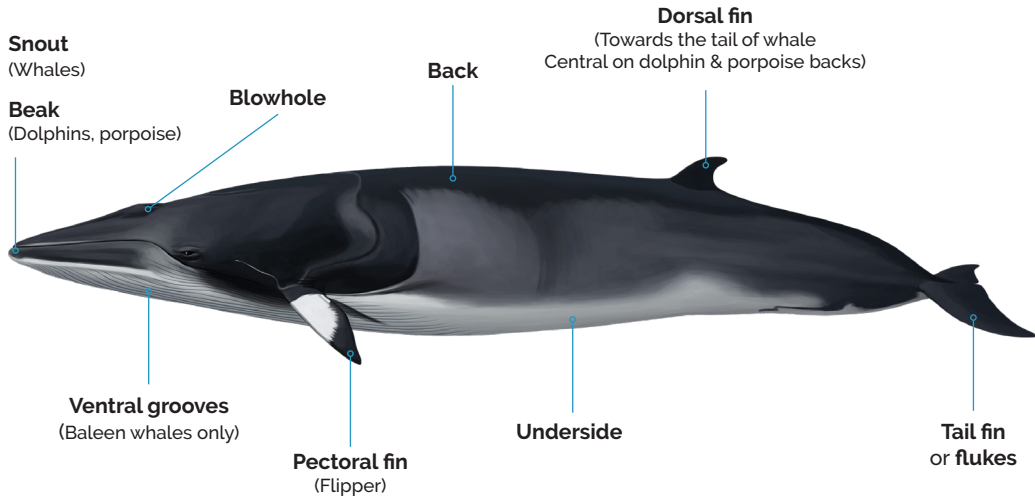
Rarely seen

Not present

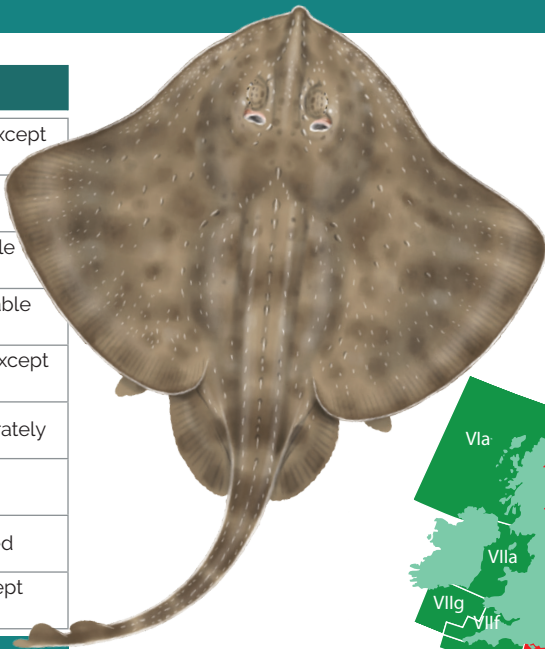


















IDENTIFYING CETACEANS

(whales, dolphins, porpoise)



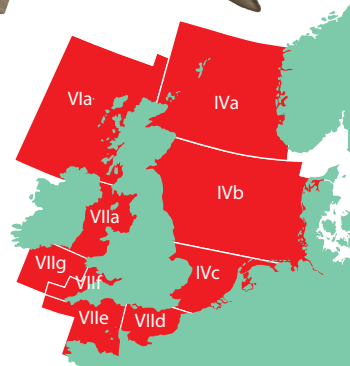
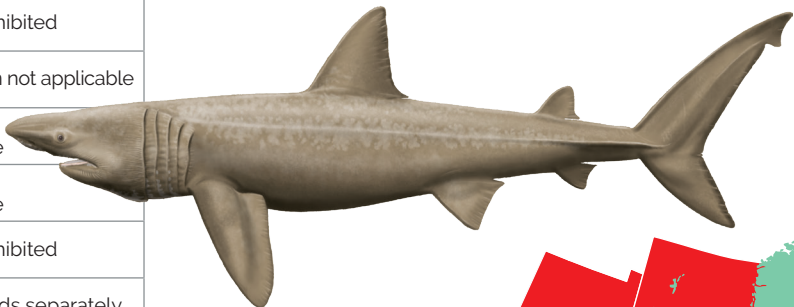
Blowhole: The nostril of a cetacean on the top of its head. **Dorsal fin:** The shape and placement along the back differs significantly between species. **Colouration:** Almost all cetaceans have a darker back and lighter underside, so look for other common features to identify the animal correctly.



Gear		Trawl, Dredge
		Targeting permitted except IVa-c & VIId
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable Outside 6NM
		Catch limit not applicable Except VIa, VIIa, e, f, g
		Retention permitted except IVa-c & VIId
		Record discards separately
		Discarding permitted
		Transshipping prohibited
		Selling permitted except IVa-c

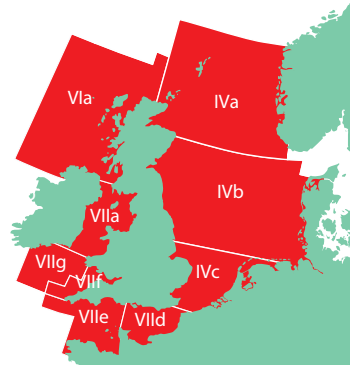


Gear		Creel, Trawl
		Targeting prohibited
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable
	N/A	Catch limit not applicable
		Retaining prohibited
		Record discards separately
		Discarding required
		Transshipping prohibited
		No legal catches





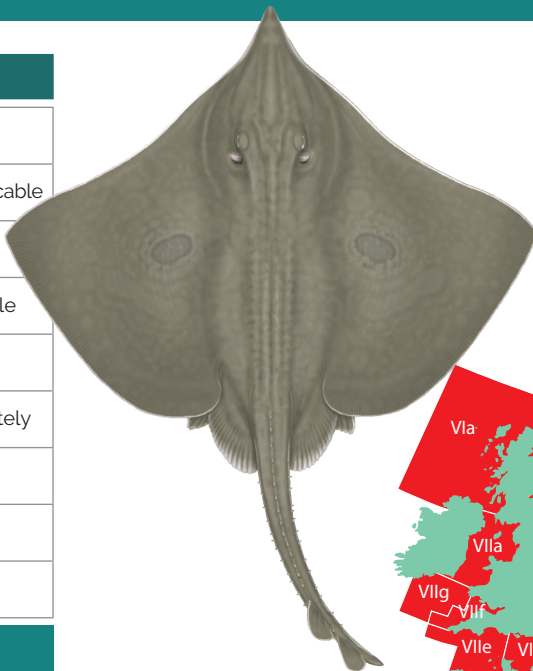
Gear		Dredge
		Targeting prohibited
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable
	N/A	Catch limit not applicable
		Retaining prohibited
		Record discards separately
		Discarding required
		Transshipping prohibited
		No legal catches





Gear	Trawl, Dredge
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		Targeting prohibited
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable Outside 6NM
	N/A	Catch limit not applicable
		Retaining prohibited
		Record discards separately
		Discarding required
		Transshipping prohibited
		Selling prohibited




















Gear	Trawl, Dredge
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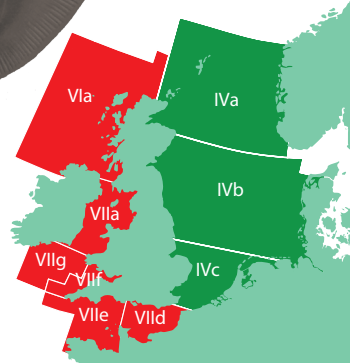
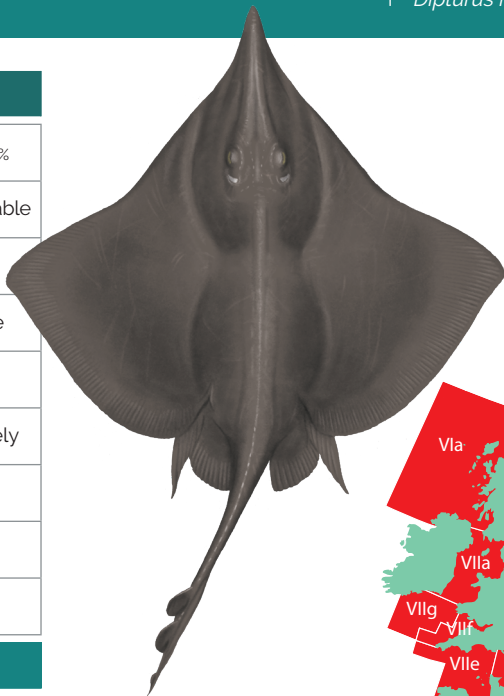
		Targeting prohibited
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable Outside 6NM
	N/A	Catch limit not applicable
		Retaining prohibited
		Record discards separately
		Discarding required
		Transshipping prohibited
		Selling prohibited

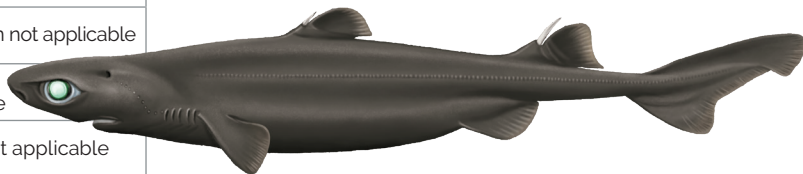




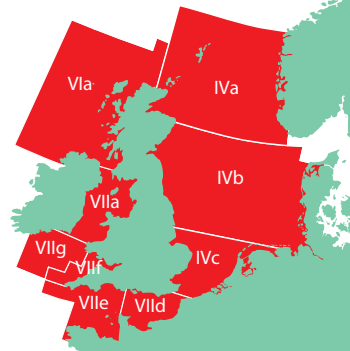
Gear	Trawl, Dredge	
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		Targeting prohibited. In IVa-c, >15 M no more than 25% SKA
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable Outside 6NM
	N/A	Catch limit not applicable
		Retention prohibited VIa, VIIa, d, e, f & g
		Record discards separately
		Discarding permitted
		Transshipping prohibited
		Selling prohibited Except IVa-c





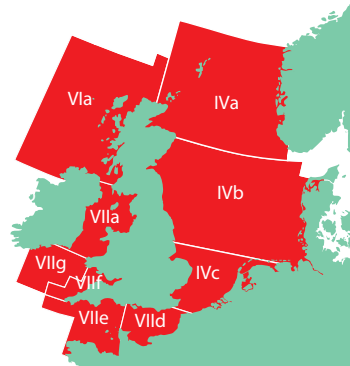
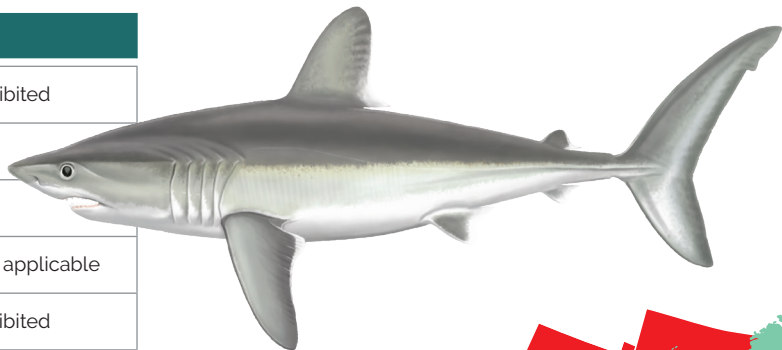
Gear	Trawl
	 Targeting prohibited
	N/A Closed season not applicable
	N/A Size limit not applicable
	N/A Catch limit not applicable
	 Retaining prohibited
	 Record discards separately
	 Discarding required
	 Transhipping prohibited
	 No legal catches








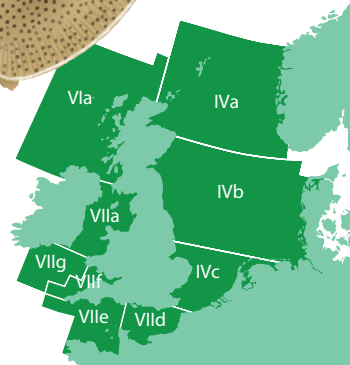
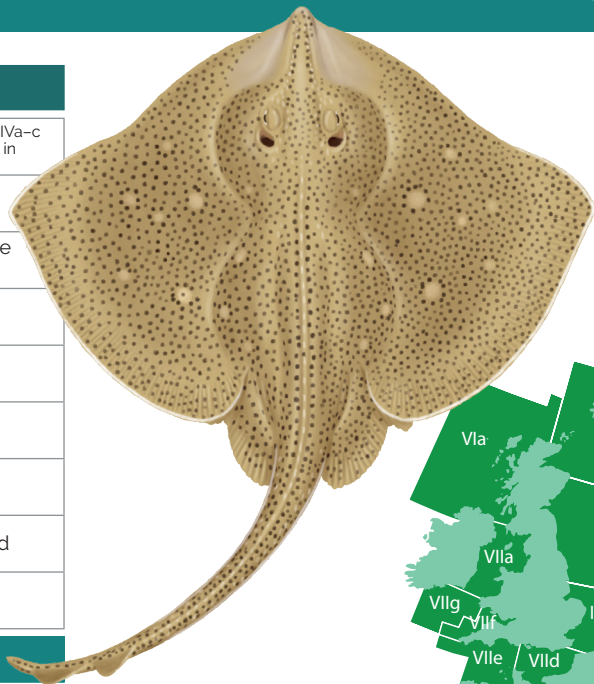
Gear	Creel, Trawl
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		Targeting prohibited
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable
	N/A	Catch limit not applicable
		Retaining prohibited
		Record discards separately
		Discarding required
		Transshipping prohibited
		No legal catches





Gear		Trawl, Dredge
		Targeting permitted, except IVa-c >15M no more than 25% SKA in IVa-c
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable Outside 6NM
		Catch limit
		Retaining permitted
		Record separately
		Discarding permitted
		Transshipping prohibited
		Selling permitted

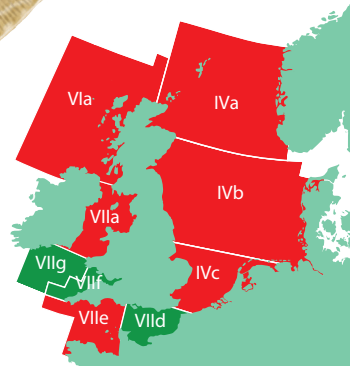
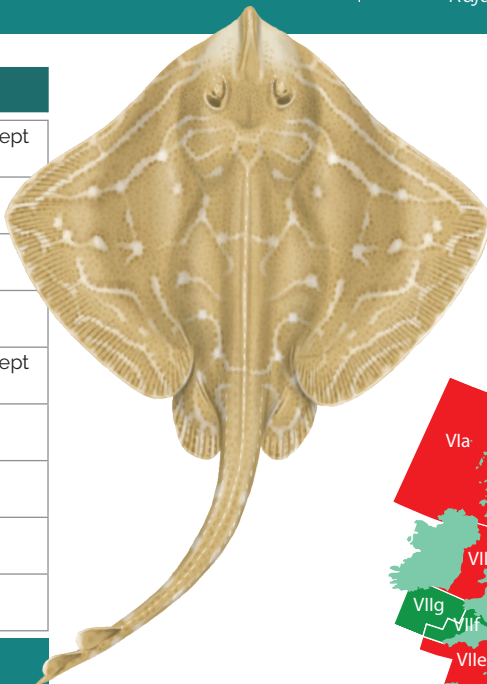




















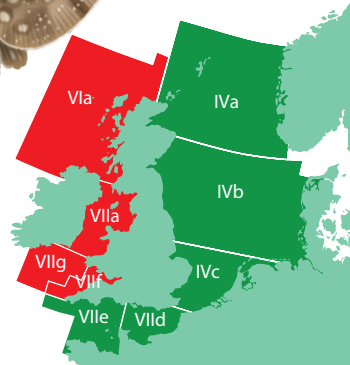
Elasmobranch

SMALL-EYED RAY

Raja microcellata



Gear		Trawl, Dredge
		Targeting prohibited except VIId, f & g
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable Outside 6NM
		Catch limit
		Retaining prohibited except VIId, f & g
		Record separately
		Discarding permitted
		Transshipping prohibited
		Selling permitted



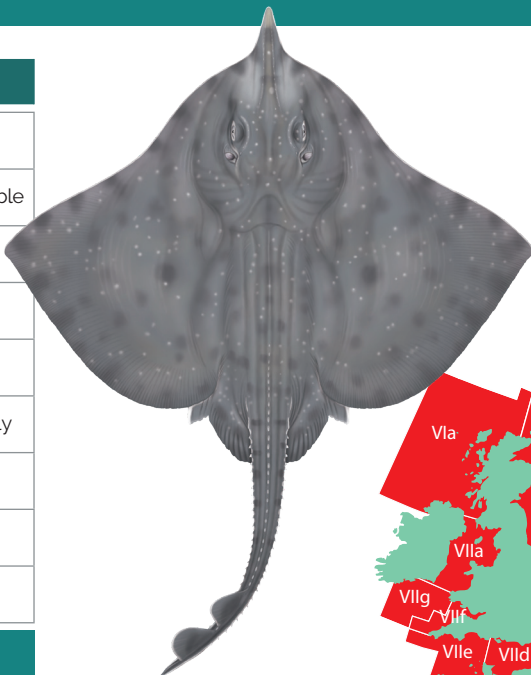
Gear		Trawl, Dredge
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		Targeting prohibited except VIId & e. >15M no more than 25% SKA in IVa-c
		Closed season May - August
		Whole or gutted only Min 78cm, max 97cm in VIId & e
		Catch limit in VIId & e 200 kg per trip
		Retention permitted except VIa, VIIa, f & g
		Record separately
		Discarding permitted
		Transshipping prohibited
		Selling permitted



















Gear	Trawl, Dredge	
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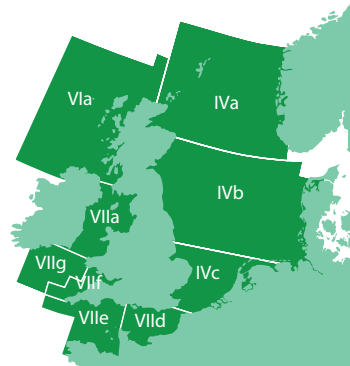
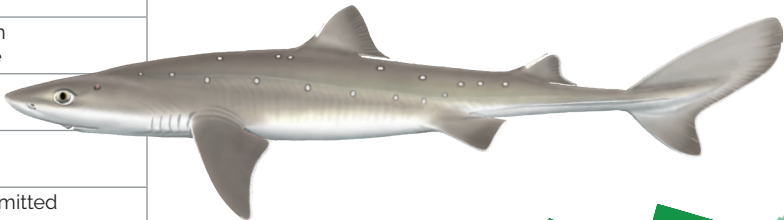
		Targeting prohibited
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable Outside 6NM
	N/A	Catch limit not applicable
		Retaining prohibited
		Record discards separately
		Discarding required
		Transshipping prohibited
		Selling prohibited





Gear	Creel, Trawl, Dredge	
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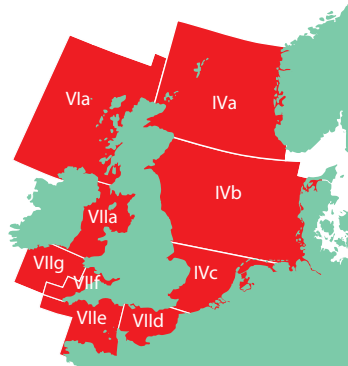
		Targeting permitted
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
		Size limit Max 100 cm
		Catch limit
		Retaining permitted unless > 100 cm
		Record separately
		Discarding prohibited unless > 100 cm
		Transshipping prohibited
		Selling permitted





Gear | Creel, Trawl, Dredge

		Targeting prohibited
	N/A	Closed season not applicable
	N/A	Size limit not applicable
	N/A	Catch limit not applicable
		Retaining prohibited
		Record discards separately
		Discarding required
		Transshipping prohibited
		Selling prohibited



Scan for
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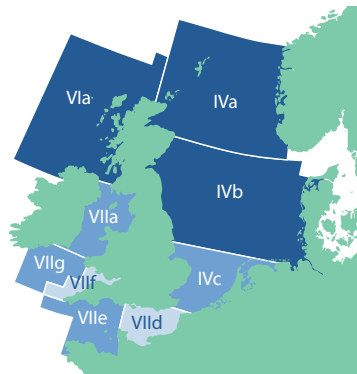
Cetacean

MINKE WHALE

Balaenoptera acutorostrata

2 metres

Gear	Creel
Behaviour	Fast swimmer. Group size 1–3
Habitat	Coastal & continental shelf.
Season	Common May–October.
Common features	Distinct white band on front flippers. Curved dorsal fin near tail. Pointed snout (nose).

Information correct as of 03/24.
Illustration © Frédérique Lucas.



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more info

Cetacean

HUMPBACK WHALE

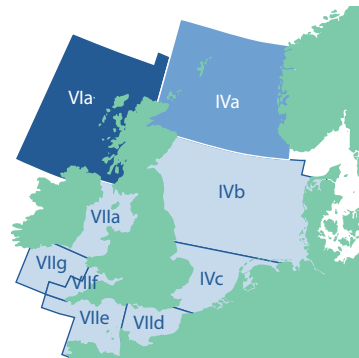
Megaptera novaeangliae



2 metres

Gear	Creel
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Behaviour	Distinctive, tall blow (~3m high). Tail visible before diving. Group size 1-15.
Habitat	Coastal & continental shelf.
Season	Uncommon, but present all year.
Common features	Head & flippers have "knobby" appearance, with many lumps & bumps. Dark grey back and white belly. Flippers up to 5m long.



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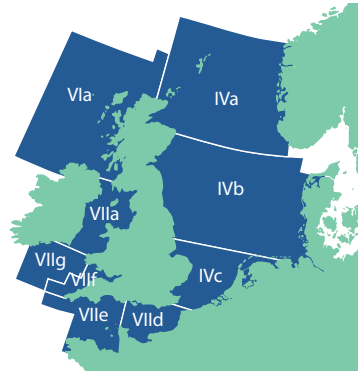
Cetacean

HARBOUR PORPOISE

Phocoena phocoena

1 metre

Gear	Creel, Trawl
Behaviour	Shy around boats. Group size 1–5.
Habitat	Coastal & inshore.
Season	Common all year. Hotspot: Moray Firth, Inner Hebrides.
Common features	Blunt head & dark-grey stocky body. Triangular dorsal fin central on back.

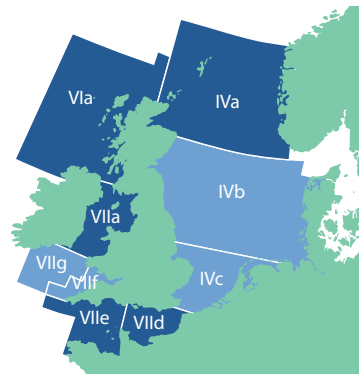
Information correct as of 03/24.
Illustration © Frédérique Lucas.



1 metre



Gear	Creel
Behaviour	Active & confident near boats. Group size 1-25.
Habitat	Coastal & continental shelf.
Season	Common all year. Hotspots: Moray Firth, Cardigan Bay.
Common features	Large curved dorsal fin. Short, distinct beak. Large, robust body.



Scan for
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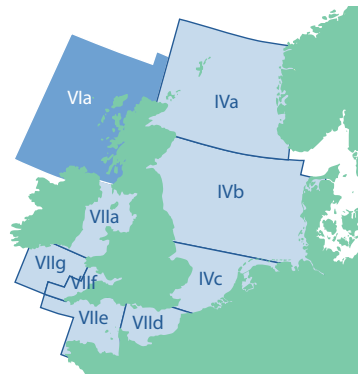
Cetacean

NORTHERN BOTTLENOSE WHALE

Hyperoodon ampullatus

2 metres

Gear	Creel
Behaviour	Often resting at surface. May approach boats. Group size 4–20.
Habitat	Offshore, deep water.
Season	Uncommon. Hotspots: September in Scotland, Irish Sea.
Common features	Colour varies dark grey to brown. Melon-shaped forehead. Small protruding beak.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Illustration © Frédérique Lucas.



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DELIVERING FISHERY IMPROVEMENTS
IN THE NORTH EAST ATLANTIC



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Cetacean

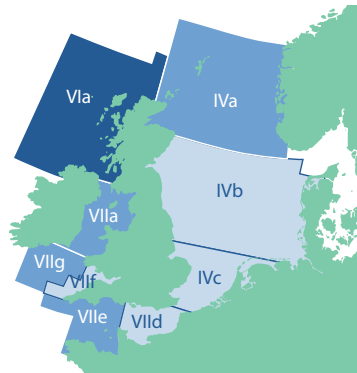
RISSO'S DOLPHIN

Grampus griseus



1 metre

Gear	Creel
Behaviour	Active & may approach boats. Group size 3-50.
Habitat	Continental shelf & deeper waters.
Season	All year. More common inshore May-October.
Common features	Grey body, adults have white scars. Blunt melon-like head, no beak.



Information correct as of 03/24.
Illustration © Frédérique Lucas.

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more info

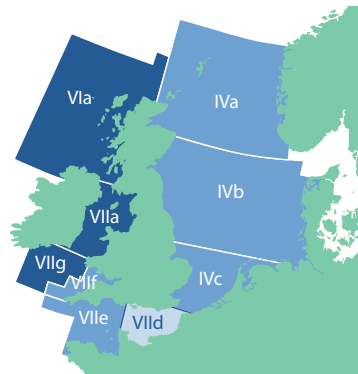
Cetacean

SHORT-BEAKED COMMON DOLPHIN

Delphinus delphis

1 metre

Gear	Creel
Behaviour	Fast, highly active swimmers. Likely to approach boats. Group size 2–300.
Habitat	Coastal & continental shelf.
Season	All year. Most common May–October.
Common features	Cream/yellow to grey 'hourglass' pattern on side. Prominent, grey snout & grey flippers.





Cetacean

WHITE-BEAKED DOLPHIN

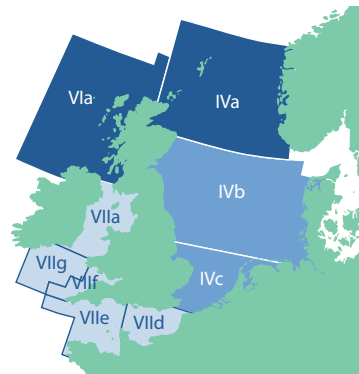
Lagenorhynchus albirostris



1 metre

Gear	Creel
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Behaviour	Acrobatic swimmers, sometimes with other species. May approach boats. Group size: 2–230.
Habitat	Continental shelf.
Season	All year. Most common May–October.
Common features	Large, robust body. Black/grey/white colouration variable. Large, black curved dorsal fin & flippers.



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Cetacean

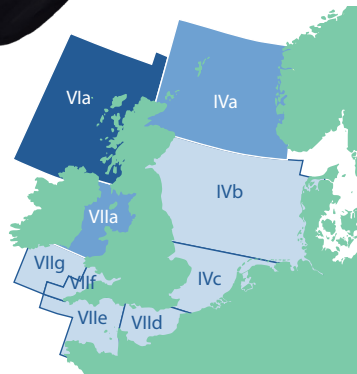
KILLER WHALE

Orcinus orca

2 metres



Gear	Creel
Behaviour	Confident, may approach boats. Hunts close to shore. Group size: 2–15.
Habitat	Coastal & continental shelf.
Season	Rare. Most common May–September in Scotland
Common features	Distinctive black & white markings. Large dorsal fin up to 1.8m high. Males: Tall & straight. Females: Smaller & curved.





1 metre

Gear	Creel, Trawl
Behaviour	Resting onshore between tides or hunting at sea.
Habitat	Coastal & inshore.
Season	All year. Females pup onshore August–January.
Common features	Long, straight nose. Larger than Harbour/Common Seal. Grey-brown-white fur with few, large spots.



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Pinniped

HARBOUR/Common SEAL

*Phoca vitulina*

1 metre

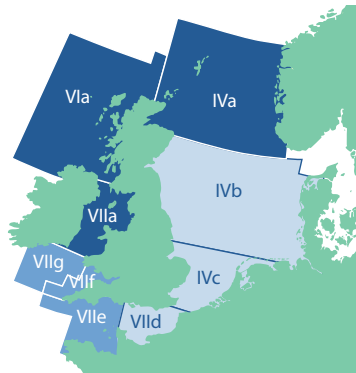
Gear	Creel, Trawl
Behaviour	Resting onshore between tides or hunting at sea.
Habitat	Coastal & inshore.
Season	All year. Rarer than Grey Seal. Females pup onshore June–July.
Common features	Rounded head, V-shaped nostrils. Grey, cream or brown fur with dark spots.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Illustration © Frédérique Lucas.



1 metre

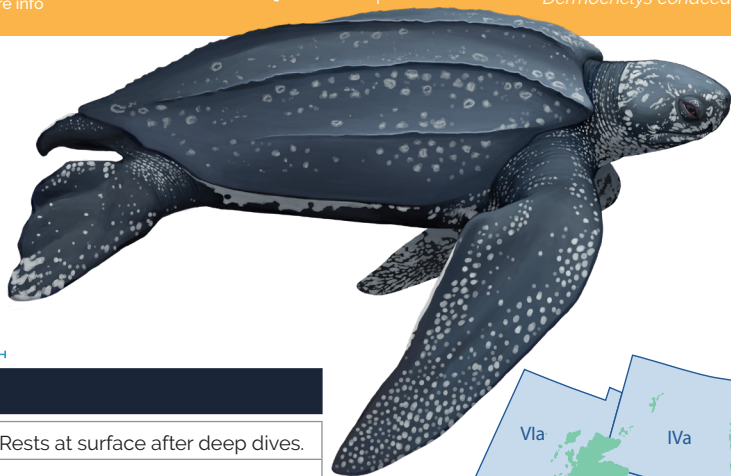
Gear	Creel
Behaviour	Sociable & active onshore. Hunts fish, eel & octopus.
Habitat	Rivers, wetlands, estuarine & coastal.
Season	All year. More common in Scotland, Wales & southwest England.
Common features	Long, stocky brown-grey body with thick tail. Flat head, cream/white fur on face & chin. Footprints show five toes.



Scan for
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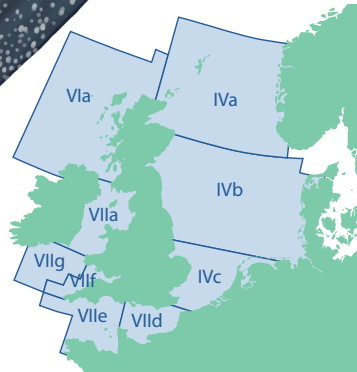
Marine reptile

LEATHERBACK TURTLE

Dermochelys coriacea

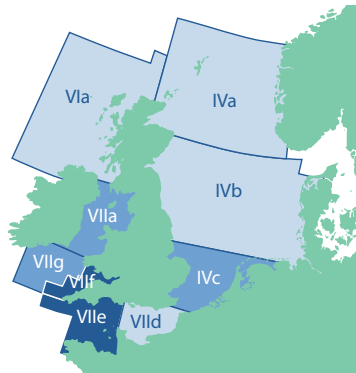
1 metre

Gear	Creel
Behaviour	Solitary. Rests at surface after deep dives.
Habitat	Pelagic.
Season	Rare but seen May–September.
Common features	Black shell with white spots. Ridged & leathery shell rather than hard. Underbelly & chin white to pink.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Illustration © Frédérique Lucas.



Gear	Trawl, Dredge
Habitat	Pelagic, except when migrating upriver to spawn.
Season	Spawns in freshwater April–June. Juveniles return to sea July–August.
Common features	Row of <6 dark spots from gill cover. Similar to Atlantic herring but has rounded belly & no lateral line.
Size	Length 30–70cm.



Scan for
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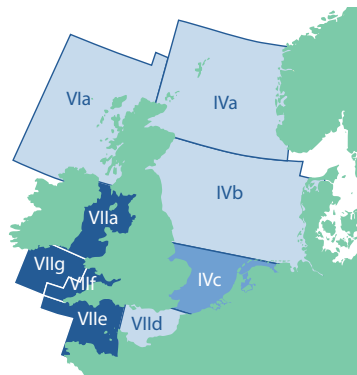
Fish

TWAITE SHAD

Alosa fallax

Gear	Trawl, Dredge
Habitat	Pelagic, except when migrating upriver to spawn.
Season	Spawns in freshwater April–June. Juveniles return to sea June–July.
Common features	3–10 dark spots on flank, fading towards tail. Blueish & silvery.
Size	Length 25–40cm.

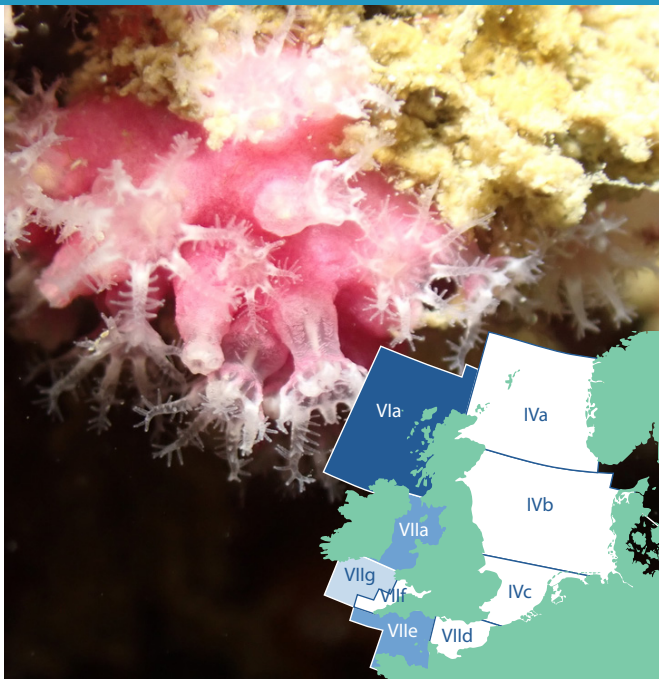
Information correct as of 03/24.
Illustration © Jonathon Couch.





Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	1-30m. Overhanging rock.
Distribution	Hotspots: Isle of Man, west Scotland & Cornwall.
Common features	Translucent pink & white bodies. Finger-like projections.
Size	30mm when fully extended.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Pierre Corbrien.



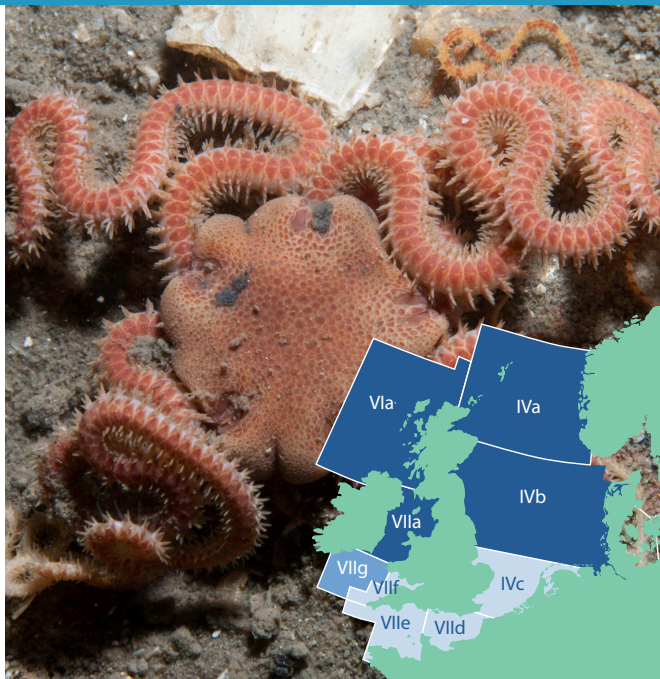
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Invertebrate

BURROWING HEART URCHIN

Amphiura chiajei

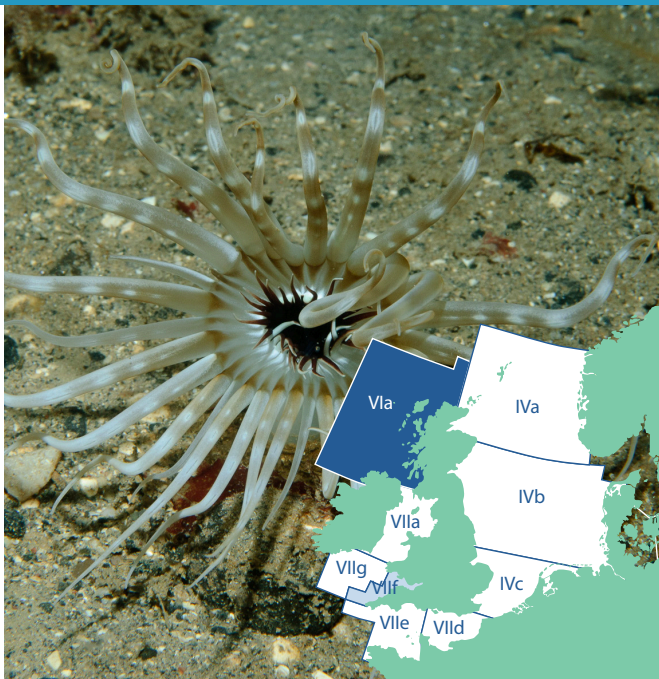
Gear	Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	10–1,000m. Soft sediments.
Distribution	All around UK. Rare in English Channel.
Common features	Central disc-shaped body. 5 slender arms. Pinkish or greyish-brown.
Size	Diameter including arms: < 80mm

Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Bernard Picton.



Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	15–130m. Subtidal soft sand, mud or gravel.
Distribution	Irish north coast, Scottish west coast & Hebrides.
Common features	2 rings of banded tentacles. Tentacles of inner ring shorter & curve inwards. Pear-shaped body column.
Size	Diameter including tentacles: < 200mm.

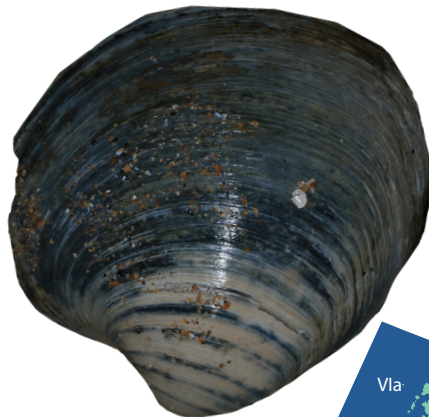
Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Bernard Picton.





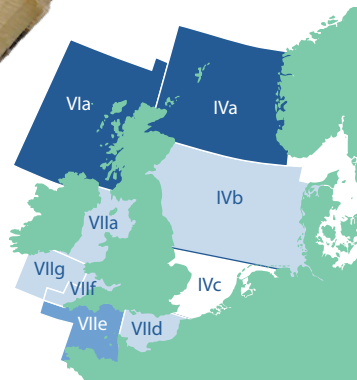
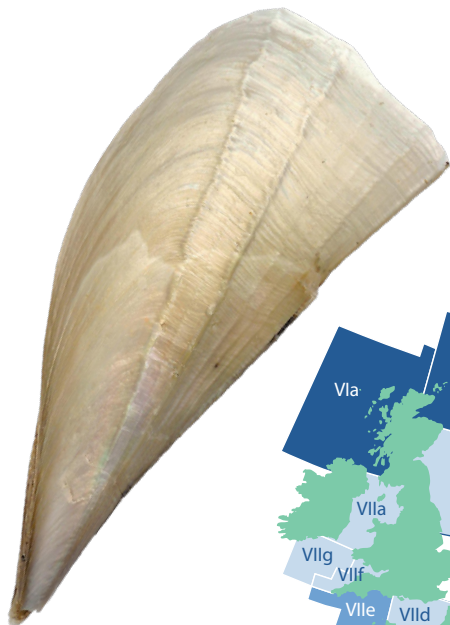
Gear	Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	4–482m. Subtidal or muddy sand.
Distribution	All around UK.
Common features	Black-blue rounded shell. Bold growth lines.
Size	Diameter 50–130mm.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © S. Rae.





Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	20–400m. Deepwater subtidal sands, rocky areas & muds.
Distribution	Uncommon along west & southwest England, Shetland Isles & Orkney.
Common features	Large triangular-shaped bivalve. Yellowish to dark-brown with blackish patches.
Size	Length 300–480mm.



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Invertebrate

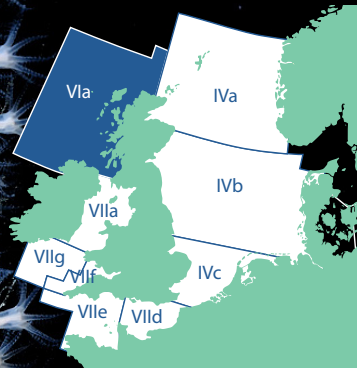
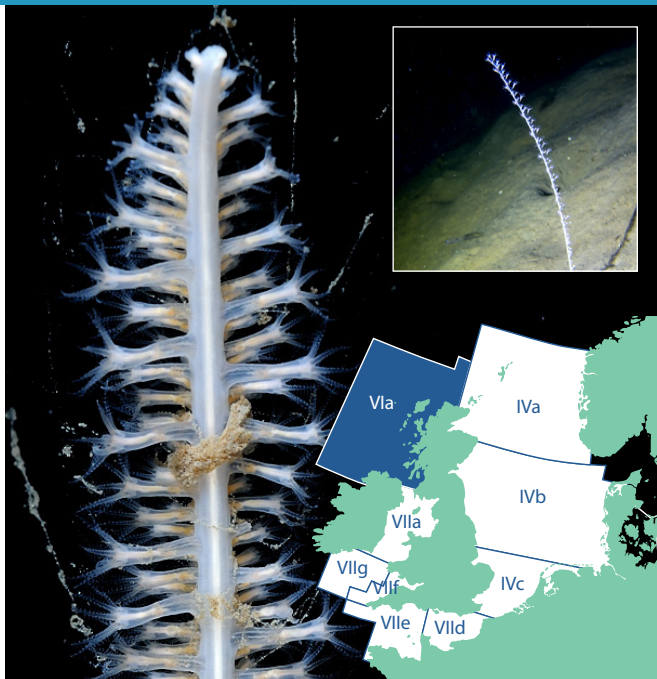
TALL SEAPEN

Funiculina quadrangularis

Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	20–2,000m. Sandy or muddy substrate.
Distribution	North & west Irish and Scottish coasts, including sea lochs.
Common features	White, pale pink or blue. Lower stem is smooth. Short polyps grow from upper stem. Live in dense colonies
Size	Height 1.5–2.1m.

Information correct as of 03/24.

Photograph © Tony Gilbert (main) & © Emil Burman (inset).





Invertebrate

HEART COCKLE

Glossus humanus



Gear	Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	20–200m. Soft muds & sands.
Distribution	Scottish west coast.
Common features	Shell dark-brown or olive-green. Heart-shaped if viewed from side.
Size	Length 100–160mm.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Andreas Hoffman.

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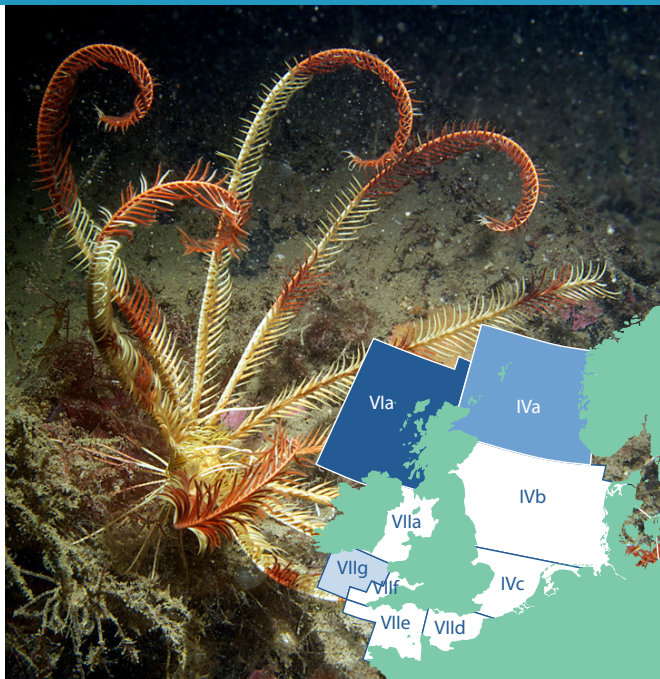
Invertebrate

NORTHERN FEATHER STAR

Leptometra celtica

Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	20–1,250m. Rocks, shell gravel & muddy sediments on shelf breaks.
Distribution	Continental shelf in west & southwest, including sea lochs.
Common features	10 branching feathery arms. Arms banded red & white.
Size	Arm length 70–150mm.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Bernard Picton.





Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	5–30m. Shell gravel & rocks.
Distribution	Scottish west coast & sea lochs where current is moderate to strong.
Common features	Bright orange tentacles emerging from rough, brown-coloured shell. Large beds up to 75 hectares.
Size	Diameter 20–50mm.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Maria Synatika.



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Invertebrate

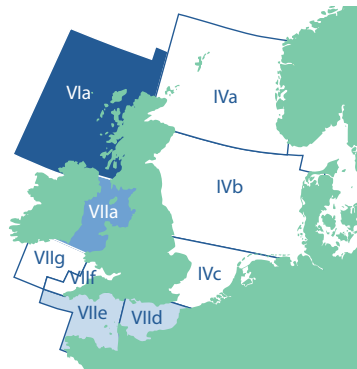
VOLCANO WORM

Maxmuelleria lankesteri

Gear	Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	0–3,975m. Fine muddy sediments.
Distribution	Scottish west coast & sea lochs, east & south of England/Wales.
Common features	Dark to pale green when alive, greyish when dead. Body covered in round bumps.
Size	180mm (contracted) – 320mm (extended).

Information correct as of 03/24.

Photograph © Dr Ruth Barnich, Thomson Environmental Consultants.





Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	5–280m. Soft sediment or hard substrates. Reef-forming.
Distribution	Commoner at higher latitudes.
Common features	Glossy brown shell, inside white. Strong, golden byssal threads.
Size	Length 100–220mm.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Georges Jansoone.



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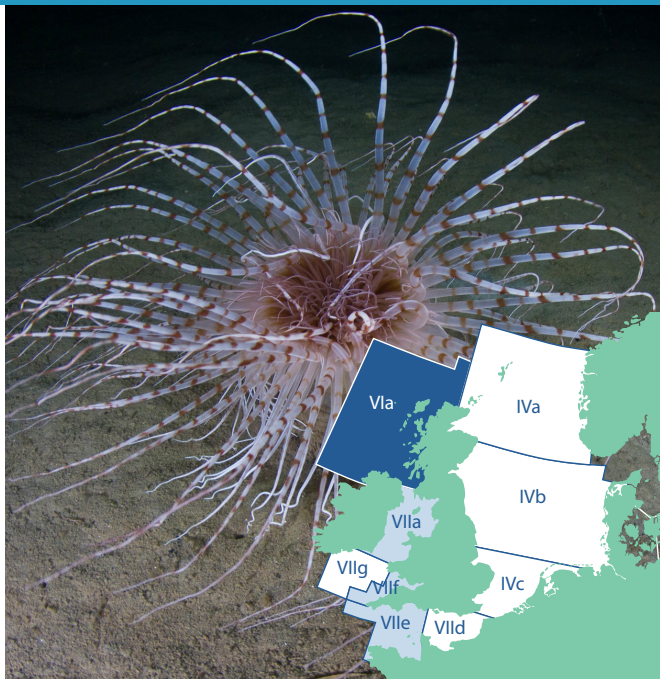
Invertebrate

FIREWORKS ANEMONE

Pachyserianthus multiplicatus

Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	10–130m. Soft muddy sediments.
Distribution	Mainly Scottish west coast & sea lochs, notably Duich & Fynne.
Common features	Up to 200 tentacles, banded white & brown.
Size	Tentacle length up to 300mm.

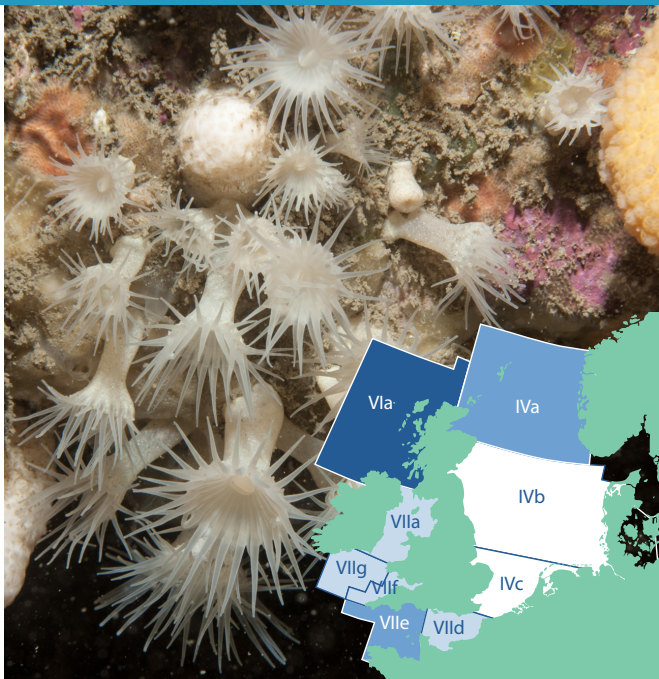
Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Poul Erik Rasmussen.





Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	20–400m. Rocky or other hard substrates.
Distribution	Mainly Western Waters, Scottish north & west coasts.
Common features	Polyps white or pink with 33–44 tentacles each.
Size	Length up to 25mm & diameter 8mm.

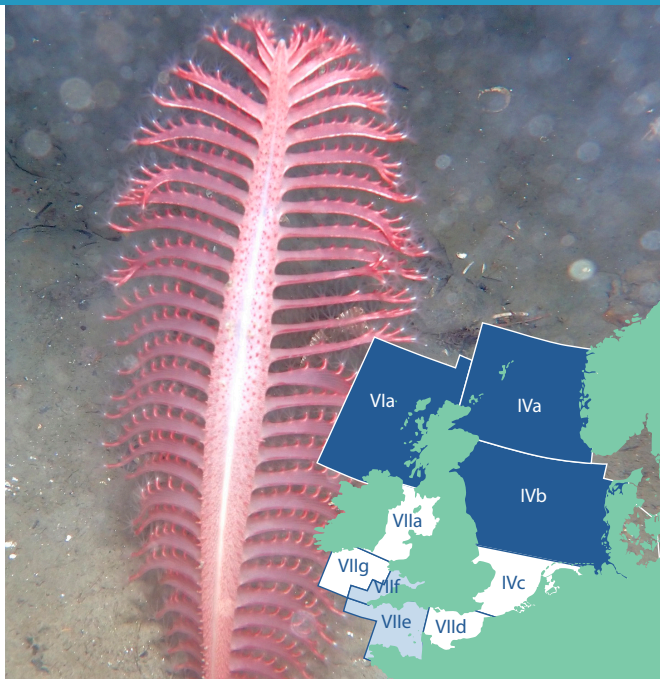
Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Bernard Picton.



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Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	10–100m. Sandy & muddy substrates.
Distribution	Common in northern North Sea, Irish Sea & Scottish west coast & sea lochs.
Common features	Thick central stem. Opposite branching pink/white polyp arms on stem.
Size	Length up to 400mm.

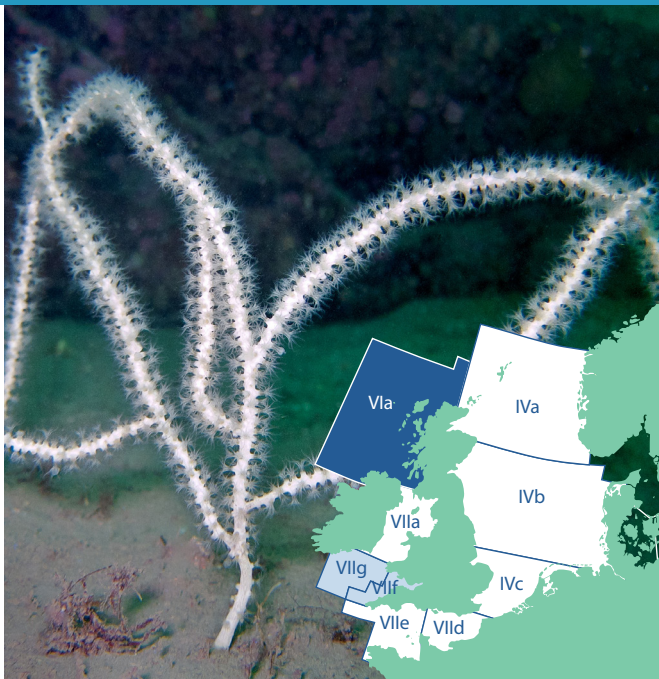
Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Vsevolod.





Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	15–60m. Rocks, boulders & coarse shell sand.
Distribution	Scottish west coast.
Common faeures	White or greyish, sometimes pink. Alternating branching polyp arms.
Size	Height 70–100mm.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Gordon Lang.



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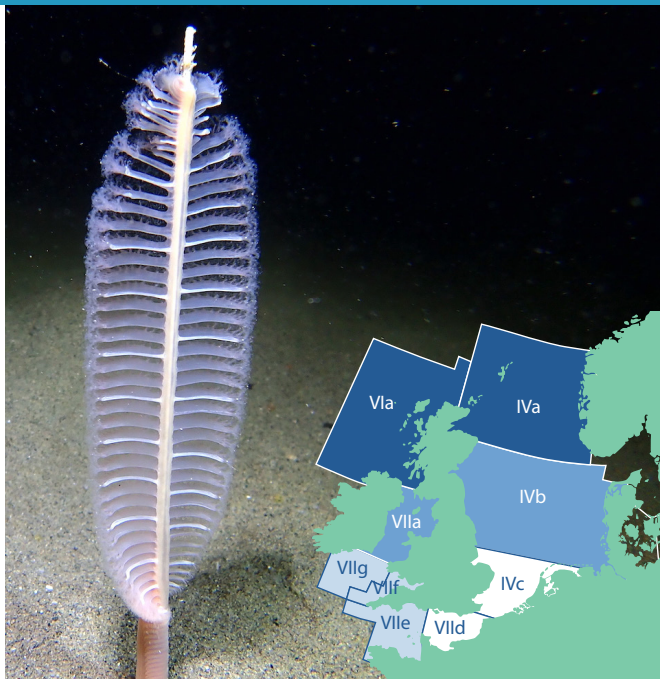
Invertebrate

SLENDER SEA PEN

Virgularia mirabilis

Gear	Creel, Dredge, Trawl
Habitat	12–400m. Muddy sand or soft mud.
Distribution	Inshore waters including sea lochs & harbours.
Common features	Thin central stem with 2 opposite rows of white or cream polyp arms.
Size	Height up to 600mm.

Information correct as of 03/24.
Photograph © Frédérique Andre.





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