

MARINE ALIENS

What are marine aliens?

Marine aliens are animals or plants that have been introduced to Scotland by man's activities, either accidentally (e.g. Japanese skeleton shrimp), or intentionally (e.g. farming the pacific oyster is permitted).

Japanese skeleton shrimp, found in Shetland.



Photo: R Shucksmith (NAFC Marine Centre)

Why look for them?

Some marine aliens are considered 'invasive'; that is, they can cause damage to the environment, the economy, or to human health, or can have an impact on the way we live. The plants and animals shown in this leaflet have the potential to cause economic or environmental impacts in Shetland, having done so elsewhere in the world.

Where do they grow?



Invasive bryozoan growing on a rope.

Many of these invasive marine aliens prefer to settle and grow on man-made surfaces, and will foul boat hulls, ropes, buoys and other structures.

The NAFC Marine Centre and Scottish Government websites contain information on non-native species, and provide links to the 'Code of Practice on Non-native Species'.

<http://www.nafc.ac.uk/non-native-species-in-shetland.aspx>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/>

Front page photo: Carpet sea squirt. Chris Beveridge (SAMS)



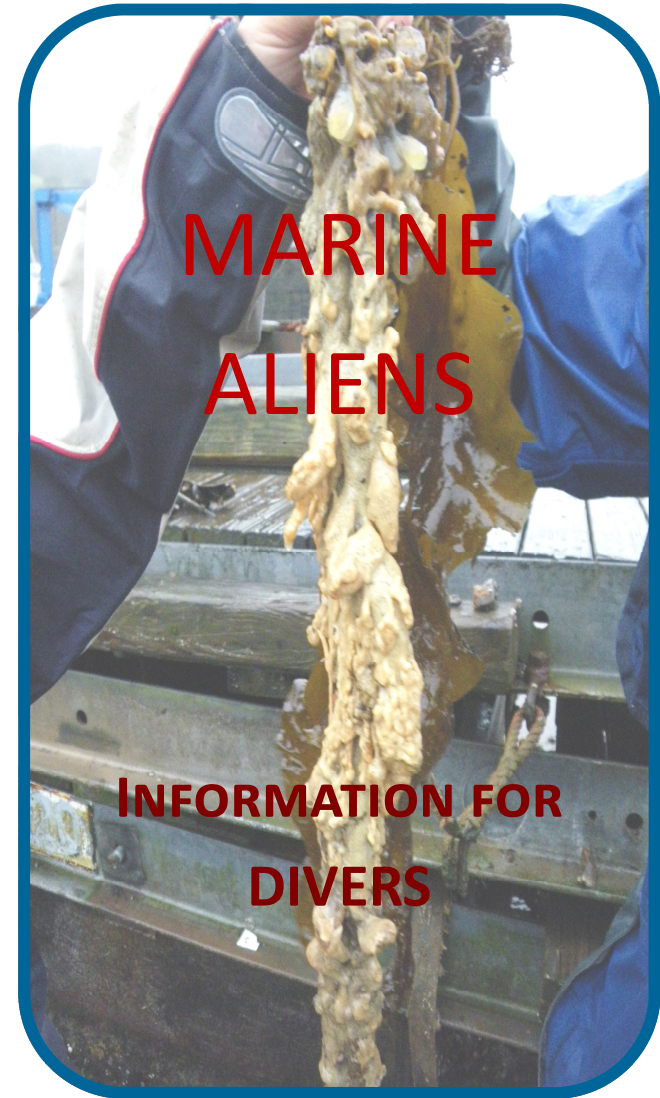
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Carpet Sea Squirt



- Pale orange to off-white.
- Firm texture, like leather.
- Forms large mats, sometimes with hanging outgrowths.
- Now found at Largs in the Firth of Clyde, Scotland.

IMPACTS: Smothers other plants and animals. Fouls harbour and marina structures and seabed.

Leathery Sea Squirt



- Individuals have a club-like body, with tough stalk.
- Can be up to 12cm long.
- Skin is yellow or brown, leathery, with folds and swellings, and often other plants and animals grow on it.
- Found mainland Scotland.

IMPACTS: Fouls boat hulls, and harbour and marina structures.

MARINE ALIENS

Shetland has a rich marine environment that is enjoyed by local and visiting divers. Marine aliens can threaten this environment. Fortunately Shetland currently has few marine aliens, but many more are found elsewhere in Scotland.

You can help keep Shetland this way.

GOOD PRACTICE

Keep boats as free of fouling as possible and regularly anti-foul. Check, clean and dry RIBS and dive gear when moving between areas.

Don't throw even a small piece of a marine alien back into the water, as some can grow back from tiny bits.

ACT QUICKLY

When diving keep your eyes open for the marine aliens shown here. If you think you have found a marine alien please contact the NAFC Marine Centre. If possible please take a picture and collect a sample.

GOOD PRACTICE AND A FAST RESPONSE CAN LIMIT SPREAD OF MARINE ALIENS.



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www.nafc.ac.uk/introduced-species

Wireweed



- Pale yellow to dark brown seaweed.
- Grows near the surface.
- Can be over a metre in length.
- Found mainland Scotland and Norway.

IMPACTS: Entangles propellers. Fouls harbour and marina structures. Dense mats hinder marine recreation, and rot on beaches. Replaces native seaweeds.

Bryozoans



- Bryozoans are also known as sea mats or sea mosses.
- Small colonial marine animals.
- There are a number of native species but the invasive species are orange and encrusting. A close look shows the roughly rectangular animals, each about 1mm long.
- An invasive bryozoan has already been identified in some areas of Shetland.

IMPACTS: Some are able to grow on anti-fouled surfaces, speeding fouling of boat hulls and marina structures.