

Habitat: Ross Worm Reefs

OSPAR Recommendation 2013/02:

Contracting Parties are required to report progress with implementation of recommendations every six years, with initial more frequent reporting until 2019.

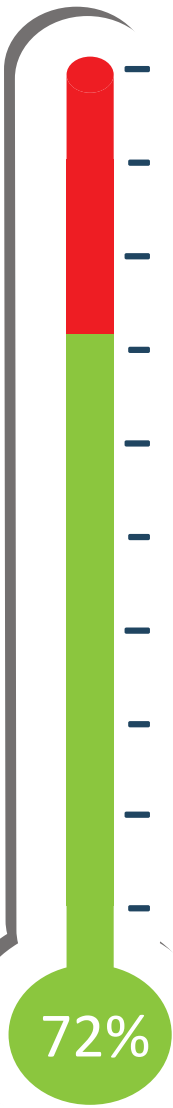
Measures taken by Contracting Parties to protect *Sabellaria Spinulosa* Reefs include protection through national legislation, designation of MPAs and awareness-raising with industry



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Description

Ross Worm (*Sabellaria Spinulosa*) is a small, tube-building polychaete worm found in the subtidal and lower intertidal/sublittoral fringe. In most parts of its geographic range it does not form reefs but is solitary or found in small groups, encrusting pebbles, shell, kelp holdfasts and bedrock. When conditions are favourable, dense aggregations may be found, forming reefs up to about 60 cm high and extending over several hectares; these are often raised above the surrounding seabed. Reefs may persist in an area for many years although individual clumps may regularly form and disintegrate. The species is widely distributed within the OSPAR maritime area, although the density of worms is typically low. Densely aggregated reef structures in contrast are relatively rare, and are typically restricted to areas with high levels of suspended sediment within the North Sea.



Action Highlights

Each Recommendation requires Contracting Parties to report on the methods used to implement the measures. The methods are Legislation, Administrative action and Negotiated agreement, or any combination of these. Some recent examples include:

1. Protected under national legislation in Germany and the UK;
2. France, Germany, and the UK undertake monitoring and mapping programmes;
3. The UK has 6 MPAs and implemented fisheries measures to protect the habitat;
4. Germany ensures that research permits require provision of results to authorities;
5. The Netherlands, and the UK, work with industries to improve knowledge.

Engagement

The engagement index (left) measures how well Contracting Parties have engaged with the national measures in the Recommendation. The higher the score the greater the number of actions that Contracting Parties, which have reported, have taken to implement the measures in the Recommendation. Click here for more information on the index.

References:

- Background Document for *Sabellaria Spinulosa* (OSPAR Publication 614)
- OSPAR Recommendation 2013/02
- OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (Agreement 2008-06)

Condition

The decline in *Sabellaria Spinulosa* reef habitat from the Wadden Sea is well documented, and there is no evidence for a net recovery from this, or from the reported losses in Morecambe Bay, UK. Elsewhere, classification of the condition of *Sabellaria Spinulosa* reef habitat is challenging, as is identification of a trend in condition. The ephemeral nature of *Sabellaria Spinulosa* reefs is such that the condition of reef habitat should be considered at a wider scale than individual reefs, though data is currently lacking in this regard. At present there is therefore too little evidence to determine the scale of, or sensitivity to, anthropogenic impacts, although they are known to be present in heavily used areas e.g. near aggregate extraction sites.



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