

David Robertson adult award winner

Chris Wood has co-ordinated the UK-wide Seasearch programme since its launch in 2003.

Seasearch is an underwater biological recording scheme that involves training recreational divers in marine identification and recording, running dedicated surveys and ensuring the data contributes to national datasets.

MCS secured Heritage Lottery Funding to launch Seasearch and appoint a National Coordinator in 2003 with the role of promoting and standardising training, and co-ordinating survey work and data management. Chris Wood was the ideal match for the role.

Since 2003 Chris has tirelessly developed and promoted Seasearch throughout the UK as well as securing the necessary funds to expand and develop the programme. As a result of his dedication and personal passion for marine life and recording, Seasearch has become an established training programme and Chris has personally trained and guided a team of regional Seasearch Co-ordinators and Tutors to deliver training to volunteer divers throughout the UK. Surveys have taken place throughout Britain and Ireland from the most northerly rock off Unst in the Shetlands, Muckle Flugga, to the most southerly reef south of Jersey, Les Sauvages. All of the species records are publically available on the NBN. Many have been used to inform MPA site selection and management in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, whilst others have been of species new or rarely recorded in our waters.

Over the past 14 years, Chris has overseen or directly contributed to an incredible range of achievements:

- Seasearch volunteer divers have undertaken 17,000 survey dives
- 505,000 species and 59,000 habitat records input to NBN
- over 600 Seasearch courses
- 750 qualified Seasearch divers
- Author of the 'Guide to UK Marine Life' and 'Guide to Anemones & Corals'
- Editing a series of other well-respected guides to identifying marine life

Chris's leadership of the Seasearch programme since its launch has made a significant contribution to the UK's marine dataset and thus knowledge of marine life, to increasing the identification and recording skills of hundreds of volunteer divers and to the conservation of the UK's marine biodiversity. He retired from the post of National Co-ordinator in September 2016, but remains actively involved with Seasearch as a volunteer.

David Robertson (1806–1896) was a Scottish naturalist who founded the University Marine Biological Station at Millport, which opened in 1897. Millport Marine Biological Station closed in 2013, but reopened in 2014 as Millport Field Centre thanks to the Field Studies Council.