

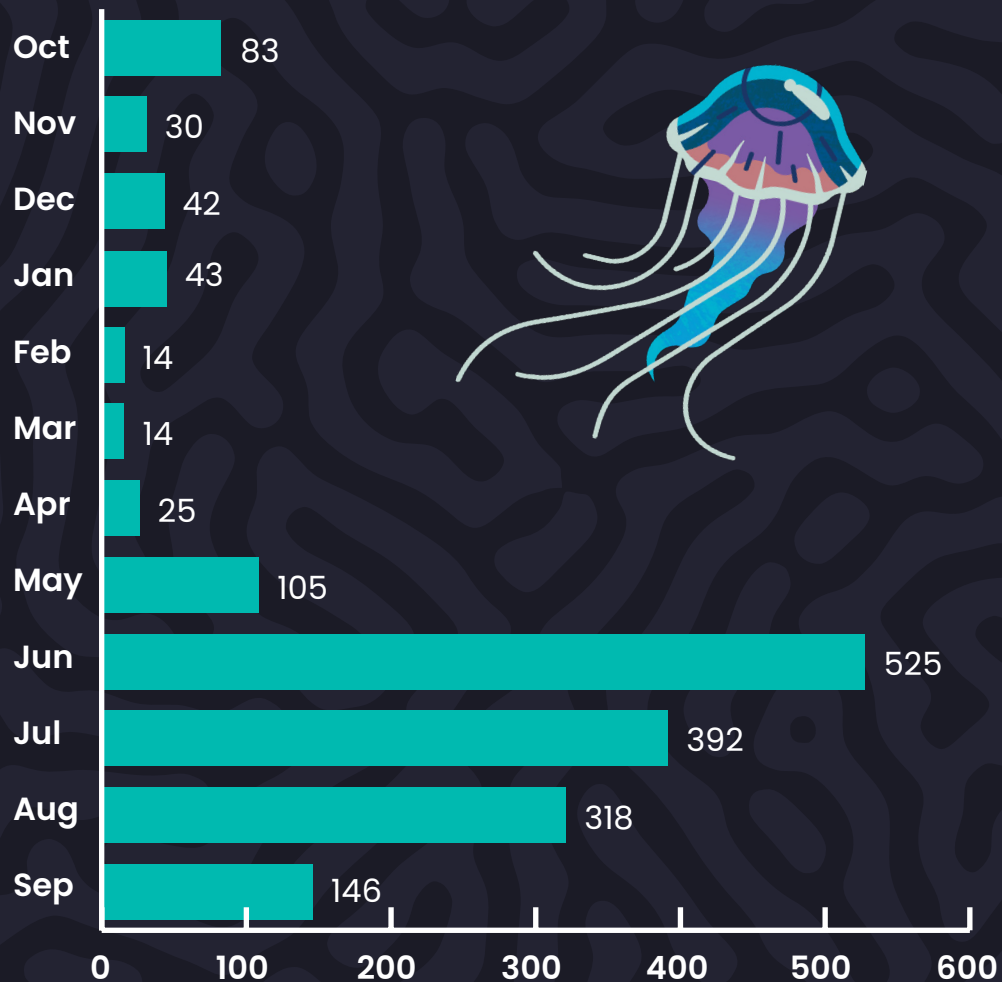
1st Oct 2022 – 30th Sept 2023

Annual Wildlife Sightings Report



When did you spot wildlife?

Although jellyfish can be found around the UK and Irish coasts year-round, jellyfish numbers increase between spring and autumn, when large blooms can be found in our waters. This year, **jellyfish sightings in September increased by over 400%** compared to last year. Below is the trend in monthly sightings for this year.

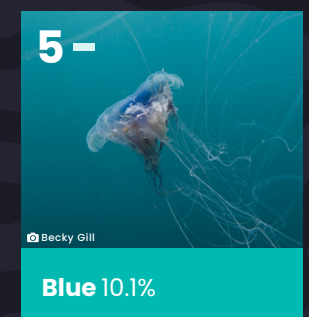
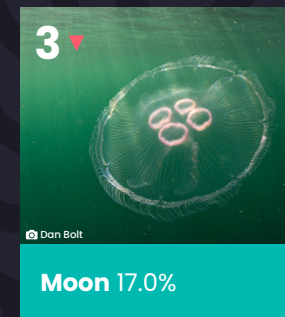
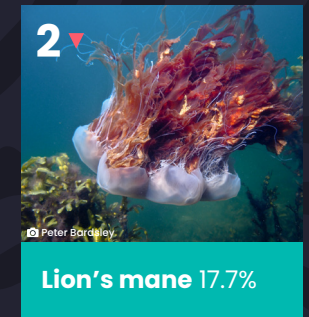


Which jellyfish did you spot the most?

75% of sightings were of individuals (1-20), whilst 11% of sightings were of large blooms of over 100 individuals, an increase of 57% from last year.

Total jellyfish reports:

1,737 ▲ up 32%
vs last year





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Barrel jellyfish

This year's most-spotted jellyfish species was the Barrel, which accounted for almost 27% of total sightings. This is an increase of 20.8% compared to last year's results, when it was the sixth most-spotted species and made up only 6.1% of sightings.

Barrels spotted: 467

Barrel jellyfish are sometimes called 'dustbin lid jellyfish' due to their large size – they can grow up to one metre in diameter!

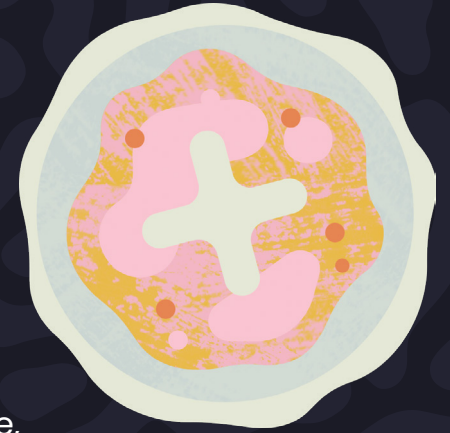
They have a solid, spherical, rubbery-looking bell which can be white, pale pink, blue or yellow. Rather than thin tentacles, Barrels have eight thick, frilled arms – hence its former scientific name 'Rhizostoma octopus' (now *Rhizostoma pulmo*).

Leatherback turtles, which we also monitor, feed on this species, but interestingly, we received fewer reports of leatherback sightings this year.

The compass, which was last year's most-reported species, has fallen to fourth place, whilst Moon dropped from second to third place, and Lion's Mane jumped from third to second.

These are interesting observations, as Compass and Moon were the top two species both last year and in 2021–2022, whilst Barrel jellyfish was last the most reported species in 2019–2020. Jellyfish populations fluctuate depending on environmental factors, which may be the reason for this change.

We'll continue to monitor these trends over the coming year to see what they might tell us about life in our seas.



Other species

As well as the six jellyfish and two hydrozoan species we monitor, we also receive reports of 'other' jellyfish species, such as crystal and comb jellies, and sea gooseberries.

This year, 'other' jellyfish sightings made up 10% of total sightings, with 173 reported. These species made up 9% of sightings in 2021–2022 and only 5% of sightings in 2020–2021. This trend may indicate changes in our ocean.

The most reported 'other' species was the **Crystal jellyfish**, accounting for 3.2% of all sightings, and 31.8% of all 'other' species sightings'. This is a slight increase from last year when they made up 2.9% of all sightings.

Despite being transparent and hard to spot, we also received 14 reports of Comb jellies and 10 reports of Sea Gooseberries.

Comb jellies are ctenophora, not jellyfish – and they can't sting people either. These delicate creatures are bioluminescent, meaning they can scatter light and create a rainbow effect underwater.

Sea Gooseberries are a species of comb cnidarians. Their translucent, oval-shaped bell with rows of combs running along it gives them the appearance (and name) of a gooseberry. This species is phosphorescent, meaning it can glow in the dark.



Picture Partners



Kondratuk Aleksei



Randy Bjorklund

Turtles

This year, we received 12 reports of marine turtle sightings, four of which were live leatherbacks.

Although six of the seven turtle species have been recorded in UK waters, the Leatherback is the most frequently seen. Each summer, Leatherbacks head to our waters to feed on jellyfish. They're the largest marine turtle species, and the only one with a soft leathery shell instead of a hard one.

This year, seven Loggerhead turtles were also reported to us, five of which were alive when found. These hard-shelled marine turtles are usually juveniles which get carried here on strong currents. They're not suited to the UK and Ireland's cold waters and we work with other organisations to help rehabilitate stranded hard-shelled turtles where possible.

Your turtle sightings will be added together with other organisations' reports and shared in the British & Irish Marine Turtle Strandings & Sightings Annual Report in March.



4 Leatherbacks



7 Loggerheads

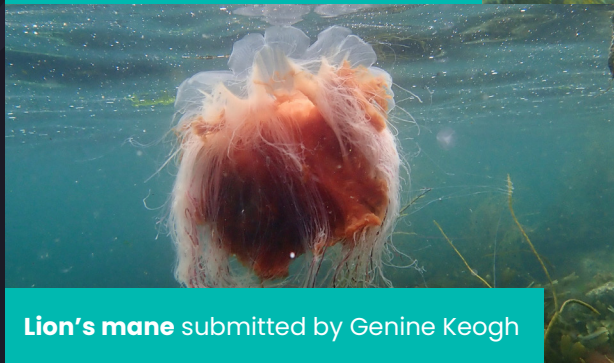


Thank you!

A huge thank you to everyone who reported their sightings of jellyfish and marine turtles around the UK and Ireland. You joined hundreds of other people in reporting wildlife and contributing valuable data to help us better understand our ocean.



Crystal submitted by Adam Hughes



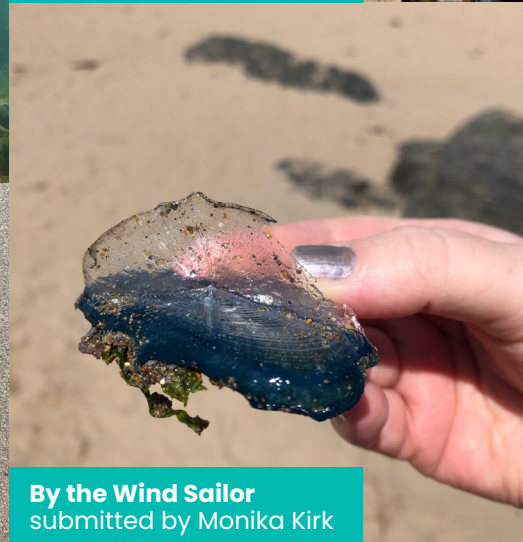
Lion's mane submitted by Genine Keogh



Barrel submitted by Joyce Kerr



Portuguese Man O' War submitted by Ian Hawkins



By the Wind Sailor submitted by Monika Kirk

Your sightings enable us to track how and when jellyfish and turtles use our waters. We monitor these trends which can indicate changes happening in our seas. This helps us prove that our ocean is facing problems and push for solutions that are backed by science.

This is a key part of our work and by reporting your sightings, you're playing a vital role in protecting our seas.

We'll be continuing to collect and analyse your reports of jellyfish and marine turtles, so please report any you see to us here: mcsuk.org/sightings and send us your photos for the chance to be featured in our *Your Ocean* members' magazine!

The kind support of your Membership enables us to continue this work. **[Sign up here](#)** to join a community of ocean enthusiasts and receive access to some members-only exclusives.

