

Pacific Oyster Distribution within the North East Kent European Marine Sites.

In March 2007, Kent Wildlife Trust held a Shoresearch event at Ramsgate's Western Undercliff. During this event, Pacific Oysters were seen at levels not previously recorded. This raised concern about their possible impact on the features of the north east Kent European marine sites and as a result a research project was commissioned by Natural England. The aim of the project was to establish a baseline record of inter-tidal distribution and density within the European marine sites.



Surveying began in April 2007 and was completed in August 2008. During this period the entire inter-tidal area from Swalecliffe to Deal was inspected and details of Pacific oyster populations were recorded. This included numbers, density, size, species and habitats affected and types of substrate used for settlement.

Results showed that a well established and dynamic population of Pacific oysters exist across the expanse of the European sites. Peak density recorded was 187 oysters in a square meter!



Settlement was recorded on concrete walls & groynes, mussel beds, flint cobbles and directly on to the chalk reef. In places, oysters are overlaying and approaching biological reef formation. The population showed a dynamic structure with a visible range from 12mm - 180mm.



Data collected are being used to produce a *Geographic Information System (GIS)* record by Natural England. A Natural England Research Report is expected to be published in 2009. This baseline data will provide the foundation for potential management of this invasive species within the European marine sites.

Willie McKnight
May 2009