



Media Release from Alderney Wildlife Trust

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Channel Islands pink sea fan population research project

Last month, the Alderney Wildlife Trust supported researchers from the University of Exeter and Jersey Marine Conservation to collect small tissue samples from pink sea fans across Alderney's territorial waters.

The samples will be used to assess the genetic connectivity of pink sea fan (*Eunicella verrucosa*) populations across the Channel Islands and beyond, as part of a new PhD research project. The visiting scientists scuba-dived sites of known locations of pink sea fans at Braye Rock, Grois Rock and other various spots along Alderney's south-west coast, including Les Noires Putes. Previous records of the species were provided by Seasearch; a citizen science project for recreational scuba-divers and snorkellers to record marine life. The samples were then taken to the University of Exeter for DNA analysis, with the results expected late spring, 2025.

Pink sea fans are pink, warty looking soft corals, found on undersea rocky reefs, from 4 - 50 m deep. Each fan is made up of a colony of small, individual animals which share a hard skeleton. They prefer to live in fast flowing, tidal conditions and use their tentacles to grab passing plankton. The fans are slow growers, growing 1 cm a year and are known to last up to 50 years old. Pink sea fans are considered an important species as they provide vital habitat for cryptic species, including the endemic sea fan anemone; *Amphianthus dohrnii*. The IUCN also classifies this species as 'vulnerable' at the global level, due to it being fragile and sensitive to disturbance.

Mel Broadhurst-Allen quote: 'Research such as this allows us to identify how closely our seas are connected. Pink sea fans are particularly under-recorded across Alderney, so gaining new information on this important marine species is paramount. We are grateful to the University of Exeter, Jersey Marine Conservation, Seasearch, the Alderney Harbour Authority and States of Alderney for enabling this exciting new Channel Islands academic study.'

Ends

Background

The Alderney Wildlife Trust is one of the 46 Wildlife Trusts working across the British Isles. We are the youngest of the Wildlife Trust, forming over 20 years ago and since then the AWT has received incredible support from a dedicated team of wildlife enthusiasts, what we like to think of as the 'TeamWilder'. This team isn't just limited to residents and AWT members, it includes people from all walks of life who have an interest in our island's wildlife, as well as supporters and organizations from around the world. We work with the local community to engage them with their natural environment to protect Alderney's wildlife for the future.

Our mission is to study, protect and champion Alderney's wildlife. We wish to see a thriving natural island where wildlife and natural habitats play a valued role in addressing our island's future and the climate and ecological emergencies that face us.

Alderney is a very special place and by helping the work of the Alderney Wildlife Trust you can make a difference. After all, if you love where you live, you'll want to look after it - Dr. George McGavin, Patron AWT

Notes to Media

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