



# Factsheet Wrecks

Ship wrecks and ocean biodiversity are strongly linked. As well as the need to protect some of the historic wreck sites as valuable cultural heritage, shipwrecks provide a safe habitat for underwater plant and animal life and as such, their preservation conserves ocean biodiversity.

## WRECK MONITORING

The Sea Ranger Service has monitored protected shipwreck sites as maritime heritage in the North Sea since 2019. Working in direct partnership with the Dutch governmental Information and Heritage Inspectorate, Sea Rangers follow patrol routes and look for any activity that could disturb the precious heritage sites, including illegal salvaging of historical artefacts, unlicensed fishing, or anything else that might damage the sites and disturb the biodiversity that these wrecks support.

- 210 individual wreck monitoring carried out
- 3.082 miles sailed by Sea Rangers for wreck monitoring
- 13 high-risk wreck sites offered semi-permanent patrols

## NEED FOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Some forms of marine plant life prefer solid surfaces to grow on, including seaweeds, corals, and sponges, and so underwater wrecks provide the perfect environment for them. Different forms of plant life use the sunken structures in different ways. Corals such as sea pens for example, attach themselves to the structure of the wreck and extend their extended tissue, known as polyps, to capture plankton from the water, whereas sponges rely on the water moving through tiny pores to filter tiny organisms and plankton from the water, in order to give them nutrients.

Once such plant life has started to grow on wrecks, it creates a good environment to attract small underwater animals like fish, crustaceans, mussels and barnacles, in turn attracting larger predators. Protecting wrecks ensures small pockets of biodiversity in the sea, which support ocean life overall.

## Partners



Information and Heritage Inspectorate  
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science



A special net, dragged along the side of the Sea Ranger vessel, collecting microplastics at the water surface.



Sea Rangers lift the sampling net from the water to collect microplastics for research.

## Contact



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