

1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2023 – 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2024

# Annual Wildlife Sightings Report



# Which jellyfish did you spot the most?

76% of sightings were of individuals or small groups (1-20), with a slight decrease in the number of large blooms (100+ individuals) than last year.

## Total jellyfish reports:

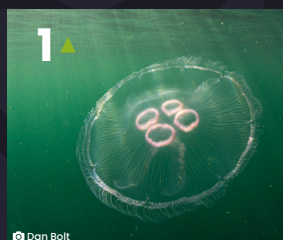
1,432



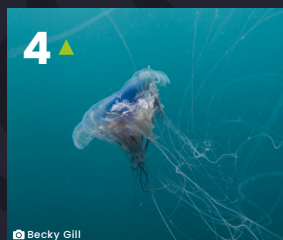
**Portuguese Man O' War** 19.6%



**Lion's Mane** 6.9%



**Moon** 20.0%



**Blue** 8.3%



**By the Wind Sailor** 5.8%



**Compass** 19.6%



**Barrel** 7.0%



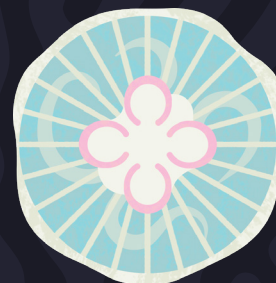
**Mauve Stinger** 2.6%

## Moon jellyfish

Moon was the most spotted species this year, up from third place last year. **286 were spotted**, making up 20% of all sightings. These were **mostly recorded between May and September**, with the most seen in July (112). It was the **most recorded species in June and August**, second-most recorded in May and July, and third in September.

Some were also seen in **November**, with 23 moon jellies making up 11% of that month's sightings.

Up to 40 cm



Four distinct purple gonad rings in the bell

Round, clear, dome-like bell



Short hairlike tentacles

Four short frilled oral arms

### Time of year



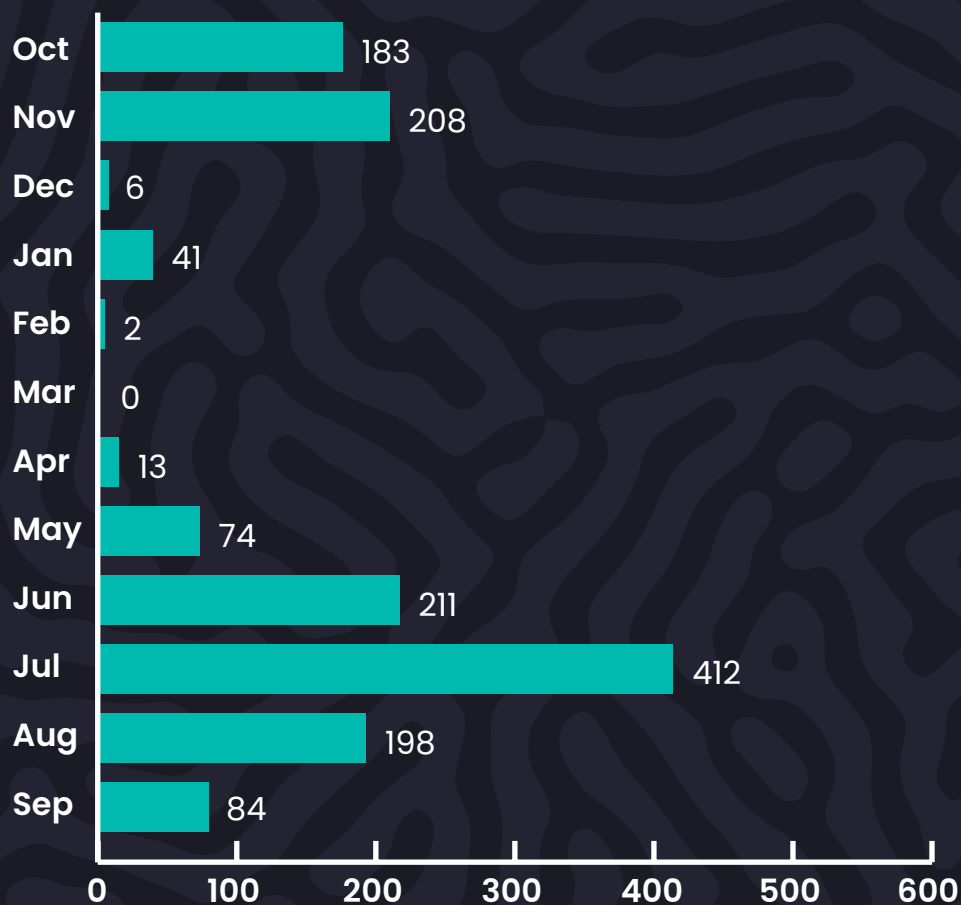
### Sting



## When did you spot wildlife?

Jellyfish were spotted year-round, with the most recorded in July (412). There were fewer sightings recorded in June and August this year, with **decreases of 60% and 38% respectively**.

However, we received a lot more sightings in October and November compared to last year, with an **increase of 120% in October and 593% in November**.



## Why could this be?

The lower numbers in summer months may be because fewer barrel jellyfish and lion's manes were spotted, dropping from most and second-most recorded last year to 5th and 6th this year. As these jellyfish swarm in warmer coastal waters in late spring and often wash up on our beaches in May or June, their absence could help explain the lower numbers in these months.

The increase in Autumn may be due to storm events and strong winds bringing more jellyfish to our shores, particularly Portuguese Man O' War.

**Sightings of Portuguese Man O' War increased by 16% compared to last year**, becoming the second-most recorded species and making up 19.6% of sightings. This was the most abundant species recorded from October to January, with particularly high numbers in October (58% of sightings) and November (25% of sightings), when they get blown onto our shores by strong westerly winds.





## 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, comb, and cross jellies, and sea gooseberries.

This year, 'other' jellyfish sightings made up **10.3% of total sightings**, with 148 reported. We're increasingly receiving reports of these species, with numbers increasing slightly each year. This may indicate changes in our ocean.

**Crystal jellyfish** accounted for **49% of 'other' species recorded, up by 17.2% from last year**. Most of these (56%) were spotted in June and July. They also made up **4% of all sightings** – a further increase of 0.7% compared to last year.

There were also more reports of **comb jellies**, with **21 spotted** (vs 14 last year) and accounting for **18% of 'other' sightings**. These ctenophora (not jellyfish) are bioluminescent, meaning they can scatter light and create rainbow effects.

Reports of **cross jellies** more than doubled compared to last year. **13 were spotted**, making them the third-most recorded 'other' species. These were mostly spotted in June and July, when 77% of sightings were recorded.

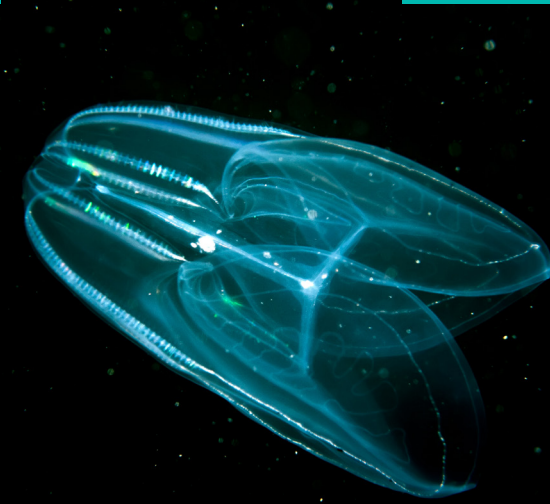
**11 sea gooseberries** were also recorded – a slight increase from 10 last year. These comb cnidarians have the appearance of gooseberries and are phosphorescent, meaning they can glow in the dark.

Crystal



© Picture Partners

Comb



© Kondratuk Aleksei

Sea gooseberry



© Randy Bjorklund

Cross



© Annie Leblanc

# Turtles

This year, we received **9 reports of marine turtle sightings**, three of which were live leatherbacks.

These were all spotted in summer months (June and July), which is when 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, three Kemp's Ridley turtles and two loggerhead turtles were also reported to us, all of which were seen in winter months. These hard-shelled marine turtles are usually juveniles which get carried here by strong winds and 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 Spring 2025.



- **Kemps Ridley**
- **Leatherback**
- **Loggerhead**
- **Unidentified**





**Mauve stingers**  
Andrew Smith



**By the wind sailor**  
Julie Pennington

## Thank you!

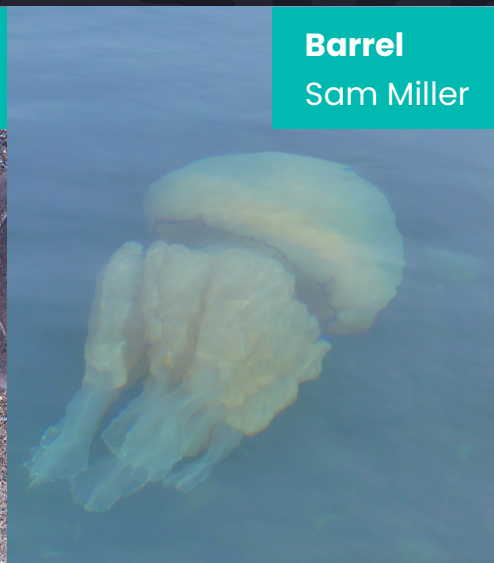
A huge thank you to everyone who reported their sightings of jellyfish and marine turtles around the UK and Ireland. You joined hundreds of other people in reporting wildlife and contributing valuable data to help us better understand our ocean.



**Lion's mane**  
Jennifer Bain



**Cross**  
Clare Peters



**Barrel**  
Sam Miller

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 at **[mcsuk.org/sightings](https://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 at **[mcsuk.org/join](https://mcsuk.org/join)** to join a community of ocean enthusiasts and receive access to some members-only exclusives