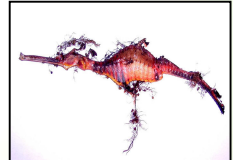
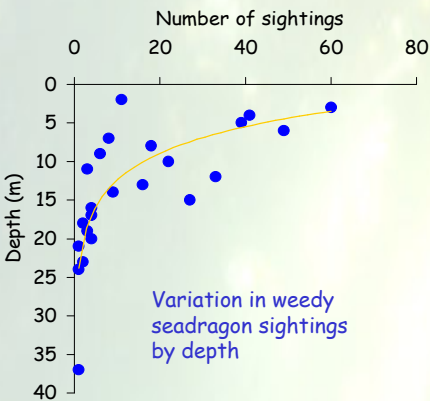


Here be Dragons!

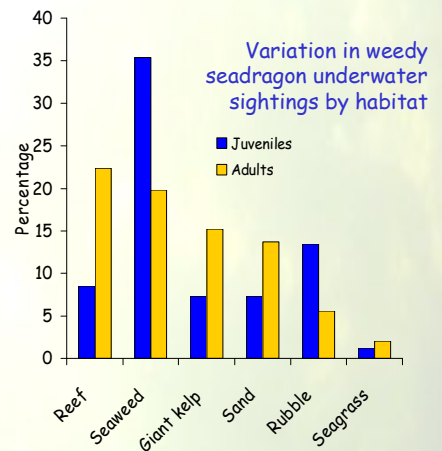


Weedy seadragons are only found in southern Australian waters. This poster looks at some of the findings from a recent survey of weedy seadragons in Tasmanian waters coordinated by the Tasmanian Marine Naturalists' Association.

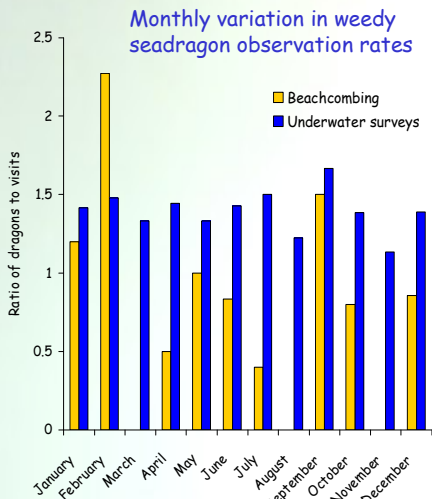


Weedy seadragons were seen in water ranging from 1 to 38 m deep, but overall, highest numbers were observed in the shallowest water - though shallow water was relatively well surveyed too.

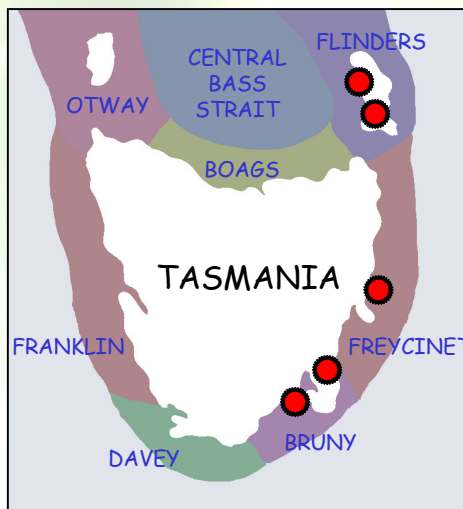
Starting in 1997, volunteers were asked to carry out beach and underwater surveys, and to fill in a recording form detailing their observations on the occurrence or absence of seadragons, marine habitats and a range of other variables. These records were collated in a central database for analysis. By early 2003, 242 forms had been submitted, representing sightings of 451 weedy seadragons.



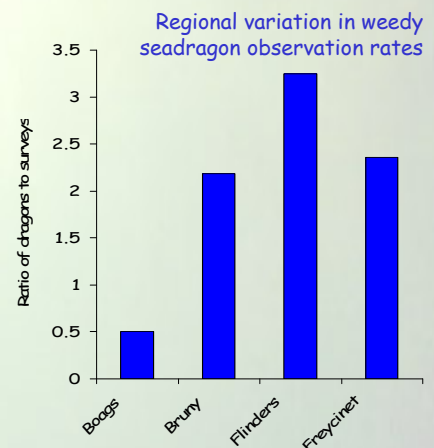
Weedy seadragons were seen in a range of habitats, but avoided muddy substrates completely. Juveniles showed narrower preferences than adults, and were mostly observed amongst seaweeds.



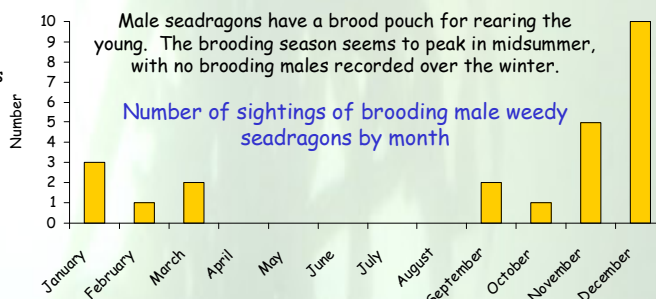
Surveys were carried out in every month. For underwater surveys, weedy seadragons were recorded at similar rates in each month, suggesting that populations of seadragons are relatively stable year-round. However, beachcombing was more erratic, and during this survey had a higher success rate in late summer, suggesting fluctuations in mortality rates which may relate to the seasons or to other less predictable events such as storms.



Tasmanian coastal waters have been divided into seven bioregions (Interim Marine and Coastal Regionalisation for Australia, 1998). Weedy seadragons were recorded from all of these, but hotspots for multiple sightings (●) were all in the east.



Underwater surveys were conducted in four of Tasmania's IMCRA bioregions (others were surveyed by beachcombing only). Those in Flinders had the highest success rate at finding weedy seadragons, while those in Boags had the lowest. Brunny rated third, despite most seadragon records coming from this region during the survey.



Male seadragons have a brood pouch for rearing the young. The brooding season seems to peak in midsummer, with no brooding males recorded over the winter.