What is seagrass?

Seagrass isn’t seaweed, but a group of flowering plants that live in shallow sheltered areas along our coastline. With bright green leaves and waterproof pollen, they form large dense green meadows under the sea. These meadows host many animals of different shapes, colours and sizes. Seagrasses are highly vulnerable to damage from humans and are now a protected species. It is estimated that in the UK we have lost over 50% of our seagrass and damage is continuing, protecting what’s left is vital.
Ecosystem is a word used to describe how all living things in an area are able to interact with each other. Seagrasses are one of the most productive ecosystems on Earth. Seagrasses provide a home for lots of small marine creatures such as seahorses and food for bigger marine animals, such as turtles and manatees. Seagrasses are also nurseries and shelter areas for young fish. Look at the pictures on the opposite page and see if you can spot the 20 differences between them!
Seagrass Word Unscramble

Seagrasses create a leafy underwater shelter for small organisms and this makes seagrass meadows the perfect nursery habitat. Many small invertebrates such as crabs live on the sea bed underneath the seagrass, other invertebrates such as anemones live directly on the seagrass leaves. Young fish also use seagrass as a nursery, it provides them with shelter, food and protection from predators. Many of the fish that like to use seagrass as a nursery are also the fish that we like to eat, such as cod.

Look at the words on the opposite page and see if you can unscramble them to spell a species that lives in seagrass!
Seahorses are a species of small marine fish. Its body is long, and it swims upright with a curly tail. Seahorses live in seagrass meadows and swim very slowly. There are lots of species of seahorse. Small seahorses only grow to be up to 2cm in size but large seahorses can grow to be up 35cm in size. Seahorses can be seen holding onto seagrass leaves if you look close enough. Complete the Dot-to-Dot on the opposite page to reveal the hidden seahorse!
Seagrass Colour In

Cuttlefish belong to the same family as octopus and squid. They have eight tentacles and two ‘suckers’ that they use to capture food. Cuttlefish can be found up to depths of 250 metres where they feed on seabed eating prawns and small crustaceans. Cuttlefish lay their eggs in seagrass so that their babies have a safe place to grow up. In the summer months baby cuttlefish can be seen amongst the seagrass leaves. Cuttlefish are capable of changing their colour to blend in with their surroundings and escape predators. Colour in the cuttlefish on the opposite page!
Threats to Seagrass Word Search

Seagrass is lost at a rate of two football fields an hour! A quarter of all seagrass species globally have been labelled as threatened, endangered or vulnerable. Seagrasses are particularly vulnerable to disturbance.

Some disturbances are natural like waves, currents and storms. Others are caused by harmful fishing practises such as trawling. Sedimentation is the gathering of material such as stones and sand in water. This can affect seagrass as it makes sea water cloudy and blocks sunlight reaching seagrass, so it cannot grow.
Fishing
Disturbance
Waves
Boats
Storms

Anchor
Sewage
Pollution
Propeller
Currents
Be a Seagrass Safe Boater Maze

One threat to seagrass is fishing and boating activities. These activities physically impact and destroy seagrass meadows.

Often boat anchors and propellers cut into the seagrass and mix up the seabed. Giving the seagrass nowhere to anchor its roots, making it also more vulnerable to the effects of strong currents and storms.

Whenever possible, it is best to avoid seagrass beds and utilize navigation channels or deeper water while under power in a boat. By simply remaining aware of your surroundings and being mindful of where you are can go a long way.
Protecting Seagrass Crossword

Seagrasses are protected by the people living closest to them. They are not protected by any international laws. Monitoring is the repeated observation of a system like seagrass so that any changes can be quickly detected, and preventative measures put in place. Replanting is a way of restoring seagrass meadows by replanting seeds or seedlings. In order for this to be successful any hazards to the seagrass must be removed before replanting takes place.

Seagrass grows preferentially in sheltered areas and this is also where the boating activity occurs. Boat propellers and tractors tear up seagrass beds. Therefore, encouraging safe boating practises goes a long way to help protect our precious seagrass meadows.
Down:
1) The repeated observation of something so that changes can be quickly detected.
3) This is a natural cause of disturbance to seagrass meadows.
6) A way of restoring seagrass meadows using seeds or seedlings.

Across:
2) These vehicles damage seagrass meadows by leaving tracks.
4) This activity can damage seagrass.
5) These vessels tear up seagrass meadows with propellers.
7) Seagrass prefers to grow in these areas.
8) This fishing practise is very damaging to seagrass meadows.
9) This process is the gathering of material, such as sand in water, which can prevent seagrass from growing.
10) Seagrass meadows are not protected by these.
FIND OUT MORE AT
www.projectseagrass.org

OR HELP US SPOT SEAGRASS AT
www.seagrassspotter.org