



The Goal

To obtain an estimate of the number of weedy seadragons in the Sydney region (Gosford-Wollongong) in 2024, which the is “Year of the Dragon” so a great time to do this project.

The need

Accurate population estimates are central to understanding population status and if any perturbates have possible impacts on population status. Sydney’s weedy seadragons were impacted by a series of East Coast low storms in 2022, resulting in at least 200 washing ashore dead, but given we have no estimate of numbers in the wild here we cannot assess the impact at a population level. Because seadragons have very limited dispersal, losses will persist if this is a significant proportion of the total local population. While we have some good information for certain key seadragon sites in Sydney we need to extend censuses across the region.

Who are we?

[UTS Fish Ecology lab](#) has studied seadragons for over 20 years now around Sydney, linking with key dragon spotters such as Underwater Research Group and Andrew Trevor-Jones.

also see https://protect-au.mimecast.com/s/KD_hCBNqn7t7DvpZ6c6h9aU?domain=iucn-seahorse.org

The plan:

1. We want to **link with divers** and dive clubs to regularly report to us on dragons encountered- link with SeaDragon Search and an iNaturalist weedy Census site (*in construction*). <https://seadragonsearch.org/>
2. We want to get a list of individuals interested in contributing to the project.
3. Organise dedicated seadragon census dives at locations where we are unable to rely on regular amateur divers.

What we ask

Regular dives by dive clubs and operators: divers search for dragons during a dive, and take photos to submit to Seadragon search, which will process and allow later surveys to spot previous dragons.

Please make contact and send data to David.Booth@uts.edu.au

Ideally, we need, for each dive

1. Metadata- Location, Date/Time, Temperature, Depth, Visibility, Diver Name
2. Area covered (metres squared plus indication on google maps)
3. Number seen (male/female, depth encountered), other info (eg. male with eggs) note also record if no seadragons seen (zeros matter!).
4. A good image of both flanks for each dragon (plus upload to [SeadragonSearch](#) as well [as iNaturalist Australasian fishes](#)).
5. **Don’t worry if you are not a photographer, accurate accounts of encounters are also valuable data.**



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