

Specialist Fauna and Flora of the Fleet Lagoon

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Because of their unusual hydrographic and temperature regimes saline lagoons have a specialised fauna and flora and the Fleet is no exception.

Though sheltered from wave action, the Fleet has strong currents at Ferry Bridge and other narrow points, salinity fluctuates at the Abbotsbury end and water temperatures are more extreme than in Lyme Bay.

These frequently challenging physical conditions favour the presence of species which either are lagoon specialists with restricted distributions in the UK or common species which occur in unusually high numbers. Several of these species have special protection.



The Foxtail is a rare stonewort which occurs in the Fleet. It is protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act.



This seaweed is rare in England but occurs in considerable abundance in the Fleet.



This colourful rare sponge is common in the Fleet and also occurs in Poole Harbour and in the Dart.



The snakelocks anemone occurs in huge numbers at Ferrybridge and at Wyke Regis forming a carpet of stinging tentacles over the pebbles.



The Starlet anemone is a species restricted to saline lagoons. It is protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act, but results of genetic analysis suggest that it is an introduction from north America where it is common and widespread.



The Lagoon Sand Shrimp, not more than an inch long, is another species with special protection which occurs in large numbers in the Fleet.



The Lagoon Cockle, a small relative of the edible cockle, is common in the Fleet.



Couch's goby was discovered in Cornwall and first recorded in the Fleet in 1980. Recent surveys have shown that it still occurs here and may be extending its range in England.

Seagrass beds are a vital part of the ecology of the Fleet Lagoon.

