

Common starfish (*Asteria rubens*)

Asteroidea (Echinodermata:Forcipulatida)



Typical colouration is bright oranges with white spines on the upper surface, intact specimens have 5 arms. However colouration may vary with violet/purple individuals occasionally seen (below) which may be confused with the Bloody Henry (*Henricia spp*). Typically less than 30cm in length though they can reach sizes of over to half a metre in diameter.

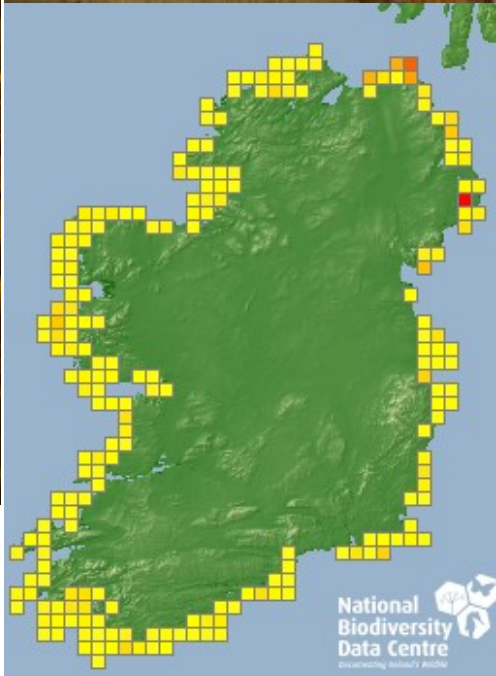
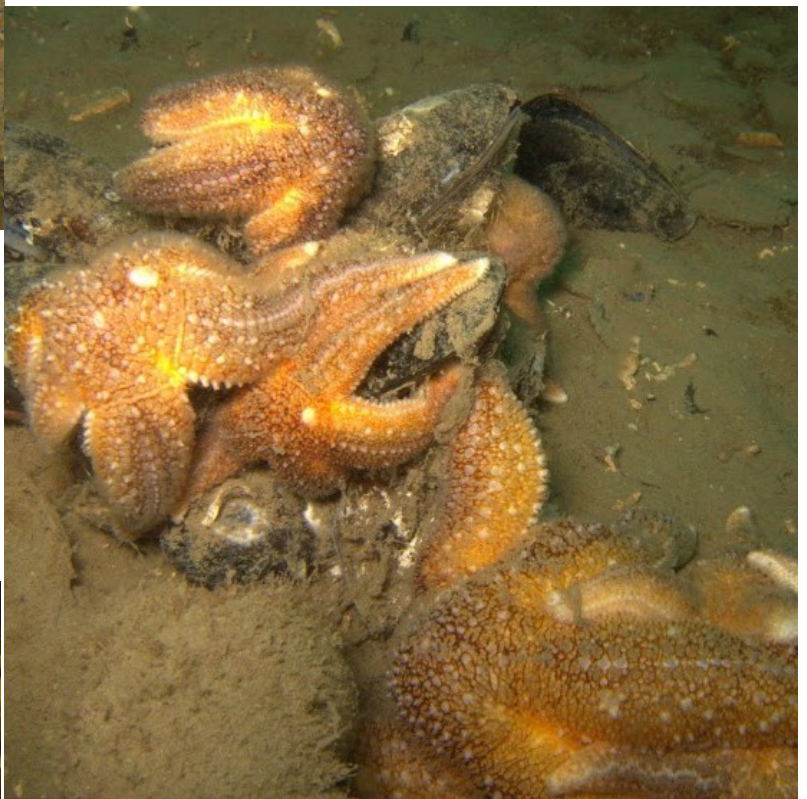


Found on all coasts this is one of the most commonly seen species by divers. Can form large aggregations blooms at certain times of the year when mussels are settling e.g. Killary Harbour.

Taxonomy: Echinodermata->Forcipulatida->Asteroidea

IUCN Red List Categorisation: Not Assessed

Extremely cosmopolitan species found from the low Arctic to Africa and along the western Atlantic from Labrador to the Gulf of Mexico, though it is largely absent from the Mediterranean. Starfish can be a major pest of aquaculture facilities, particularly oysters and mussels kept in bags: if the starfish can gain access they can quickly decimate the entire population.



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