

Kellett Island Biodiversity Project

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For more than 15 years the Wan Chai Basin and the Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter have been severely impacted by massive engineering works as the new bypass and the railway tunnels were built. Towards the end of 2020 the works were completed, and no future works of that scale are planned.

So what happened to the marine life that lived there? Are we really seeing more fish around the pontoons? What is living on the sea walls and rocks now that the water has returned undisturbed?

To the Sustainable Working Group (SWG) this looked like a potential good story, because Victoria Harbour appeared to be regenerating and it needed to be monitored and documented.

In 2020, on SWG advice, the RHKYC applied to the Environmental Protection Department for funding to do a two year community based science study, to identify what is there and to monitor changes. The application was declined and the main reason was that there were *“reservations in the study promoting biodiversity as the target site has low ecological value.”*

So the challenge was made and we needed some factual information about the existing state of biodiversity in the Kellett Island area. The first part was to have a pilot study on the

bird life in the area and the HK Birdwatching Society did a one hour morning survey within Kellett Island and found 12 different bird species including more than one type of each of herons and egrets – marine related birds.

The more challenging part was the marine ecology, as it is not readily seen and the common impression was there is nothing

there. After doing water quality tests and being surprised at the high quality of the water, it was decided to do a dive survey and photograph what was there. Divers Megan and Valerie carried out pilot dives on the 11 April. They started on the southern wall of the Wan Chai Basin and the wide range of life growing on a wall which was above the water only months ago, was absolutely amazing.

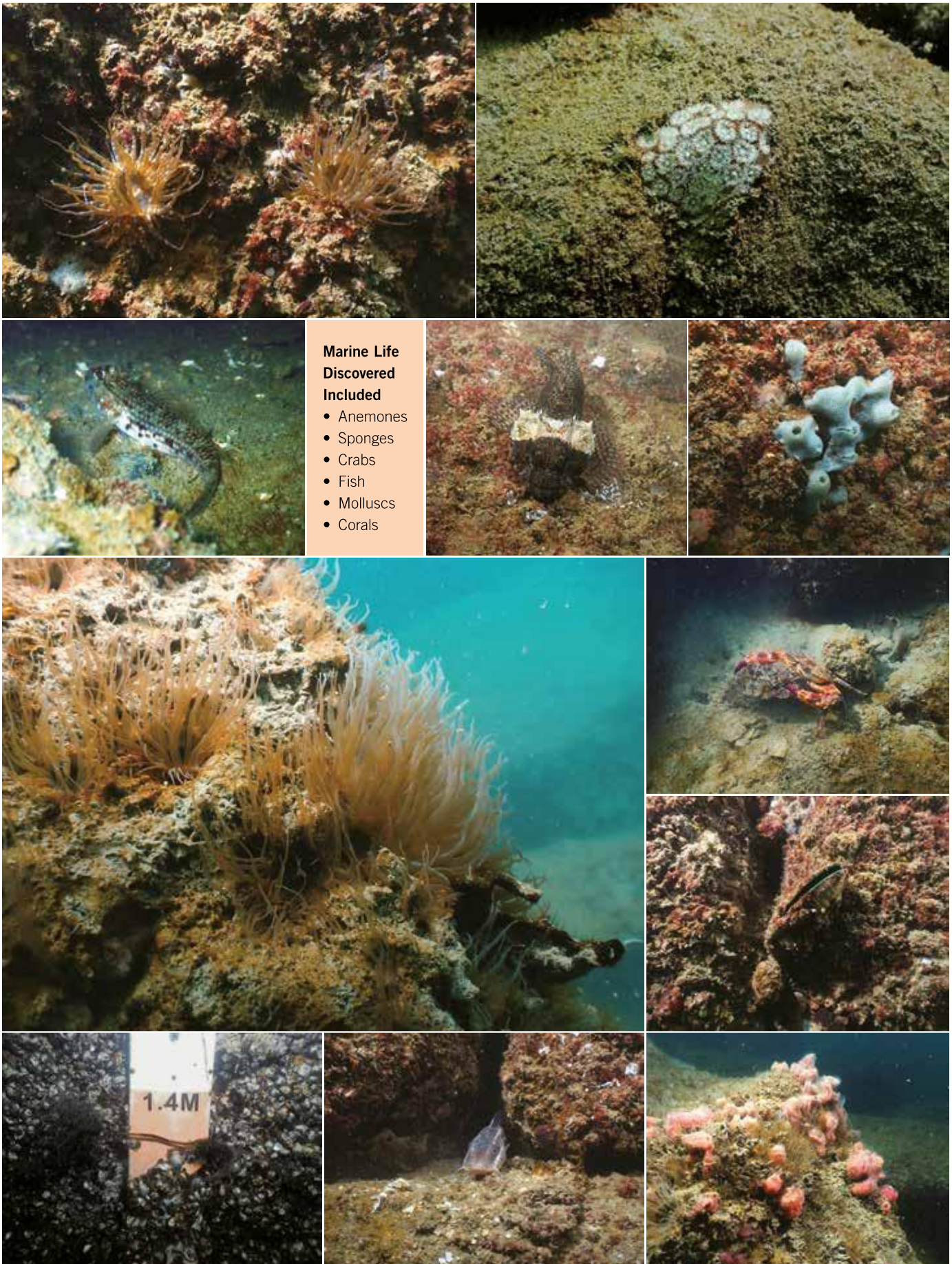
Nature is coming back big time and their photos illustrate this in all their beauty. The second area they looked at was the inside of the typhoon shelter sea wall and the range of species and quality of the marine life was massively expanded. They photographed at least 180 individual species, including corals.

The results were presented to the Club at a Biodiversity Forum on April 21. There is great interest in the subject and the need to monitor and assist the changes in the years ahead. There are members who are expert divers and others with academic qualifications in marine ecology, and many have made themselves known and want to do more.

Our challenge is to find a structure and process which can harness the abilities of the Club Members and others, to put together a programme which can handle the enormous amount of information and data that could be collected. The process needs to be managed in a suitable scientific manner so that the information can be used with certainty and can be replicated so that changes can be identified.

The most significant outcome of these two studies is that they confirm that Victoria Harbour is a thriving ecological system, and biodiversity is readily apparent. It is going through a major change – nature is taking it back – and isn't that just fantastic! 🌊





Any comments or suggestions please email to sustainability@rhkyc.org.hk
 To watch the Biodiversity Forum including an introduction to Hong Kong's Biodiversity by Shaun Martin of WWF go to
<https://youtu.be/sqOgc8GHXkl>