

Artificial reefs in the OSPAR maritime area

Artificial reefs and other structures are used in many countries and regions across the world for coastal management purposes, including the enhancement or concentration of living marine resources, compensation for habitat loss, and coastal protection. However, different countries – and regions – have different definitions thereof and, as a result, have differing opinions as to what structures are considered as artificial reefs. The OSPAR Guidelines on Artificial Reefs in relation to Living Marine Resources (OSPAR, 1999) define artificial reefs as follows: “An artificial reef is a submerged structure placed on the seabed deliberately, to mimic some characteristics of a natural reef. It could be partly exposed at some stages of the tide.” For purposes of this report, it is understood that the definition excludes artificial islands, or structures, such as breakwaters, established for coastal defence purposes.

The development of artificial reefs in the OSPAR Maritime Area has been relatively limited. Nevertheless, the past two decades have seen an increase in such activities for purposes such as fisheries protection and production, habitat protection and enhancement, research and recreation. The majority of these reefs have been purpose-built, primarily in concrete, although natural rock has also been utilised. In a few cases, disused vessels have been placed to create opportunities for recreational diving. The number of OSPAR countries deploying reefs has also expanded, and artificial reefs can now be found in all OSPAR regions with the exception of Region V – the Wider Atlantic. The largest concentration of reefs is in Region IV – the Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast (Figure 1.1).

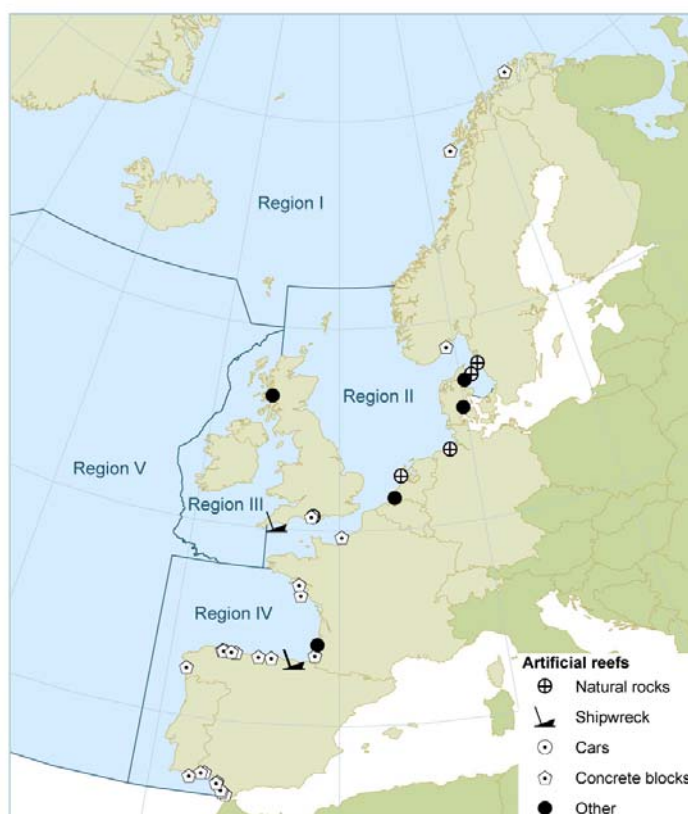


Figure 1.1. Location of artificial reefs in the OSPAR area

➔ [Go to full QSR assessment report on construction or placement of artificial reefs \(publication number 438/2009\)](#)