

Reef balls support fish and scientists

By Charlie Anderson
Staff Reporter

It's a cruel fate for fish who die by the new Sidney Pier.

The fuzzy seaweed on the town's two new artificial reefs is providing shelter for ground fish and crabs. And an ecologist is treating the reefs as its private laboratory, with lessons on the beach.

The reefs are a marine study project, allowing scientists to monitor what grows on them.

"They're made of concrete tubes called reef balls," said Brian Semley, head of Aquatic Assessment at the County Institute of Ocean Sciences.

"This is the first attempt at building a reef using this technology in Pacific Northwest waters, and possibly in temperate waters, period as these."

Semley said the concrete balls, liberally perforated with holes to provide habitat for fish, were invented to replace destroyed natural reefs.

They were put in last November to provide recreation, improve and enhance the reef area.

The Royal Museum of B.C. is providing the educational program with the Professional Association of Diving Instructors throwing in the volunteer dive boats. The County Fisheries and Oceans is also interested in the reef balls as a means of creating a restoring habitat.



Ball photo by Peter Baxton

Scientist Kelly Sordahl holds up a sunflower seastar.