

COASTWISE

NORTH DEVON

March 2018

North Devon AONB Forum

Our links to the North Devon Coast AONB have strengthened under the Coastal Creatures project and several of us attended the 2018 AONB Forum in February at the Pier House Hotel. With over 60 representatives of interested organisations present, it provided an excellent opportunity to meet and share views, stimulated by the keynote talk on Farming & Environmental Futures from Biosphere Chair Professor Michael Winter.

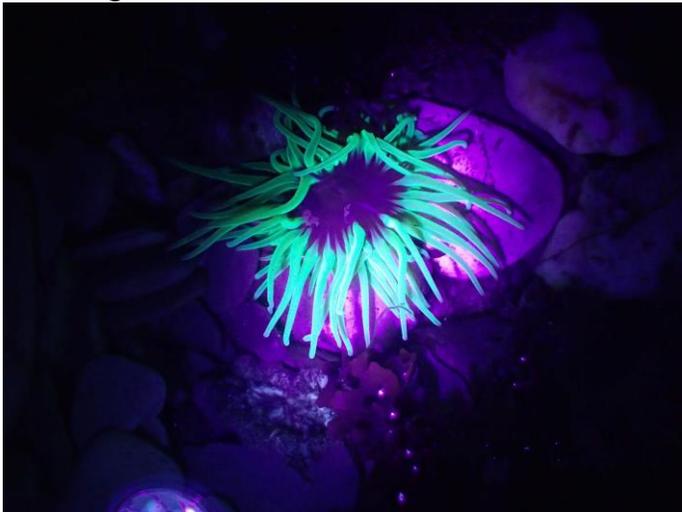
The AONB used the occasion to celebrate contributions to their work by 5 volunteers including 3 from Coastwise: Paula Ferris, Nicola Mello & Janice Whittington - a much appreciated innovation.

Buzzing Bioblitz

North Devon's first ever 24 hour bioblitz took place at Lee Bay Ilfracombe in September led by the Marine Biological Association and the AONB, in collaboration with Coastwise. A great time was had by all judging from the buzz in and around the hub, the delightful Lee Bay Village Hall where many of the 40 organisations involved had their stalls. For more information see

<https://www.mba.ac.uk/selfedit/bioblitz-2017>

The highlight for twenty or so intrepid participants was the midnight rockpool ramble led by Jack Sewell of the MBA to see animals roaming fearlessly under the cover of night. Jan Whittington was able to capture striking images using ultra-violet light including the Snakelocks Anemone below.



INTRODUCING NICOLA



Nicola Mello took over as Co-Chair of Coastwise from Paula Ferris in January. She says “I've been coming to Coastwise for 3 years and was hooked immediately. I had no idea that sea life was so varied and beautiful. I've attended as many events as I could ever since and here I am with a thirst for knowledge, a (possibly obsessive) interest in anemones and barnacles and looking forward to the future discovering much more about the life on our shores.”

All a far cry from the classics she studied at university and her overseas travels which took her to Colombia where she met husband Juan. His appointment to North Devon Hospital brought the family here 10 years ago, Nicola volunteered at the museum where she heard about Coastwise and threw herself whole heartedly into to our activities, She took on a stint as “techie” thus proving she was made of strong stuff, ready for leadership! Nicola is passionate about plastics (see Sue Austin's BioBlitz photo) & with son Hamish they are formidable members of the Coastwise shore brigade.

Paula says “We have come a long way since starting in 2006. The last year has been transformative in terms of our skills and output, thanks to the AONB Coastal Creatures Project. Sustaining this beyond project end will be a challenge. Nicola, working alongside co-chair Malcolm Roberts, will show the

way. Her energy and enthusiasm have won the hearts and minds of all Coastwise members.”

Words and Pictures

Good talks can awaken interest, grow our knowledge, and be a call to action, photographs too, as we have recently experienced.

Two talks came from to us from academic practitioners at the forefront of marine pollution research. Emeritus Professor John Harwood gave an exemplary talk about recent research on the impact of noise on whales and other marine animals. Recognition of the damage to hearing and behaviour is growing. Avoidance measures are being adopted by some, but slowly in the UK.

From the other end of the academic hierarchy we heard from Plymouth University PhD student Imogen Napper. As a member of Professor Richard Thompson's influential plastics research team, she provided much of the leg work to quantify microplastic pollution of the sea, due to fibres from washing and exfoliant microbeads, that attracted much public attention.

Sue Sayer and colleague from the Cornwall Seal Group shared footage of a seal birth during their talk. A private moment that was a privilege to see, happily the birth, was not much more than an energetic stretch on the sand. Most CSG monitoring is based on photographs to identify individuals by their “fingerprint” markings, and we were urged to contribute our pictures to the data bank, something already regularly undertaken by several members. Meanwhile we have made a contribution to CSG's latest venture, preparing and articulating a seal skeleton found by CSG volunteer, Rob Wells, for use as an educational tool. We hope Rob, who has done much of the work with some expert help, will bring “Septimus” to see us in the autumn.

Pip Jolland's talk entitled Kingdom & Classes on the Foreshore set the scene beautifully for our developing interest in Taxonomic ID, alongside a series of expert Coastal Creatures workshops focussing on specific groups. Workshops on Algae (Dr Sarah Hotchkiss), Anemones (Dr Keith Hiscock), Crustaceans (Jack Sewell) and Plankton (David Conway) have already been held. The following are still to come: Jellyfish & Hydroids, Sea Slugs & Snails (Heather Buttivant) 17 & 18 April), Red Algae (Jo Corke, 15 May), Sponges tbc.

A departure from our normal fare attracted interest when Alex Belisario of CITiZAN, introduced us to a project that harnesses citizen science to record inter-tidal archaeology before it is lost to the sea.

Many of the south west examples she described have local counterparts and this excited members' interest, being followed up by Malcolm Roberts.

Maggs Ashton from Ilfracombe Dive Club gave us a masterclass on underwater photography. Her skill, stamina and determination to get the very best from her imposing kit resulted in superb exhibition standard photographs. National Trust Ranger Josh Day's style was quite different. His topic was managing Trust land and he used exquisite evocative photography to support a very thoughtful approach, clearly bringing both his artistic and scientific sensibilities to bear.

At short notice Chris Mandry used a talk session to demonstrate the attractions of a small compact camera and housing for more opportunistic shots. Ease of use, speed and flexibility enabled him to capture colourful images of a huge range of animals with which to challenge our ID skills, good practice for us all.

Three go to a Conference Jan Whittington, Annette Dutton, & Muriel Lindsay (l to r) attended CWT's annual Your Shore Conference, celebrating the work of Beach Rangers & local marine groups.



The Coastwise presence included leaflets, business cards and the display created by Sue Austin for Barnstaple Library. Annette says that there was a good programme of talks, with coffee breaks & lunch when we had

chances to chat to the other attendees many of whom we have met before. The event finished with Martin Dorey talking about his very successful '2 minute Beach Clean' initiative.

Horsey Island breach & Braunton Marsh

Following a Coastwise request for clarification the Biosphere recently issued a welcome Position statement on Coastal Change. *Extract: “The flooding of Horsey Island occurred prematurely due to lack of maintenance of the culvert and tidal flap, leading to excessive flow through the culvert and its ultimate collapse, leading to a wider breach. This has led to the inner bank (the Great Bank) now being the primary defence for Braunton Marsh.....Due to the natural and social capital embedded in Braunton Marsh... we believe that the Great Bank should be invested in to make it fit for purpose as a priority. The BR team will work with the Braunton Marsh Inland Drainage Board, the Braunton Marsh Commissioner, and the Environment Agency to secure rapid upgrading of the Great Bank.”*

Paula Ferris March 2018