

February 2017

SURVEYS, SEaweEDS & SAFARIS

The Coastal Creatures project is well underway with school and college groups visiting and exploring coastal environments, beach clean groups cleaning up our shores and coastal educational events in full swing. Coastwise are an integral part of the project as they are taking the lead on intertidal recording of species on our four target beaches: Combe Martin, Lee Bay, Westward Ho! and Croyde.

To kick start the surveying season we held a survey methodology training workshop at Combe Martin at the start of February. Despite the torrential rain on our practice survey, the afternoon went well and everyone was acquainted with new project cameras and GPS devices. The main methodology that will be implemented by Coastwise is a 'species census' which is a one hour survey to record and photograph all species on the shore. This will be conducted twice a month at low tide. The resultant data will inform us of the variety of species resident on our shores which will eventually be made available on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) via iRecord.



February also saw a seaweed identification training workshop run by Coastwise member Sarah Hotchkiss at Ilfracombe Dive Club (pics above) which was a great introduction to seaweeds where we learnt to make our own herbariums. Upcoming training sessions which are open to all Coastwise members include a coastal photography workshop in April and then there are a variety of coastal species group workshops (eg. anemones, crabs, molluscs) which will be scheduled throughout the year.

Cat Oliver, AONB Coastal Creatures Education & Interpretation Officer

SHORE SAFARIS

We usually hold 6 or so public shore safaris each summer and aim to do so this year - see dates overleaf. If the weather forecast is bad we will experiment with moving the event to a better day in the same run of spring tides. We will still publicise the dates but refer to Facebook for late changes.

Some 20 members were trained as safari leaders in 2009 in a project funded by an AONB Sustainable Development Fund grant. They have since taken part in over 50 safaris for

several thousand participants, & thoroughly enjoyed it. Now we want to involve newer members too. So to recruit & refresh the team there will be a training workshop led by Maya Plass, author of the RSPB Handbook of the Shore, on 11 April. Competition for places will be strong, and early booking is advised.

Some say it's the best thing we do, and advise that with a little confidence the famous Factsheet & a friendly smile you will delight the public.

MAPPING MOVEMENTS

The autumn talks programme provided some new perspectives on our coast, those of the time traveller and map maker. Geologist Andrew Green gave us a masterclass on the journey of local rocks through time. Cyclist & walker Mike Harrison took us with him as he mapped the coasts of Devon & Dorset. Copies of his generously donated maps were snapped up by members, raising £140.

The remaining talks were the more familiar fare of marine life with a little history & culture and included very welcome sessions from several members. Attendances remained good with 40 - 50 members attending.

WATERMOUTH

We had a rare opportunity, thanks to Mavis Symons, to visit Watermouth Cove with permission from the land owners. On a good low tide in October the gullies lived up to their reputation as home to uncommon marine animals. Amongst the Devonshire cup corals, cowries, squat lobsters and the like, one Feather Star was found. This was a first for many members though several had been spotted earlier in the year by Muriel Lindsay & Janice Whittington at Tunnels, Ilfracombe.

BEACH CLEANS

These are regularly held around our coast, thanks largely to the activities of the AONB & other dedicated local groups which many Coastwise members support. Three even became unsuspecting stars in publicity posters for funder Tesco's "Bags of Help". We are developing a wider interest in marine litter policy with encouragement from committee member Nicola Mello & others.

OTHER OUTREACH

News from other partners in conservation: Estuary Forum - Sandra Knight raised members' concern about Horsey flooding at the Estuary Forum whose Acting Chairman, Tony Pratt, is now monitoring the situation.

North Devon Biosphere - has been selected by Defra as one of two pilot Marine Pioneer Areas (with Suffolk), and one of three Landscape Pioneers, under Defra's new Natural Capital approach to a 25 Year Environmental Strategy. Natural England officers will tell us more when they talk to us on 23 March.

The Biosphere's Marine Working Group has been consulted on the latest proposal for a Tranche 3 MCZ site near Lundy, & responded

with a consensus favouring a west of Lundy site in preference to the Bristol Channel.

The Gaia Trust has installed an Osprey Platform at Home Farm Marsh in response to a proposal from Coastwise Chair Malcolm Roberts. Funding wanted for a webcam link to Fremington Café.

COASTAL CREATURES BIOBLITZES

Coastwise ran the first of 4 bioblitzes under the Coastal Creatures banner at Croyde in September. Basecamp was on National Trust's Limekiln Field, and the shore & sands of Parkdean's Ruda Estate were the survey area. With help from MBA's Esther Hughes, friends & colleagues, we counted 460 species, 150 of which were new to the area. The good weather and the enthusiasm of all involved ensured a great success.

Combe Martin School is leading the next blitz, with a schools focus, on 14 March and another Coastwise blitz is planned for September.

WHAT'S ON

28 Feb Westward Ho! census CO
14 March Combe Martin Bioblitz
29-31 March Looe visit - JW
31 March Lee Bay census 2 pm CO
7 April Social media training CO
10/11 April Maya Plass workshop CO
12 April Combe Martin census 12.30 pm CO
25 April Shore Safari Lee 10 am
29/30 April Lizard visit MS
11 May Croyde Census 12 noon CO
27 May Lee bay Census 12.30 pm CO
29 May Shore safari Westward Ho 1.30 pm
9 June Combe Martin Census 11.30 am CO
25 June Shore safari Croyde 11.30 am
26 June Westward Ho! Census 1.30 pm CO
12 July Croyde Census 1.30 pm CO
24 July Shore Thing Lee, 11 am
25 July Biotope mapping Lee Bay 10 am CO
27 July Shore safari Hele 1.30 pm
9 August Biotope mapping Combe Martin 10 am CO
10 August Shore safari Croyde 1.00 pm
21 August Shore safari Lee Bay 10.30 am
22 August Biotope Mapping Westward Ho! 10 am CO
24 August Shore Thing Abbotsham 12 noon
8 Sept Biotope mapping Croyde 10 am CO
20 Sept Lee Bay Census 11.30 pm CO
22/23 Sept Bioblitz Lee details tbc
CO events: SignUpGenius - <http://bit.ly/coastwiser>
or catherine.oliver@devon.gov.uk (07768214597),
other enquiries to mheath2025@gmail.com or
sandraknightuk@yahoo.com