

January 2011

2011 SPRING PROGRAMME

January

13 Introducing Coastwise

20 Atlantic Array

27 Kelvin Boot, Shells

February

3 Tony Gussin, the Angler's Angle

10 Doug Anderson on BBC's Frozen Planet *

17 Estuary Tidal barrage?

24 Armchair Shore Safari

March

3 Seasearch, North Devon

10 The RSPB approach

17 Ilfracombe Aquarium & Ilfracombe Sub Aqua visit

*Provisional date

Includes media professionals Doug Anderson, a leading underwater cameraman on his most recent BBC natural history assignment, Kelvin Boot a popular naturalist & broadcaster, and Gazette reporter Tony Gussin, of Barnstaple Rods 'n Reelers.

The state of our seas will no doubt be a recurrent theme. Sally Sharrock of Seasearch will tell us what the divers see, Giles Beauchamp of the RSPB – what it means for birds, Peter Crone and Tara Hooper – the implications of wind turbines and tidal barrages respectively. The armchair safari and visit to Ilfracombe will prepare members for summer on the shore for monitoring and public shore safaris. Enjoy.



Above: Barnacle Nauplius Larva, right Carpenter's Rule & other diatoms
Photos Jim Monroe

NEW! THE MICRO DIMENSION

Helping people to see the wonders of microscopic life is the aim of the latest Coastwise project. Most life on the shore is so tiny as to be nearly invisible at some stage in its development, and remains unknown. Coastwise wants to change that.

We aim to do so with the help of a £500 grant from the North Devon Areas of Outstanding Beauty and a contribution from our own funds. This will enable us to buy 3 low powered microscopes, ideal for viewing these shore organisms. The microscopes will be located in interpretation centres in Combe Martin, Mortehoe and Northam where they will be available for public use.

Coastwise members have participated in several local events where the MBA's Marlin team has made microscopes available, and the response from people of all ages has been very enthusiastic. We hope to build on this, and will provide training workshops where there will be opportunities for the public to use the scopes, collect specimens, view them and try to identify them. Planning for the first workshop at Northam on Saturday 14 May is already underway.

The several scopes available at each workshop will include one at a higher magnification to view diatoms, as well as the basic kit needed to view live specimens. Coastwise Projects Co-ordinator Jim Monroe says "Learning to use a microscope in this way is a beguilingly simple process. The challenge is in identification, and later in capturing an image to share with others." That this is good fun was evident from Jim's recent talk to Coastwise on the history of microscopes and his own microscopy, illustrated by his images of pond and marine life. The presentation can be given at the workshops to provide an ideal introduction.

MARINE CONSERVATION ZONES & THE BIOSPHERE PARTNERSHIP

The representative Biosphere Reserve's Marine Working Group, which includes Coastwise and is chaired by Robert Down, has coordinated very well received local input to the MCZ selection process.

The MWG's aim has been to identify and then safeguard the most precious North Devon marine environments by proposing levels of protection for them. Consensus has been sought and achieved on the following: the estuary, the VMCA, and areas of the seabed to the west & north west of Hartland Point and to the west of Morte, recognised for its exceptional animal communities.

The Devon MCZ Group received the submission in September and it was forwarded to Finding Sanctuary in October. To date only one issue has been raised which is being addressed in discussions between MWG & the Ports Authority.

North Devon has made the best of a difficult process and Coastwise can take pride in its part. There remains little for us to do. The onus is now on Finding Sanctuary to attend to stakeholder issues and the ecological concerns being raised by the Science Advisory Panel. The timetable is tight, the final report is now due in August 2011, for implementation after Defra's public consultation in 2012.

SUMMER SHORE ACTIVITIES

Our shore safaris have been popular and for many are the best thing we do, and thoroughly recommended as a great way to get involved. Enthusiasm is the main requirement, as a very little knowledge goes a long way. Next summer we plan to concentrate on a dozen or so events, combining shore safaris with monitoring, plankton trawling, and microscopy as people & places dictate. We will visit a wider range of beaches.

The National Trust ran its first series of beach events at Woolacombe last summer and NT's Jemma Lowin, who joined us in the autumn, reports that they are to continue. Congratulations to all concerned. We will again offer support, helping at the first rock-pool rambles when we will have a chance to get to know and learn from one another.

ON OUR PATCH

A good speaker, a (very) local topic and enthusiasm and you can't go wrong, and so it proved last session. Consultants Tim Jones and Chris Cornford, told us in turn about the ecology of our estuary birds and the processes that created the Bay, both giving presentations that could hardly be bettered. But in other talks local enthusiasts gave them a run for their money as they shared with us their evident knowledge and enjoyment of their subjects: Maranda Coleman-Cooke on Braunton Marsh, Jim Monroe on Microscopy and Chris Mandry on Wrecks. All the talks resulted in requests for follow-up activities, and plans are underway.

Other presentations were important for addressing issues of data collection and marine management, providing useful briefings to Coastwise members on MCZ selection, an area to which Coastwise has been called upon to make a significant contribution during the year.

MEMBERS & CONTACTS

The Coastwise winter programme continues to attract a full house, with 48 full members and 20 Associates, including now two free places, for a student member, Imogen Hunter, and Barry Bassnet in recognition of his Herculean beach cleaning efforts. Nearly a dozen were new recruits.

We are replacing the Yahoo Network with our own email Contacts group, effectively a wider membership group which will include all those that have an interest in what we do. Subject to their agreement we will include past members, local speakers & others engaged with our projects, and representatives of the many marine organizations whose response to our activities suggests this will be welcome. No longer will our reach be limited to the capacity of the meeting room.

COMMITTEE

Members of the committee were reappointed at the recent AGM with the exception of Paul Madgett who resigned as Research Co-ordinator due to pressure of other commitments, but thankfully assures us of his continuing interest. Jay Nicholson, a former Observer, takes his place, and Brenda Aydon will serve as a second Observer with Eric Pufahl.

Enquiries to Secretary Marjorie Heath,
mheath2025@aol.com, 01271 831190

Edited: Paula Ferris 1/2011