

HELE BAY...a Victorian survey revisited

Jim Monroe, an enthusiast with a keen interest in the work of Victorian naturalists and P.H.Gosse in particular, invited Coastwise members to join him in a survey project at Hele Bay Ilfracombe on Sunday 8th.April.

2012 was exactly 160 years after Gosse's visit to North Devon, which resulted in the first of several books which he wrote, devoted to the marine life of our coasts.

To mark this occasion the group of 22 enthusiastic Coastwise members set out to re-survey the marine life of the beach with a view to comparing their findings with those of Gosse. He had given such detailed descriptions of his finds and their environment that it was often possible to locate actual sites. A good low tide made access to the lower shore easy and many interesting finds were made in the rocky crevices among the kelps.

Jim said " The highlight of the day for me was for us to find the Devonshire Cup Corals, just as Gosse had described. It had been my main objective in the survey"

Among the many interesting creatures found were a rare Snapping Shrimp, Sea Urchins, Sea Cucumber, cowries and a splendid Spiny Squat Lobster, but the full species list is included below :-

8TH APRIL 2012 - SPECIES LIST

Sponges

Particularly wide range on eastern shore

Corals

Devonshire Cup Corals – 6 found in total (1 on west side of beach, and 5 on the east side – 1 being 4mm in diameter)

Anemones

Beadlets (Common) mid/lower shores – ratio of red & green species on east side of shore 50/50

Daisy (Frequent) found in clusters in rock pools – (some c.5mm size)/others approx. 25mm in size – mid/lower shores

Dahlia 1 found in cave on east side - 50mm in diameter
Gems (Common) – small in size - mid/lower shores
Snakelocks (Occasional) species with grey tips found on east side
 (Common) on west side
Strawberry (Occasional) - large in size - 3 on lower shore)
Unidentified gelatinous dwellers of bored rock, referred to Marlin.

Crustaceans

Edible crabs
Velvet Swimming Crab
Furrowed Crab, X pilipes & incisus
Hermit Crabs
Shore Crabs
Hairy Crab
Broad Clawed porcelain Crabs
Long Clawed Porcelain Crabs
Squat lobsters, G squamifera
Spiny Squat Lobster, G strigosa (1)
Snapping Shrimp
Lobster

Molluscs

Chitons
Saddle oysters
u/i scallops
Artic Cowries
Blue ray limpets, small, embedded mid stipe
Painted Top shells
Grey topshells
Dog Whelks & eggs
Netted dog whelks & eggs
Sting winkle and eggs

Thick Lipped dog whelks

Bryozoans

Abundant including Bugula sp as found there by Gosse, and several discoid species

Echinoderms

Common Starfish

Brittlestars, Ophiothrix spp & Amphiolis squamata

Sea Urchins, P miliaris

Sea cucumber, Pawsonia saxicola

Tunicates

Morchellium argos

Star Ascidians

Fish

Shore clingfish (1)

Common Blennies (2)

Worms

Scale worms

Fan worm, Bispira volutacornis

Greenleaf worms

Ragworms

Keelworms

Commonly found animals such as molluscs and crustaceans eg isopods and amphipods present in abundance but not recorded.

Compiled by Marjorie Heath