

March 2013



LOTTERY FUNDED

A BIG THANK YOU

We are delighted to have been awarded a grant from The Big Lottery to make the BioBlitz fully worthy of the wonderful level of support we are receiving. We will be joined by a top team from the Marine Biological Association and over 30 naturalists, terrestrial and marine, drawn from across the county. The data to be collected will contribute to North Devon's Marine Conservation Zones bid.

With the kind permission of Parkin Estates & the National Trust we will be able to explore the coast and shore around Woolacombe in a programme of guided walks radiating from the tented BioBlitz village on Woolacombe's Greensward. The Biosphere's superbly equipped science dome will be the hub where naturalists can share their interest with everyone. In the surrounding tents there will be activities for all ages provided by the various organisations taking part.

GET INVOLVED!

We need to recruit volunteers to make the BioBlitz a success, one that we can all be proud of! No one will be expected to do more than 4 hours volunteering which will allow for plenty of free time to join in the fun. We require help in the following areas: setting up camp, meet & greet guides, species recording, data input, lab technician, kit custodian, photography & IT, family activities etc.etc.. We need enthusiasm not expertise! Interested?

Email info@coastwisenorthdevon.org.uk



INVITATION TO A BIOBLITZ

7th SEPTEMBER 10.00 am - 6 pm

Join scientists and nature experts in a BioBlitz at Woolacombe this September and help to discover, identify and record as many different animal and plant species from the land, coastline and sea as possible within an 8 hour period.

We would like to build a picture of what flies, swims, grows, hides and scurries in the beautiful natural environment around Woolacombe and we want as many people as possible to come and help us find out. Whether you are a family, individual, local school, belong to a group or a visitor or live locally, there will be something for you to survey, learn about or get involved with.

You can join our scientists on a survey expedition or if this is not for you, how about joining a guided walk, getting your feet wet on a rockpool ramble, peering down a microscope, getting arts and crafty in the activity tent or asking an expert who will be on hand to answer all your wildlife questions? Visit the BioBlitz webpage for more information-www.coastwisenorthdevon.org.uk

The Bioblitz is being held to celebrate the 10th anniversary of North Devon's UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and is being organised by Coastwise North Devon in close partnership with the National Trust, the Marine Biological Association, Devon Wildlife Trust, and the North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

2012/3 TALKS PROGRAMME

The talks have proved as popular as ever, with something for everyone, including rather more marine policy than usual reflecting the national agenda, and plenty of marine life ahead of the BioBlitz. We were privileged to hear from two closely involved with Marine Conservation Zones - Natural England's Jen Ashworth, co-author of the ecological guidelines, and Keith Hiscock, member of the Scientific Advisory Panel. Sessions on seaweeds, barnacles and molluscs focussed our attention on the shore, whilst marine inspired pottery, the local maritime heritage, and pioneering wildlife photographers broadened our horizons. The Exe and its birds were the subject of a talk and trip to Topsham, where the Avocets and Brent Geese showed well on a glorious sunny day.

More information about the talks can now be found on the website thanks to the reportage and photographs of Mark Haworth-Booth and Robert Down.

STILL TO COME

March

Last session in the Library

7 Introducing Woolacombe's habitats, National Trust's

Josh Day, followed by BioBlitz Briefing

Out & about

14 11 am Beach visit to Lee

21 10.30 am Microscope Workshop at Ilfracombe Dive Club, Ilfracombe

MISCELLANY

Committee changes At the December AGM Malcolm Roberts succeeded Robert Down as co-chair alongside Paula Ferris, Robert agreeing to continue as Treasurer to general acclaim. Other changes: Sue Austin to be Publicity Officer and Robert Durrant Science Officer.

Cornwall Wildlife Trust & VMCA's Janice Whittington and Paula Ferris represented Coastwise at the 2nd annual meeting of south west VMCA's, Newquay, where programmes were compared, fisheries and marine litter issues discussed as well as the challenges of sustaining the 5 Cornish VMCA groups now independent of CWT resources, and marine recording.

Marine Records Robert Durrant and Paula Ferris have been exploring which route to use for submitting their records. Becky Seeley of the MBA & Paula Lightfoot of the National Biodiversity Network have been very helpful. The rationalisation they are currently working on should soon bear fruit. Meanwhile members are encouraged to submit personal records via NBN's *irecord*. Becky's offer to help with BioBlitz data has been gratefully accepted.

Common Fisheries Policy The EU Parliament agreed to a radical reform of the discredited CFP on 6 February when a raft of sustainable fishing proposals, including an end to discards, was put forward by the EU Fisheries Committee. This was later broadly approved by Council. Southwest MEPs Chichester, Fox, Girling and Watson responded to lobbying by Coastwise members indicating their support for reform.

ValMer project - North Devon and its benthic mud will feature as one of the 6 case study areas under this European funded project. Its ultimate aim is to enhance marine planning and policy decisions through developing

methodologies to value marine and coastal ecosystem services (economic, social and environmental).

MARINE CONSERVATION ZONES

Defra has identified for further consideration in the first tranche only 31 of the 127 areas proposed for MCZ designation. This is very disappointing, particularly as none of the 5 recommended for North Devon are included despite the confidence with which they were submitted by Coastwise members amongst others. Extracts from the Coastwise response to the Minister follow:

"It is increasingly clear that the process for identifying Marine Conservation Zones was flawed in several ways. Our concern now is to clarify the timetable for revisiting the submissions.

Ours was a very strong consensual submission under the auspices of the Biosphere Reserve, but rejected by Defra on grounds of the need for "greater data certainty", a finding we have difficulty with. Our proposals were based on the best available evidence, and endorsed by the Science Advisory Panel. The Morte Platform data came from the National Museum Wales' study of the Outer Bristol Channel Marine Habitat, 2006, which could hardly be bettered.

We are pleased to note that Defra is commissioning new marine survey work in North Devon through Cefas and Natural England. The results together with the Environmental Impact Assessment undertaken for the Atlantic Array will increase the data to support North Devon's proposed MCZs. We are confident these will be vindicated."

Biosphere Marine Working Group This group, which includes several Coastwise representatives, meets as business requires to consider marine issues including the ValMer project and more recently Defra's MCZ consultations. The response was recently reported to members by the Group's Chairman, Robert Down, and elicited support from members who will be lobbying their MPs accordingly.

Jenny Marsen attended the MCS's London March on 25 February. Congratulations on her effort, good to know from her that "This was worthwhile and it was great to see so many enthusiasts. It was thought around some 2,000 were there."

SEAL RELEASE

Coastwise's Dawn Murphy, a member of the local Strandings Team, reports that staff from RSPCA, West Hatch came to Combe Martin on 30 January to release four seals.

"During the past few months the seal pups had become separated from their mothers and were found stranded on various beaches along the coast. They were taken to West Hatch to recover and be fed until such time as they were ready to fend for themselves. There were three Atlantic Grey seals and one Common Seal. The latter caused some excitement as Common Seals are rarely found hereabouts. Cages and seals were carried from the van and lined up alongside one another on the beach. The doors were opened simultaneously and the seals headed out to sea in an instant like greyhounds out of the traps!"

Edited by Paula Ferris, February 2013

www.coastwisenorthdevon.org.uk