

HELFORD

Voluntary Marine Conservation Area

Newsletter No. 40 Spring 2010

The National Lobster Hatchery – the future

With global population predicted to rise from 6 billion to over 9 billion over the next 40 years and little prospect of an increase in the world's wild fisheries, 75% of which are fully or over-exploited, or depleted, meeting an increased demand for sea food will be heavily dependent on two sources, fish farming and stock enhancement programmes. In the first, fish such as trout, carp and salmon are raised fully to market size. In stock enhancement, cultured juveniles are released into the wild to augment existing stocks.

Japan is the world leader in the latter method. Its 16 national and 57 local government hatcheries have together released many billions of juveniles covering about 100 species. In one year, for example, releases included 76 million juveniles of 37 fish species and 221 million juveniles of 12 crustacean species.

In stark contrast, the UK has two lobster hatcheries, at Padstow and Orkney, down from five although a few more are planned. Fisheries are of great importance to Cornwall. It has 326 miles of coastline, about 50 ports, a few fish markets and 10% of the UK's under-10m fishing fleet. There is a substantial reliance on shellfish (includes crustacea) with most of the catch being exported to the continent, to the value of £1.8 million in 2005. In that year there were 400 shellfish permits with around half-a-million pots in operation.

Cornish lobster stocks declined in the 1980s and 90s and, mindful of the spectacular collapse of Norwegian stocks from the 1960s, when their catch dropped from 1400 tons to 30 tons per annum, Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee took action, increasing the minimum landing size so that more lobsters could breed before being landed and closing the fishery to egg-bearing females. In addition, the Chief Fisheries Officer proposed the setting up of a hatchery. Padstow was the chosen location and the building for the National Lobster Hatchery was completed in 2000.

Although it is possible to raise lobsters from egg to

adult, i.e. farm them, it is economically unviable. Lobsters are cannibals and it takes 3 to 7 years for the animal to reach market size. Instead, the hatchery starts with a broodstock of egg-bearing females and rears the hatched larvae in large cylindrical kreisel cones for 14-18 days, at which stage they can swim and seek burrows. After a further 3 months they are released and have a high survival rate. About 68,000 juveniles have been released to date, around 10-20,000 per year, at chosen sites around Cornwall and the Scillies (800 in the Helford last year). Local fishermen advise where to find optimum places, a sea bed of sand or silt with scattered rock where juveniles burrow for 2 years.

Initially run as a non-profit organisation, the hatchery became a charity in 2005. It makes no charge for the stock enhancement operations. It also undertakes an educational role, increasing public awareness of lobsters and sustainability through contacts with schools, colleges and its visitors' centre. A third strand of activity is research, in-house and in collaboration with the University of Plymouth. Much remains to be discovered about lobsters. For instance little is known about the life stage from 5 weeks to 2 years when the animals are burrowed in the sea bed, or of their diet, or of diseases.

A key issue for the charity is how to fund the production and release of large numbers of juvenile lobsters.

Income derives mainly from its visitors' centre, which attracts 40,000 people per year, but also from the shellfish training centre, research/education grants, shop/web sales, corporate members, donation schemes and product development. The overall aims are to increase production and survival rates.

The HMCG wishes to express sincere thanks to Dominic Boothroyd for his absorbing and highly informative talk. A longer version of this article will appear on the website.

Paul Garrard



Your Shore - Cornwall's Marine Heritage Project

Have you ever looked out to sea and wondered what lies beneath the silvery waves that play on its surface? Perhaps you have been rockpooling with a younger family member and found it frustrating not to know what type of seaweed you are clambering over or what species of crab is glaring at you from under its rock!

In previous years, residents of Looe have been able to join Cornwall Wildlife Trust to learn more about their local marine environment through the 'Discovering the Wonders of Looe's Marine Heritage Project' which successfully involved thousands of South East Cornwall residents in marine related events, school workshops and volunteering opportunities. And the good news is that the work will continue!



Volunteers will be recruited all around Cornwall to help protect five of Cornwall's most important marine wildlife conservation areas through the 'Your Shore' project, thanks to a grant of £103,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The three-year activity programme, run by Cornwall Wildlife Trust, will be centred on the Voluntary Marine Conservation Areas (VMCAs) of St Agnes and Polzeath on the north coast, and Looe, Fowey and, of course, Helford on the south.

The focus of this project is on Cornwall's diverse natural marine heritage which is recognised as being of both regional and international importance. It contributes to the county's appeal as a tourist destination – attracting more than 4 million visitors each year – but also requires protection for the same reason.

Local residents, families, businesses and volunteers, of all ages, will be recruited in Helford to take part in a range of activities that will raise awareness of the fragility of various ecosystems. Events such as rockpool rambles, snorkel surveys, guided walks and river cruises will be held combining fun with learning opportunities.

Commenting for the Heritage Lottery Fund, Head of HLF South West England Nerys Watts said: "Cornwall's superlative marine heritage will benefit through people's increased understanding of the local environment with increased numbers of children and adults encouraged to 'look,



learn and leave' so as to conserve this treasury of wildlife for future generations."

If you wish to find out more about the project and how you can get involved then call one of our marine conservation officers on 01872 240777 ext 207 or check out the events diary to join in on one of your nearby VMCA events. Speak to our project officer at the Helford AGM on Sat 20th March.

Alternatively, please join us for our Helford Seashore Safari on Thursday 1st April. Find crabs, sea-anemones, sea squirts and other mysterious creatures. Wear non-slip rock-scrambling shoes that you are prepared to get wet! Bring small nets and plastic buckets if you wish.

Time: 1.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.

Meet: In front of the Ferryboat Inn, Helford Passage, TR11 5LB. SW764269.

Contact: Rhiannon 07710 956734 or Ruth 07967 251278.

Cornish Dolphins – an update

In his talk to an appreciative audience of 57, Dr Tregenza began with the largest cetaceans, the whales, showing photographs of stranded animals, alive and dead, and mid-water sightings. It was a surprise to hear of the great variety of whales which have been recorded in Cornish waters, for example a Baleen whale at Sennen, Fin whales around the Lizard and Lands End and Sei whale in Carrick Roads. Sightings of Fin whales over the last 10 years may reflect growth in the population since it was cut by more than 90% by commercial whaling, which ended in the 1980s. Strandings of Minke whales have

been recorded and these are seen regularly. Sowerbys Beaked whale, an animal that can dive to depths of 2-3 km, is rarely seen from the coast, but there have been live sightings in Falmouth Bay (reported by fishermen as crocodiles). Pilot whales are more often seen. Orcas also visit Cornwall and there have been 30-40 sightings. They tend to associate with basking sharks and have been observed to tear them apart as food.

The commonest cetaceans are Common dolphins, often seen by fishermen 2 or more miles offshore but rarely in shallow water. Hence

the tragic stranding in June 2008, when 26 healthy Common dolphins died in Froe Creek, was a most unusual occurrence. A naval exercise using anti-submarine sonar had ceased earlier, but helicopter noise may have been contributory in driving the animals inshore in panic. Such mass strandings are very rare. One involving Long Finned Pilot whales occurred in Mounts Bay in 1905 and there was a near-repeat in 1962, when the whales entered the Helford and Gillan Creek but were driven back to sea.

The Harbour porpoise is the smallest of the cetaceans, but

widespread, extending to Greenland. Sightings decreased from 1955 onwards, caused by the agricultural use of organo-chlorine pesticides. Entering the marine environment via surface run-off, these pollutants move up the food chain from algae to fish to cetaceans and other animals and, as they are soluble in fats, the chemicals become concentrated in the female's milk and are transferred to the babies. As a result, although the females became relatively unpolluted, the death of contaminated males and babies damaged the breeding process. The pesticides were eventually banned, except for daffodil growers who claimed exemption to combat Narcissus bulb fly, but even they were forced to concede after a campaign by CWT and others exhorted children to 'buy chocolates not daffodils' for Mothers' Day! The well-being of peregrine falcons, otters and cetaceans subsequently improved.

Accidental entanglement in fishermen's nets, known as the by-catch problem, is a serious issue for dolphins and porpoises, with the animals suffering injury and death. Over 2000 by-catch incidents were recorded by Cornish and Irish fishermen each year. They occur all over the Celtic Sea, showing that the creatures occupy shelf waters, not just coastal zones. In an attempt to understand and reduce the death toll, devices which recorded cetacean communication sounds were developed by Dr Tregenza.

The POD (porpoise detector) is housed in a cylinder and installed on the sea bed. A smaller, 'bomb-like' version can be attached to nets. The instruments record the presence and number of cetaceans and can help to chart their movements. Porpoises are known to have moved southwards since 1994, increasing the numbers found off Lincolnshire and East Anglia and in the Celtic Sea. This movement is probably a response to shifting fish patterns. PODs have been used in the Sea of Cortez, Baja California, where by-catch has reduced the Vaquita, a small endemic porpoise, to 200-300 individuals; and in New Zealand, where inshore gill net fishing has been restricted to halt the decline in Hector's dolphin.

Another important instrument is the Pinger, which emits a sound pulse every 4 seconds. In trials under the auspices of the Cornwall Wildlife Trust, four fishermen have attached pingers to some of their nets. These act as a warning to cetaceans; and accompanying POD records show that fewer porpoises are detected in the vicinity when pingers are employed. Freed of the stigma of cetacean by-catch deaths, the fish catch can be marketed at a better price as environmentally-conscious (Pisces project) and the fishermen now want to attach pingers to all of their nets. Other fishermen contend that the pingers do not work, or break, and work is in hand to develop a more robust version. Although pingers are effective in

reducing porpoise by-catch, the evidence is uncertain in relation to dolphins. Common dolphins get caught in nets not infrequently and Bottlenose dolphins are now present in such small numbers that by-catch trends are impossible to evaluate. Past observations record how Bottlenose dolphins would drive fish into Hooe Lake, Plymouth, then wait for the tide to fall to catch them as they swam out. Then Bottlenoses disappeared, apart from a few lonely individuals, and did not reappear until 1991 when a pod of about 20 arrived, probably after splitting off from a more distant group. Now they have been reduced to perhaps 10 and are on the verge of extinction. These are the inshore form of the species and have been recorded from Dorset around Cornwall to Ilfracombe. An offshore form exists in larger numbers, mainly along the edge of the continental shelf. Bottlenose dolphins sometimes play with surfers and swimmers and have a similar life-span to ours. They are highly intelligent creatures with exceptionally strong social structures. They are one of the few animals which can recognise themselves immediately in mirrors. In a comparison of brain size relative to body mass, man registers as 7.44, dolphins 5.31, chimpanzees 2.49 and dogs 1.17, but if only lean body mass is used dolphins and man are very close together.

The key issues which have faced the cetaceans have been (1) organo-chemical pollution, the reduction of which is now showing some success; and (2) fishery by-catch, which hopefully can be reduced by further development of pingers and fishery management measures. The animals most at risk and in danger of disappearing entirely are the inshore Bottlenose dolphins.

On behalf of the HMCG, I would like to record sincere thanks to Dr Tregenza, not only for his absorbing talk but for helpful corrections in the above report.

**Dr Nick Tregenza 23 Jan 2010
report by Dr Paul Garrard**



HMCG Annual Report April 2009 – mid March 2010

Advisory Section and Networking Linking organisations and the public has continued, with HMCG quarterly advisory meetings acting as a platform to ensure open discussion. Attendance has averaged 16, representing local businesses, scientific advisors, councillors, the National Trust, Natural England, Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee, Environment Agency, local residents and landowners. On request, detailed minutes have been circulated to over 70 recipients giving them an opportunity to engage though being unable to attend. Topics for discussion included proposals for a community quay at Helford Village, Gweek Quay, the eelgrass beds off Grebe Beach, the creation of the Marine & Coastal Access Act and the development of Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authorities, proposed demarcation zones of the Oyster Farm, as well as talks from local businesses. Work of partner organisations have also been shared, such as the Cornwall Wildlife Trusts 'Pinger Project', 'NetSafe', Basking Shark surveys, and 'Your Shore'.

Natural environment concerns brought forward by local residents or researchers have been examined, for instance, the late summer toxic algal bloom containing *Karenia mikimotoi* also affecting Falmouth and St. Austell Bays. Large numbers of invertebrates such as worms, sea potatoes and molluscs were affected.

Sadly, earlier in 2009, the recently discovered fan mussel, *Atrina fragilis*, was reported to have disappeared from the HVMCA. Anchoring over the eelgrass beds off Grebe Beach continues to cause concern. Eelgrass is a delicate flowering plant that lives on the seabed, and can be easily damaged by anchors. The HMCG is again raising awareness of the importance of the beds and their location in the Helford River by preparing and delivering warning cards to local sailing clubs, etc. and other outlets.

HMCG volunteers are happy to give talks to interested parties to raise awareness and build links between organisations. Jenna Oakes has already spoken to various groups including to 'Friends of the Fowey', another VMCA.

Projects

Exciting new research has started on the Helford River eelgrass beds, just off Grebe Beach through a SeagrassNet project that aims to run for two years to assess the overall health of the beds. This builds on Tony Sutton's earlier surveys which will be complemented by a regular dive transect by, Mitchell Neilly, of the Marine Biological Association. Interested volunteers are encouraged to get in touch with Mitchell (mitchneilly@hotmail.com) and view the website (www.zosteramarina.blogspot.com).

The National Oceanography Centre in Southampton aimed the annual field trip to the Falmouth area which was fortunate for the HMCG, as many of their surveys took place in the mouth of the Helford River and some interesting results are anticipated.

The 2009 Good Friday triggging drew some 80 people collecting cockles and mussels on each of the beaches of Treath and Bar Beach, though it was considered there were perhaps fewer cockles than last year. Triggging studies will continue on the Good Friday collection this year.

Derek Goodwin has continued surveying the Sea Bass populations of the HVMCA and has also built links with the Cornwall Sea Fisheries Committee who now lends invaluable support and manpower to this project, along with regular volunteers, namely K.Bennetts, B.Bowden, N.Hatton, N.Knight, S.&B. Mynett, P.Noonan and P.Woodward. The catches have indicated that last year's bass recruitment was better than expected, although the average length of the 2008 recruitment was only 10 cm, compared to the equivalent 2007 recruitment which was 11.3 cm.

Public Awareness

The annual events programme is mainly planned and delivered through the hard work of the member's section in particular Paul Garrard. Production costs were generously sponsored by Natural England. Next year's sponsorship and topics are already under consideration. The HMCG were invited to participate in a National Trust project to create an information room in an old fish cellar in Durgan. Led by Dr. Joanna Henley of SciArt Solutions, this

also involves the local primary school.

The HMCG also continues to produce and distribute a newsletter twice a year to keep members informed of activities. Work is also near completion for five new information leaflets, kindly funded by the National Marine Aquarium Grants Ltd. These leaflets will cover the topics of shore life, fish, fishing, geology, and the significance of the Helford Voluntary Marine Conservation Area. Once completed these will be placed on the website and be widely distributed.

The website has been upgraded (www.helfordmarineconservation.co.uk), and is regularly updated by the webmaster Jayne Herbert. New sections to the website include downloads of the events programme and information leaflets, as well as a guide to Cornwall Sea Fisheries minimum landing sizes of fish and shellfish.

Thanks

The National Seal Sanctuary, Gweek, has very kindly continued to offer storage space for our equipment. Thanks must also be extended to all the volunteers, sponsors, and supporters of the HMCG, who are too numerous to name! Special appreciation must be given however to Pamela Tompsett who despite her best efforts has never been given the chance to retire fully!

The Future

The Strategic Guidelines of the HMCG have been updated highlighting plans for the next few years. An exciting time also lies ahead as links have been built with the 'Your Shore' project of the Cornwall Wildlife Trust. Current work of the HMCG will be complemented through a wider range of activities, and in particular school trips to the shores of the Helford where more children will be able to learn about the fantastic marine life of the VMCA! It is also hoped that funding may be secured to once again conduct survey transects to provide important time-series information of the biology of the Helford shoreline. As the current Co-ordinator Rhiannon steps back from the role, someone new will now be leaping into the seat for this exciting time.

David Muirhead (Advisory Section Chairman) and Rhiannon Pipkin (Co-ordinator)

HMCG Members Committee Chairman's report Spring 2010

At the last AGM in March 2009 we elected 4 new people to the HMCG Members committee (including me), which was a change of about half the team. Those of us who were new have learnt a lot and are truly grateful for the expertise provided by those who had been there and done it before. The combination seems to be working well; producing new ideas and hopefully some good things for the future.

The main feature of the members section is the programme of events. This involves a huge amount of time to organise and our thanks once again go to Paul Garrard and his sub committee for another year of excellent events in 2009. During 2009 Paul and co spent their time putting together the 2010 programme and producing the superb leaflet which forms our main means of publicity. From now on they work on 2011 – so if you have any ideas or suggestions for events or subjects now is a good time to make them known.

On the subject of people: Rhiannon Pipkin, who took up our part time role of co-ordinator in 2008, has had to step back as she has taken a full time job with Natural England related to the marine bill. Rhiannon soldiered on for us, on a voluntary basis, for many months last year but has found that this is not feasible in the long term. I am delighted to say that Rhiannon is however keen to remain on our committee and we are most grateful for the excellent work she has done for HMCG.

We are therefore in the process of discussing possibilities for this important role of co-ordinator, which is the only paid job for the HVMCA (one day p.w.). In previous years grant funding for the post has been obtained and we are actively seeking support for the next 3 years.

Anyone interested in the job should make this known to any committee member.

With regard to our funds: these are currently fairly healthy and the subject of a separate report by Ian Jakeways (treasurer) at the AGM. As previously reported we made a successful start to recruiting corporate sponsors who are listed on the back of the events leaflet.

Having said that our funds look ok, we do have some significant spending plans. Subject to having the money we will be producing new Display Boards to replace those in existence around the Helford. Hopefully we could have new ones by next year.

The Members section of HMCG is all about involving and informing people about the Helford and its associated environment. In this way we hope people will value and help to protect it. The Display Boards help do just this.



It is great news indeed to report that, via the Cornwall Wildlife Trust, we will be starting an educational programme at primary schools in the area. CWT have been awarded Lottery Funding for schools programmes throughout Cornwall (for us and other VMCA areas) and this will involve 5 schools in our area. More details will be available at the AGM.

If you have not done so already, then visit our website www.helfordmarineconservation.co.uk as there has been significant work done to develop the facility over the last year. More is planned.

To help communications with members we are gathering email details from those who would like to be kept up to date with what we are doing. This will also help us to communicate with people who are interested to volunteer for activities around the Helford; from survey work to beach clean ups but first we need to know who might be willing. If you are interested please speak to Martin Rule.

The Lottery Funding via CWT could also provide some training for volunteers for survey work.

It looks like 2010 will be a busy year for us, which we hope our members will enjoy. We would like to continue to attract new members. Membership fees have remained unchanged and now represents as good value as anything I can think of. By keeping fees down we hope to increase membership and enable more people to get involved. Please pass the word on – recruit a friend.

Finally, may I thank everyone who helps by giving their time and expertise in any way they can. We have a committed group of people working on behalf of the Helford River.

Thank you also for continuing to support us.

David Thomson Members' Section Chairman

Australasian immigrants head down in the Helford VMCA

Charles Darwin was fascinated by barnacles and in the 1840s he published a monumental work on the subject in which he made comparisons between the closely related free-swimming crustaceans such as shrimps, and barnacles including the sedentary, securely anchored acorn species.

Imagine a marine crustacean living upside-down with an enlarged head that is firmly cemented to a hard

surface, with modified legs protruding from a robust conical structure of greyish-white shell-like plates. These rapidly-beating cirri draw plankton and other food particles from the surrounding water into the mouth which, together with other body parts within the cone, are protected by a sensitive seal that remains tightly closed when the water recedes.

Helford barnacles

Look closely at the Helford VMCA barnacles that encrust rocks, shells, lobster pots, moorings, boats, in fact almost any hard surface, and which are particularly obvious in the intertidal or mid-shore area. By far the commonest barnacle present is one with a cone formed from four plates and a diamond-shaped opening, *Elminius modestus*, a relative newcomer to Britain, commonly known as the Australasian barnacle. This species was first identified in the UK in Chichester Harbour, Hampshire in 1945 where it is believed to have arrived sometime between 1940 and 1943, possibly in ballast water, on ships' hulls or even on flying boats. It spread as far north as Scotland within 40 years and is now also found in fairly sheltered situations on the Atlantic coasts of Europe from Germany to Gibraltar although it is absent from exposed parts of the north Cornish coast.

This Australasian barnacle has a free-swimming larval form that matures and settles on to a hard surface

where it then remains attached. It grows rapidly, has several broods each year and withstands reduced salinity, muddy waters, and tolerates higher and lower temperatures than some native species. Its initial growth rate can be 6mm in 40 days and it reaches maturity, up to 10mm diam., in its first season. There are no serious predators although crabs, amphipods, shore-fish such as Shanny *Lipophrys pholis* and occasionally birds, will sometimes attack them. No wonder the Australasian barnacle is so successful.



Look closely

In the Helford VMCA they can be a nuisance when they settle in large numbers on cultivated shellfish such as oysters or mussels which have to be scraped clean before sale.

Nevertheless these are fascinating animals; try placing a stone with some living barnacles in a dish

of seawater and observe them closely, preferably through a hand-lens or magnifying glass. The feeding fans can be seen frantically sweeping through the water. You may even see other creatures such as tiny periwinkles using empty barnacle cases for shelter.

Boats and barnacles

On a wider front, barnacles of various species are economically significant because they settle on ship hulls and harbour installations; the resulting encrustation of the vessels greatly increases friction, diminishing speed and increasing fuel consumption. Ships are treated with a shiny plastic coating or with anti-fouling paints containing copper or mercury to prevent or reduce encrustation. Tributyl tin additives

which proved so damaging to the whole marine ecosystem have been banned for this use since 2008.

The Australasian barnacle is unlikely to appear on a restaurant menu but the large goose-necked barnacles are popular in many places but that is another story.

Pamela E Tompsett

Explore the Shore

“Dare you to put your finger in this bucket!”. Then came a yelp, and a rapid withdrawal of the hand. The Velvet Swimming Crab had instantly reared up, arms wide, claws open, its bright red eyes glistening. Only later, when it had subsided, did we see the flattened back legs, with hair-like fringes, that enable it to swim. There were crabs in abundance, small Broad-Clawed Porcelain Crabs, Hermit Crabs, Edible Crabs, nicknamed ‘pasty crab’ because of the crimped edge to the shell; and another nicknamed ‘bodybuilder crab’ because of its tenacious grip and a shell looking like a rippled torso. The rock pools at Prisk Cove were proving to be a productive hunting ground for the 38 people in attendance, half of them children, and Ruth Williams, the Cornwall Wildlife Trust’s Marine Officer, was kept busy identifying the finds.



With a very low tide, the full spread of the shore was available, from the barnacle- and limpet-encrusted rocks in the upper parts to the slippery mats of spaghetti-like Thongweed, Kelp and invasive Japweed at the water’s edge. Squat Lobster, Prawns and Shore Urchin were added to the collection, plus numerous Brittlestars of all sizes and an occasional Cushion Star. As the rocks were turned over, small fish darted out, too fast to be netted, but the slower-moving Cornish Clingfish was easier to catch. The tally for the day included a Snakelocks Anemone, which preferred to stay where it was, not moved to a bucket, and the egg case of a Dogfish. The weather had been just right – breezy, overcast, but rain-free, but there were numerous wet feet to be dried out at the end. The HMCG is indebted to Ruth for yet another rewarding and enjoyable afternoon.

Durgan Fish cellar project

A new interpretation project is underway in the tiny hamlet of Durgan. The National Trust is set to create an information room within an historic fish cellar in the centre of the village. The concept to interpret here is that Durgan is a ‘treasure trove of discovery’. Preserved in character, the cottages and buildings are a glimpse of a forgotten time. Once a thriving fishing cove with a series of fish cellars, donkey sheds, coalhouse, schoolhouse, chapel and alehouse - this tiny village would once have been a hive of daily activity.

In this way it is the social and fishing heritage of the place that will be interpreted in the fish cellar, with particular reference to the pilchard industry. However, a second theme will be the surrounding environment, most notably that of the Helford River. With a range

of delicate marine habitats and species of conservation value close to Durgan shores, information about the Helford marine environment will also be displayed.

The Trust hopes to create an educational space within the village that will encourage both locals and visitors to the gardens and beach, to spend time in Durgan and appreciate the heritage and environment. The project is being co-ordinated by Dr Joanna Henley of Sciart Solutions, Penryn. The new information room fish cellar is due to be launched at Easter. If anyone has any information, objects or artefacts (fishing/sailing paraphernalia, Victorian period costumes etc.) that they would be willing to discuss or donate to the project, then please contact Joanna on 01326 378 578 or email: info@sciartsolutions.co.uk.

ERICA for Windows Database

The Erica for Windows database has been developed over the last twenty years to record everything that lives or has lived wild in Cornwall – on land, in freshwater, or at sea. This immense resource for Cornwall reached the milestone of two million biological records on Saturday 30th January 2010, at a special celebration where Rosaline Murphy, one of the largest contributors of records, entered the two millionth record (a Western Ramping-fumitory sighting – a Cornish endemic plant). The database has details of 25,000 different species and encompasses a strong marine and estuarine element, resulting from numerous surveys over many decades, including a number from within the HVMCA.

Thanks to a colossal voluntary effort Erica for Windows has become the largest and most comprehensive computerised natural history databank

of any region in Britain. As such it assists many members of the biological recording community in Cornwall and beyond, and is, by far, the largest source of biological records for ERCCIS (Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly) and through them serves many other organisations such as Cornwall Council, the National Trust, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Dr Colin N French



Web site update

In May 2009 I implemented a major redesign of the Helford Marine Conservation web site with the aim of making it much more attractive and interesting for our visitors, and helping the group to promote their conservation message.

The site can be viewed by people anywhere in the world through the web address www.helfordmarineconservation.co.uk.

Most of the visitors come from the United Kingdom, but a lot are from other areas of Europe, the United States and as far away as Australia, Egypt, Brazil and even Madagascar. Since the re-launch of the site we

have had over six thousand visits, clocking up over fourteen thousand page views.

In early February new pages on the Cornwall Sea Fisheries District Guide to minimum fish and shellfish sizes were added. These included a downloadable guide, provided by Cornwall Sea Fisheries that are hoped visitors will find useful.

There are also downloadable copies of all our newsletters right back to issue number 27 in Autumn 2003, and the list of events for 2010 is also available.

I am currently working on making some of the information leaflets the HVMCA have published, such as bait digging and Helford birds, available to download from the site. By the time you get this I hope they will be live.

It is hoped that the site will become an even more valuable resource for anyone interested in marine life or in the Helford area.

Jayne Herbert (Web design and management)
www.jayne-herbert.co.uk



Aim: To safeguard the marine life of the Helford River by any appropriate means within its status as a Voluntary Marine Conservation Area, to increase the diversity of its intertidal community and raise awareness of its marine interest and importance.

For further information relating to the Helford Voluntary Marine Conservation Area please contact the HMC Group Co-ordinator: Rhiannon Pipkin Tel: 07710 956734 Email Rhiannon@helfordvmca.co.uk

Newsletter Editor: Pamela Tompsett Email: petomp@bioscope.demon.co.uk Chairman: David Muirhead

Design: Sheila McCann-Downes, Cornwall Wildlife Trust Illustration: Sarah McCartney, Cornwall Wildlife Trust