



Boarfish or Zulu in the Helford VMCA

On 3rd March 2014 during a routine check on the eelgrass *Zostera marina* exposed at the low spring tide East of Treath a local beachcomber was pleased to show me the colourful Boarfish or Zulu *Capros aper* that he had just found stranded but alive. It was happily swimming in a rock pool out of reach of hungry gulls and he intended to retain it in his large marine aquarium.

The Boarfish, also known as the Zulu, is a close relative of the more familiar John Dory *Zeus faber*. Laterally compressed, rhomoidal in shape with large eyes and 160mm long, the bright golden red colour of this fish is eye-catching on a muddy shore line.

However this is essentially a deeper water fish, 100-400m, living in association with yellow or pink coral-encrusted rocks and sometimes swept away by upwelling events at the edge of the continental shelf. It is not unusual for dead boarfish to be found stranded around the British Isles, with just a few, 25, Cornish records on the ERICA database, but it is probably under-recorded. They are sometimes taken by trawls in large numbers and with no commercial value they are discarded which may account for many sightings on the shore.

Please report any marine stranding, including birds to the Marine Strandings Network 0345 201 2626.

Dr Pamela E Tompsett



Helford Marine Conservation Group Annual Report for March 2013 to March 2014

The Advisory Section and Networking

The advisory section quarterly meetings continue to be well attended, with a wide range of interests in the River, representing the National Trust, Natural England, Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation, Port Health Authority, local businesses, HMCG scientific advisors, local residents and landowners. Detailed reports of HMCG meetings are circulated widely, we currently have a mailing list of 52 giving everyone an opportunity to respond even if they cannot attend the meetings. Topics of discussion in the past year have included

- The planning proposals at Gweek Quay and recent change of ownership.
- The eelgrass beds off Grebe Beach and the continued maintenance of the voluntary no anchor zone.
- The revision of the fishing byelaws and what it may mean to the VMCA.
- The proposed Marine Conservation Zones.
- The proposed Falmouth to St Austell Bay Special Protection Area.
- The health of the shellfishery and water pollution.
- The illegal collection of shellfish for commercial purposes and netting in the river and its potential impact on both nursery stocks of fish and neighbourhood security. Netting fish in the river is of conservation and commercial fishery concern as it is a nursery for many species of fish including Bass, it is hoped that with the introduction of the proposed fishing byelaws it will be easier to monitor fishing vessels and clear up many of the 'grey areas' in fishing law.
- Protection and ongoing monitoring of the Helford Maerl bed.
- Unauthorised anchoring and mooring.

Some of the advisory group are also on the Fal and Helford SAC advisory group too, keeping up with events in the Fal and making sure that our part of the SAC is not forgotten.

Last September our project, The Helford River-Capturing Hearts and Minds, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation ended, this grant funded our coordinator post for three years and we would like to extend our thanks to them for allowing us to work unhindered by financial concerns for all this time. This year we are exploring ideas for a new grant funded project looking at pollution sources and water quality.

Swansea University are investigating the propagation of eelgrass and have been down to take samples. Dr Richard Unsworth is leading on the Seagrass Restoration Project and will be down in December to present the project and tell us more about this vital habitat, see the 'What's on' leaflet for details. Cornwall Wildlife Trust's PANACHE project continues to support us directly by giving our volunteers opportunity for training in shore survey work and by keeping the profile of marine conservation high in the county.

We are very fortunate to share The National Trust's and Natural England's Wild Lizard project education officer, Claire Scott. Claire has focussed her efforts in the past year in forging links with the local schools and youth groups with activities on the river and we have been very pleased to have her on board.

We rely on the generosity of local business to sponsor our leaflets and interpretation boards and funds raised from events and membership subscriptions as well as a vast amount of effort from volunteers working on the two committees. Thanks also for the continued support from the Cornwall Wildlife Trust and National Trust in all aspects of our work.

David Muirhead



A vibrant rainbow hangs over St. Anthony. Photo by Annie Jenkin

HMCG Members Committee, Chairman's Annual Report

Once again I am delighted to report an active year of events and activities.

Overall the program was well attended and successful, having a good mixture of subjects and activities that hopefully provided interest for all.

The fully attended photographic day with David Chapman on 20 April had perfect conditions as well as location at Trebah. On 12 May, it rained on the sand sculpture event but this did not dampen the fun too much. That was not the case however on 22 June when we were forced to call off the Helford Conservation Cruise as the boat could not reach the Helford due to the high winds. After that it turned into the warm summer that we had hoped for even though it took time for the sea temperature to catch up with the season. We were fully booked for the Snorkel Safari on the 13 July. It was a beautiful day even though the water was on the cool side for July.

In August we had over 30 people enjoying the Rockpool Ramble and in September the BBQ and snorkel safari was fully attended with perfect snorkeling and BBQ conditions down on Durgan beach.

Our evening program of talks at Gweek, began in October with good attendance numbers to support the interesting speakers. The December fixture was the exception as we decided it was best to cancel this in view of the deaths of two of our past active members and illness on the committee at that time.

It was sad indeed to hear of the deaths of David Nightingale in late November and then of John Froggatt in early December. David was Chairman of the HMCG Members committee from the outset until about 5 years ago, playing a crucial role in establishing and developing it. John was also a founder committee member and active supporter right up to the point when he became too ill to attend functions. David and John made important contributions toward the protection of The Helford and will be missed.

The group have redesigned the "What's On" leaflet to promote the program of events for this year. This complements the design of the new information boards, all of which are now in place around the Helford. Apart from having a larger map, the new leaflet also includes some useful information and contact details, such as Marine Strandings, Fishing Rights, Fish Sizes, Eelgrass, Boatwatch, Pollution and others. We hope you find the new design helpful. This year the leaflet has been funded by The Duchy of Cornwall and we are most grateful for their support.

Our finances are healthy at present. However, our principal source of funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation over recent years has now come to an end. We will still of course be able to continue existing activities, thanks to all of our membership and fundraising efforts, we are almost self sustaining, but always on the lookout for additional funds to support us.

In view of the fact that the Advisory and Members Groups' finances have become increasingly interchangeable, we are amalgamating the two sets of accounts. This will simplify administration and make it more manageable.

Membership: I guess it is stating the obvious to say that our membership is fundamental to what we do. Numbers have been remarkably steady for years but have reduced slowly in the last couple. Although we involve many more people than are members in our activities, it would be good to see more people joining.

The subs must represent the best value anywhere, remaining unchanged at £5 per person (£10 per family) and we have deliberately not recommended an increase in order to make it as attractive as possible to attract new members.

As an experiment we have been putting the new leaflet and a letter of invitation to join through doors around the area and this appears to be a good method of raising our profile. It would be really useful if any existing members could introduce new members so please spread the word!

Volunteers: activities continue with our wetlands bird surveying and monitoring and also our regular beach cleaning teamwork. Thanks to our volunteers we also attended local events in order to exhibit what we do and to promote the value of this uniquely beautiful area. This included attendance at some of the local regattas in 2013 and it is our intention to continue to promote our group in this way. If you would like a day out with us then please get in touch, it is good fun and 'many hands make light work'.

In conjunction with National Trust we have supported activities with local schools and youth groups to involve them in The Helford and give them appreciation of this special place.

During the year we have received reports of netting in the River and of commercial shellfish collection. It is good to have these reports as it helps us monitor activities, whether legal or not. We then pass the information on to interested parties and authorities.

Shellfish: the rights to shellfish are the property of The Duchy, who have leased them to the Oyster Farm. We report activities to them and Port Health Authority who are concerned that untreated Shellfish from the river do not get sold to the food industry.

Netting in The Helford is also an important conservation issue as it is an important nursery for commercial fish species. We will report activities when known to us and the new What's On leaflet has the number to call: Cornwall Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (CIFCA) 01736 336842. Again The Duchy owns the fishing rights to the majority of the river and any netting would need a license from them. We understand that they are not currently issuing licenses.

It has as you see been another active year with a lot of things going on. This is only possible with the help of many people and partner organisations. My thanks go to our committee members, past and present, to our volunteers, sponsors and partners. In particular to CWT for their continuing support in many ways and

to National Trust for helping with time, expertise and activity. Last but certainly not least, many thanks to our members and sponsors for continuing to support us. We welcome new members, volunteers and in particular anyone interested in joining the committee. The time involved can be as little or as much as you are happy to provide. Just contact any of us if you would like to discuss.

Looking forward to another active and interesting year.

Thank you for your support.

Dave Thomson
Chairman Members Committee

Ps For Sale!

The old display boards are available to anyone wanting to have one for their use at home. They make interesting displays of course but are rugged enough to make into table tops. Just add legs! We are asking just £20 each. A bargain!

EVENT REPORT: FLOWERS WOODS AND WATER

We met in Helford Village car park on a fine Sunday afternoon for a guided walk with botanist Keith Spurgin. Twenty seven of us set off down through the village and up past pretty cottages and gardens stopping to admire the combination of wildflowers and garden escapes decorating the stone walls. We follow a narrow path into woodland where it opened out and we were able to admire the bluebells and reaching a stream, were able to find Opposite Leaved Golden Saxifrage, Ransoms and delicate Wood Sedge amongst others giving Keith free rein to share anecdotes on plant names and uses. We climbed the hill into a field where we learned about some of the names of species of bramble (Keith is currently writing a paper on them) in the hedge and learned that Elm species can be very difficult differentiate indeed!

We then walked through the ancient farmstead of Kestle Barton and turned right along a lane resplendent with wildflowers, stopping at regular intervals to quiz Keith on plant names. We then took a little lane down to Penarvon Cove finding the garden escape, Fringe Cups *Tellima grandiflora*, I was to find out later that it was a new record for the tetrad thanks to investigative work by Peter Ealey. We crossed the top of the cove and then back into the village by the Helford Passage ferry, finishing back in the car park by the cafe. Huge thanks to Keith for sharing a little his vast knowledge of plants and I suppose what they now call ethnobotany with us in such an interesting way.

Sue Scott



Photo by Dr Peter Ealey

BAIT DIGGING IN GILLAN CREEK

Bait digging is facilitated in the Gillan Creek area by its easy access due to the road bounding its northern banks and by the fact that both Gillan Creek and Harbour dry out at low tide. Bait digging is known to have an adverse impact on the sediment structure and communities and also to have a significant effect on important predator populations such as wading birds, by depletion of their food source and human disturbance of their roosting and feeding areas.



Amongst all the creeks in the Helford River, Gillan Creek, only 1.2 km long and 120 m wide, is unique. It is the only creek to be fronted by well developed spits and a narrow tidal inlet, features, which are well developed in the Rade de Brest in Brittany, where they are considered to be of national importance. Seaward of the tidal inlet is a series of bars and channels comprising a well-developed shingle ebb delta. Landward of the intervening spits is a 200m long shingle flood tide delta. Behind this the creek becomes increasingly dominated by tidal mud flats, except around Carne where coarser sediments are deposited by the streams that drain its two catchment areas. Within only a distance of 1 km, Gillan Creek contains the full transition from a fluvial through tidal to a coastal dominated environment. As such it could be regarded as the Helford in miniature and an ideal, easily accessible, study area for the processes operating in the Helford catchment ecosystem as a whole.

Bait digging for both rag and lug worms, as well as the well known traditional Good Friday triggering fiesta, has long been undertaken in the area seaward of the spits. This is a relatively high energy environment

dominated by ebb tidal currents and wave action. The intensity of the latter is, however, dependent upon wind direction, and greatest with easterly winds. Lug worm bait digging also takes place in the 900 m long, low energy sector between the flood tidal delta and the fluvially dominated area around Carne. This low energy part of the creek is where the tidal mud flats are best developed. It is known from recent catchment studies that the rate of mud deposition here is not constant but associated with episodic spikes of high discharge particularly in winter months. Large areas of this critically important intertidal sector have been turned over for lug worms in individual pits landward of the flood tidal delta and more menacingly one individual is trenching areas of the Creek farther landward. The failure of bait diggers to backfill their operations prolongs the duration of winnowing of fine sediment through tidal current and wave action.

Dr Peter Ealey



Update on Gillan Creek's Glossy Ibis

Reported in the last newsletter as having been seen in Gillan Creek in October last year, there have been numerous discontinuous sightings since then over the last six months. As a result it is become clear that the Ibis has overwintered in the Creek area. This is not the first time that the Glossy Ibis has overwintered in Cornwall. There have been reports of similar overwintering in Chapel Amble near Padstow in 2012 and Tregony. The first major influx of the Ibis into the British Isles appears to have been in 2007 and since 2009 there has been an annual influx of at least 20 birds. Although the Ibis in Gillan Creek is not ringed, it has become clear from the identification of ringed birds elsewhere in the country that most of the birds originate from south-west Spain or southern France. The Glossy Ibis appears to be following the same range expansion into England as that of the Lesser Egret some 20 years ago.

If Glossy Ibises start breeding in Cornwall and the Helford as a whole as seems likely, a preliminary picture of what this will look like can be deduced from observations in Gillan Creek this winter and particularly this spring. It has clearly adapted well to all the habitats of the creek which vary considerably over it's less than a mile length. It is equally at home in the area around Carne where the River Durra and enters the creek, on the intertidal flats farther seaward and Gillan harbour which is exposed to more coastal conditions. It has been seen flying between the these habitats. It seems to get on with other birds in the Creek which include Common Sandpipers, Curlews,

Egrets (Lesser), Greenshanks, various types of gulls, Kingfishers, Mallards, Oyster Catchers, Redshanks, Shelducks and breeding Swans. It clearly gets on with egrets feeding in the same habitats and roosting on the same fallen trees when the tide comes in. It seems to be an irrelevance as far as the Mallards and the Mute Swans are concerned. It doesn't seem to have any problems with the quarrelsome larger Shelduck breeding pairs on the mud flats. It has been noticed that the Redshanks, when feeding in the restricted margins of the creek as the Ibis when the tide comes, tend to step warily around the Ibis if they want to pass. Unfortunately the relations of the Ibis with the curlews which it resembles with its beak shape (in fact the Glossy Ibis has been known as the Black Curlew) remain a mystery. They have rarely been seen together. However Curlews and Lesser Egrets happily co-habit.

Dr Peter Ealey



The Bait Diggers code of Conduct as published in our Leaflet

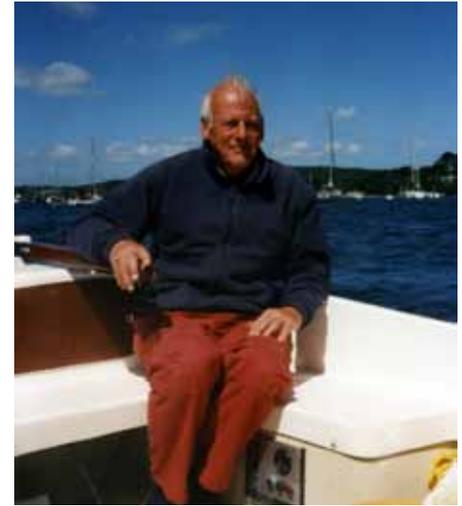
- **Back-fill all diggings.**
This minimises disturbance to the animals left & doesn't interfere with other beach users.
- **Avoid digging close to boat moorings or causing disturbance to them.**
This is particularly important Easter to end of October.
- **Obtain permission before crossing private land but preferably use public rights of way.**
This safeguards access to the worm beds for the future.
- **Put rocks back as you found them especially when collecting peeler crabs.**
- **Do not trap seaweed beneath them.**
- **Do not dig in the upper shore areas.**
This is the lugworm nursery area.
- **Remember: all Lug leave a cast, other bait worms don't.**
- **Thin casts are made by small worms, thick casts by large ones.**
- **Do not take more worms than you can use or keep.**
This applies to bait purchases, even if you can afford to waste money!
- **Leave undersized worms.**
4" for Lug and 6" for King Rag. They are your future supply of bait.
- **Do not dig in April & May as King Rag are spawning.**
- **Ripe worms are easy to recognise - they are bright green.**
- **Observe sensible safety precautions on the muddy shores.**
- **Avoid digging alone, leave location details & expected return time with responsible adult, carry mobile phone, whistle and rope.**

Group Coordinator's Update

Hello, I hope you enjoy the new format for the Newsletter of a Spring/Summer edition and an Autumn/Winter one. This spreads out the news a bit and takes the preparation away from the more busy times of the year. Anyone who would like to contribute an article about living and working around the Helford River is more than welcome to, it can be as short as you like up to about 750 words plus pictures. Annie Jenkin made some time to contribute some of her lovely photos that she has taken around the river and I would like to have more of that from you all please!

I have managed to get to all the events so far and am starting to get to know our regular participants well; we have been blessed so far with good weather for our outdoor events, fingers crossed for the Conservation Cruise! There are still tickets left if you would like to come aboard for a guided trip up the river with information on the bird life, history, industry and other activity from our local experts. We also have activities for the children with Claire Scott of the Wild Lizard project and her helpers on board.

We are planning a Helford River Roadshow for next year, showcasing the geography of the river, the human activities both past and present, to be taken around the villages in the catchment area of the river. The project is still in its infancy but if any of you have any interesting photographs historical or present day that you think will be useful and indeed any memories you would like to off load to me then please get in touch. I can come and interview you and photos can be scanned and quickly returned. Please contact me on 01326 340961 email coordinator@helfordvmca.co.uk or catch me at one of our events. Sadly these past few months we have lost some of our founder members and supporters from our group. John Froggatt, David Nightingale and John Green. John Froggatt formed part of the early committees to help with the accounts, I was privileged to meet him last year and his widow Joyce is still a stalwart supporter of the Group, regularly attending events. John Green best known here probably for his founding of the Helford River Children's Sailing Trust. All my four children, now adults, were taught to sail through the HRCST so I



David Nightingale

personally owe a huge debt to him and his energy and vision. He was a regular at our Saturday night talks at Gweek Village Hall and member of our advisory group, Pam Tompsett tells me he was active with the Group well before he came to live at Calamansack.

David Nightingale put in huge time and effort for a number of years to the membership committee and the Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

Sue Scott

Photographer Profile

My name is Annie Jenkin and I grew up at St. Anthony. Gillan creek and the Helford have always been very special to me and I try to come back as much as I possibly can now that I live in Bristol. Having grown up in this area I have always been fascinated by the sea and I'm at my happiest when I'm on, near or under the water. I went on to study a BSc in Marine Geography and a MSc in Marine Environmental Protection. I now work as a freelance marine scientist offshore. Projects include ROV surveys to map areas of cold water reefs, marine mammal observation, using underwater cameras and taking grab samples.

My favourite things to do around the river are walk to Bosahan beach from St. Anthony to Helford or vice-versa, walk through the woods at Carne, kayak up Carne creek and potter around the river on boats. I definitely want to end up living in this area - it's the best!



Editors Note- You will find Annie's photos dotted about in the newsletter, we would like to run this feature in the future with other keen photographers, please send to the coordinator with a few words about yourself and your connection with the Helford River.

Practical Volunteers

The Helford Marine Conservation Group practical volunteers meet about four times a year in the Black Swan, Gweek, principally to have a social but also to keep us all informed on the many different activities that the group are involved in and to share information from the membership and the advisory committees, enabling any input from the volunteers to be fed back and vice versa.

Activities this year include litter picking and creek clean up, the BTO

Wetland Bird Counts, Seaweed Fun with Angie Gall (seaweed id and pressing specimens with coffee and cake), helping out at our events and attending local marine conferences and other VMCA activities to name a few.

On the horizon we have various workshops, survey and training sessions as well as a great deal of preparation for events next year.

Newcomers are always welcome and you can give as much time

as you feel you are able to. If you would like to be added to the email mailing list then please contact me coordinator@helfordvmca.co.uk

Sue Scott



Upcoming Events

Sunday 13th July 12noon till 2pm

Crabs and Critters

Leader Matt Slater

Meet outside the Ferryboat Inn, Helford passage. SW 764 269

Join Matt Slater on a search for fascinating mud-dwelling sea creatures on an exceptionally low tide! Find out more about the myriad of creatures that live in and on the mud at Bar Beach, Helford Passage. Wellies essential! Please be dressed for the weather conditions, sunhat or raincoat. Getting muddy most likely! **Booking essential.**

Sunday 27th July 4pm to 630pm

The Helford Conservation Cruise

Adults £10 Children £5 Booking Essential with cheques payable to "Helford Marine Conservation Group" and SAE for tickets to Sue Scott, Little Helland, Treverva, Penryn TR 10 9BP.

Leave from the Ferryboat Inn, Helford Passage. SW 764 269

Enjoy the Helford wildlife scene on a boat trip upriver from the mouth of the estuary with local experts, displays and children's activities. Please bring binoculars if you have them and be dressed for whatever the weather throws at us.

Wednesday 13th August 130pm to 330pm

Rockpool Ramble

Mawnan Church, Old Church Rd Mawnan TR11 5HY

Church SW 788 272 Prisk Cove SW794 276

Investigate the fascinating rockpools at Prisk Cove and discover the hidden world of crabs, fish sea anemones and strange shellfish with marine expert Ruth Williams. Please wear non slip rock scrambling shoes that you are prepared to get wet! Bring small nets and plastic buckets if you wish.

Saturday 20th September 10am to 12 noon

Snorkel Safari and Barbeque

Durgan Beach, Helford River SW 773 272

Leader Abby Crosby

Join the Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Marine experts on a guided snorkel tour of the Helford eelgrass beds then warm up with a tasty barbeque. Snorkelers must bring their own equipment including wetsuit, snorkel, mask and fins. Barbeque £5, snorkelers will be asked for small contribution to CWT insurance. **Booking Essential, snorkel places limited.**

Saturday 11th October 10am to 1pm

Fungus Foray in Tremayne Woods

Meet at Gear Farm, St Martin TR12 6DE SW 722 249

Join National Trust Ranger Justin Whitehouse for a foraging session and walk in Tremayne woods. Wear Clothing suitable for all weathers and sturdy shoes or wellingtons bearing in mind it could be muddy. **Booking Essential.**



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: Sue Scott** Tel: 07772323502 Email: coordinator@helfordvmca.co.uk

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