

April 2020

Liesje & Jan take the lead

INNShore North Devon

Last April's training day was keenly supported, with ID guidance from Jack Sewell and time on the shore. The methodology was tweaked after pilot surveys in May and full surveys held in September at Lee, in glorious sunshine, and next day Westward Ho! in pouring rain.

Mentoring us MBA INNShore surveyors Chris Wood and John Bishop carried out their own survey alongside us in May. Some interesting results: *Caulacanthus okamurae* (Pom-pom weed) and *Austrominius modestus* (Darwin's barnacle) were common on both beaches; *Sargassum muticum* (Wire weed) common at Lee, rare at WHo!, *Magallana gigas* (Pacific oyster) rare at W Ho!, absent at Lee.

Nigel Mortimer (South Devon AONB) led a training day in February on Pacific Oysters and ten were found and dispatched at Westward Ho! By September we hope to run autumn surveys. All are invited, regardless of whether training has been attended.

Pip Jollands & Nicola Mello



Marjorie Heath, here with Malcolm Roberts, received a well-deserved 2019 NDVS Volunteer Award for doing so much for Coastwise.

The Committee has appointed Liesje Birchenough and Jan Whittington to be Acting Co-Chairs, following the resignation of Malcolm Roberts and pending December's AGM.

Liesje came to North Devon three years ago and lost no time in joining Coastwise. With a background in terrestrial conservation with Dorset Wildlife Trust and Flora & Fauna International, she relished the willing help of members on her steep learning curve with marine matters. She has more than reciprocated with her own very welcome support and enthusiasm for all Coastwise activities, surveys especial favourites. liesje_vn@yahoo.com.



Jan, founder of Tarka Ecological Consultancy, developed her personal interests into marine life on joining Coastwise near the beginning. Since then her passion, enthusiasm and ability to find elusive animals has become legendary. This coupled with the facebook group she set up for us (celebrating its 400th member recently) has brought Coastwise many friends and contributors, greatly enhancing the Coastwise experience. janwhittington@yahoo.co.uk

Liesje says "I'm looking forward to my new role, though I wish times were happier and we were all out as usual peering into rockpools on the shore! Working together with other enthusiastic and experienced committee members, I'm hoping Coastwise can go from strength to strength, and continue to be a source of information, inspiration and fun."

The ongoing review of the future of Coastwise led by Stan Coats, coupled with the influx of enthusiastic newcomers to membership and the committee has provided an opportunity for long-serving officers to pass on some responsibilities. Coastwise founder Paula Ferris started the process last year, resigning from the committee and the Chair she shared with Malcolm Roberts, to make way for others. Malcolm has since decided to follow suit, stepping down from the Chair whilst continuing on the committee & the talks programme sub-group. Secretary Marjorie Heath continues to be the first post of call for just about everything but unsurprisingly is looking to share some tasks from the autumn.

Stay in touch!

Coronavirus may have put a stop to our activities but not to our concern for one another. For many of us Coastwise is more than group, it's a club. We can't meet but we can use email to reach Coastwise friends. We can join Jan's Coastwise Facebook group. We can respond to this newsletter or ask to join the WhatsApp group set up by Martin Batt. Whatever you decide, stay safe.

Horsey Marsh

Since the collapse of a significant section of the outer bank at Horsey Marsh over 2 years ago Coastwise has shared local concern that this special freshwater habitat would be lost to saltwater inundation, with threats to the Inner Bank and Braunton Marsh beyond. The recent acquisition by DWT presents opportunities to manage the process for environmental benefit. When BBC Spotlight covered the story, the Wetland Birds Survey WeBS counter for Horsey, Rob Jutsum, welcomed the acquisition and later contributed to a DWT magazine article, saying "In just a few years Horsey Island has been transformed. The freshwater habitat has been lost, replaced by an evolving saltmarsh where large numbers of waders and waterfowl forage and rest." Gavin Broomfield, the new DWT Horsey Development Officer with the challenging task of sustaining Horsey as a prime bird habitat, will consult further with local birders soon.

DWT in North Devon

We can expect Devon Wildlife Trust to play a bigger role in North Devon following their acquisition of Horsey. Prior to this Marine officer Coral Smith gave a talk & shore visit, & welcomed closer ties. Liesje Birchenough and Martin Batt then met DWT Chief Executive Harry Barton to explore possibilities, leading to his Coastwise talk in March. He spoke about post EU future of marine conservation, Horsey Marsh and in response to Annette Dutton acknowledged the need for increased DWT support for North Devon. Encouraging signs.

On the topic of talks, we have had some other crackers over the last year, just check out Robert Down's write-ups on the website, many with memorable headlines - High Seas Drifter, A Difficult to Sea Horse and titles such as Starfish: The Curious Case of Canine Casualties and Seaweed sleuthing - a tale of phycological fascination in Victorian Devon.

Seaweed proved popular thanks to Sarah Hotchkiss's approach embracing the science, artistic & social aspects. She held a workshop to collect and press seaweeds for 20 of us at Ilfracombe. Guests included visitors from Exeter Museum as part of a project addressing women as collectors. A follow-up is planned to be held in Braunton Countryside Centre.

Museums moves

Several south west museums hold important Victorian seaweed collections. Barnstaple Museum has the collection of the Rev W S Hore. This includes many volumes of pressings from around the county collected by him and other respected algologists which Sarah wrote about for The North Devon Journal, as part of the Museum's 100 objects series.

This and the Museum's recent extension prompted Coastwise to encourage fuller coverage of North Devon's coast. The museum responded, encouraging us to invest our effort and enthusiasm into a small area, taking a dunes to the deeps approach. Space, resources and time were limited but we made the most of the opportunity with extensive contributions from members: Dave Jenkins - strandline expertise and exhibits, Martin Batt, Liesje Birchenough, Nicola Mello & Paula Ferris - text and pictures, funding and support - the AONB.

Just for us?

Husband and wife team Steve Trehwella and Julie Hatcher gave us a talk based on their latest book The Essential Guide to Rockpooling, and took the opportunity of their October visit to include a trip to Lee Bay for a spot of rock-pooling with members. Host Jan Whittington says "As a good friend to Coastwise, Steve contributes to our facebook group. We felt privileged they came and spent time on shore with us. They gave us tips to get more from our visits, Julie memorably using a head loupe, and Steve a sieve to catch the tiniest animals".

Looe blogger Heather Buttivant, now also has a book to her credit, Rock Pool, Extraordinary Encounters Between the Tides, an evocation of time spent rockpooling, with lots of information to enrich our knowledge of the life we see. We took the opportunity to propose Heather's book for the Appledore Book Festival and were delighted she and they agreed. Heather's presentation ensured the success of the event, confirmed by book sales. Our thanks go to her and the Book Festival for helping put marine life on the local agenda. Perhaps it is not so surprising that this year has seen more members and full houses for the talks programme.

Marine planning matters

The MMO's current marine planning exercise to identify issues and policy options is out for consultation with stakeholders. Topics such as access, aggregates, aquaculture etc, are covered in the light of the competing pressures of habitat sensitivity, climate change, and the economy

The plan aims 'to make sure the right activities occur in the right place, at the right time, and in the right way', and it will set the policy framework for the next 20 years - so if you want to have your say, closing date 20 April, here is the link:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/mmo/draft-south-west-inshore-and-offshore-marine-plans/>

Paula Ferris
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