

Newsletter - April 2012

AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR DORMICE

On 20th March member Janice Whittington, a Licensed Dormouse handler, and Jan Ashworth led a team of 12 Coastwise Members who put their DIY skills to the test by building new homes for dormice. The National Trust had generously offered their workshop facilities at Brownsham. Alistair Ashworth not only sourced the materials at no cost, but pre-cut the wood to size - for which everyone was grateful. Following instructions from Alistair, the Members took their places at their respective workbenches and the "hammering/sawing" began. After a couple of hours of light-hearted discussions 24 nest boxes materialised. They were installed a week later in the woods at Bucks Mill where hopefully they will have new residents in the not too distant future. Alistair has recently completed a further six boxes and these will also be installed soon.

"SHORE THING" MONITORING

Join us monitoring shore life with guidance from marine ecologist, Pip Jollands and take part in a national survey project from MBA's Marlin. It is a great way to learn & good fun.

7 June, 13.00 Abbotsham

3 July, 10.30am Lee Bay

18 Sept, 11.30am Lee Bay

Want to know more? Details from Jim Monroe, 01271 882078 / 07889 134466



HELE - REVISITING A GOSSE HAUNT

Jim Monroe, an enthusiast for 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 explorers set out to 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 creatures found were Urchins, Sea Cucumber, splendid Spiny Squat Snapping Shrimp which particularly memorable Durrant. Notable for generate a sound wave that stuns its prey, only a few are recorded each year, though Coastwise may have more than its fair share as Clive Symons found one at Lee last year. This was a rare find, the species probably *Alpheus glaber*.



interesting Fan Worms, Sea cowries, a lobster and a made the day for its finder Rob the ability to with its claws

A FINE SPREAD

The Spring term got off to a great start with Jim Monroe's talk on Victorian marine naturalists and finishing in good form with Tim Jones's talk on Lundy and Seabirds. Both attracted capacity audiences, and numbers exceeded 40 throughout the series. The first four sessions were given by members and proved very popular. Outstanding amongst them was newcomer Sarah Hotchkiss. Her subject Edible Seaweeds, clearly an enthusiasm as much personal as professional, she shared with us and our tummies, having prepared a wonderful spread to tempt us. Members end of session evaluations revealed appreciation for the diversity of talks, ranging from cod to helicopters, archaeology to birds and birds again. The four birding sessions included a trip to the Exe and 3 talks, each reflecting the personal enthusiasm of the speaker: Rob Jutsum on bird ID lovingly illustrated by his photographs, bird behaviour captured in a wonderful series of watercolour sketches by John Broomhead and finally Tim's focus on Manx Shearwaters and the other notable Lundy birds, timely in view of the uncertain impact of the proposed windfarm. Mark Haworth-Booth reawakened our interest in marine life with his moving poems on endangered sea animals and members for a summer on the shore with a quiz, surprising themselves and setter Paula Ferris with their knowledge, which was further put to the test during a beach visit to Lee Bay on a gloriously sunny day in March.

MISCELLANY

20 Coastwise members attended the conference to consider the future of the south west's **VMCA**s on 26th February convened by Cornwall Wildlife Trust in Newquay. In all some 200 attended mainly from Cornwall but also Devon and Dorset for a very full programme. Things that stood out: the strength and enthusiasm of CWT for the marine environment and coastal communities, the varying age ranges within the groups, input from marine professionals, especially the universities, and Cornwall's emphasis on data collection and related conservation effort. Paula Ferris says "We were inspired by the energy and enthusiasm generated, and will be considering how this can inform our approach to **future opportunities such as a bioblitz, or the Connecting 2 Coasts Heritage Lottery Fund bid**, which though not yet successful could still be developed into something very worthwhile for Devon."

Conservation- Representations have been made to the region's MEPs urging support for **EU Commission reform of the CFP**. Meanwhile North Devon's **MCZ proposals** appear to be withstanding the rigours of government scrutiny, and very practical support is being given to the Marine Conservation Society's marine litter campaign thanks to Mark Haworth-Booth who is organising North Devon's part in the

MCS/M&S Big Beach Clean-up on 11th May, 10.45 am at Downend car park, Croyde - after prior registration with MCS.

Subsidising the training of members so they can cascade it to others is an idea to emerge from CWT's approach. Coastwise contributed to the costs of attending the recent Maggs, Brodie & Bunker **Seaweed ID workshop** at the MBA for Sarah Hotchkiss and Jay Nicholson. In return they undertook to pass on what they learnt to other members. Sarah took the opportunity at the 21st April Microscope Workshop. Jay will be giving a talk for the autumn programme.

Chris Mandry not only shared his amazing local underwater photos for the year with us but he responded to the great interest they generated by letting people have their own copies on CD, in return for a small donation to Coastwise, along with a challenge, since taken up by 30 members. Identify the animals, with a winner's summer trip on the Ilfracombe Sub Aqua dive boat to Lundy.

SUMMER PROGRAMME

The Shore Safari Team's programme of rock-pool rambles got underway at Croyde on 10th April in brilliant sunshine and a bitter wind, which did little to deter about 50 members of the public whose enthusiasm made up for the dearth of marine life on a shore recently buffeted by a high swell. A dozen members led four small groups down the shore from a base camp graced by a splendid Coastwise umbrella where Brenda Aydon & Brian Heath looked after the ever popular tanks of finds.

Contributions from Marjorie Heath & Jim Monroe, edited by Paula Ferris. April 2012

www.coastwisenorthdevon.org.uk

10 APRIL

1.30 pm placeMain (Ruda) slipway

8 MAY COMBE MARTIN

1.30 pm On beach

5 JUNE SAUNTON

12 noon Main slipway

4 JULY placePlaceNameLEE PlaceNameBAY

11.30 am On beach

23 JULY

2.00 pm On Barricane beach

2 AUGUST

11 am On Barricane beach

21 AUGUST

1.00 pm Main beach slipway

1 SEPTEMBER

11.00 am

CROYDE

WOOLACOMBE

WOOLACOMBE

WESTWARD HO!

ILFRACOMBE

To be confirmed