



SOUTH EAST GROUP

Newsletter – May 2010



Future Speakers at the Holland Club

The monthly meetings start at 8.00pm in the function room of the Holland Club at the Imperial College of London SW7 2AZ. The nearest entrance is in Prince Consort Road. Parking within the grounds is expensive but free on single yellow lines in the surrounding public roads, after 6.30pm. The nearest underground train is South Kensington. Meet in the bar from 7.30pm. A map is available on request. You don't have to be an MCS member to attend the meetings and there is no charge, although we do raffle a bottle of wine to help pay for the room.

11th May - "Coral reef or coral grief? The Tun Sakaran Marine Park, Sabah, Malaysia." 30 years ago this area was identified as an area of outstanding marine biodiversity by Dr Liz Wood, the MCS Coral Reef Conservation Officer.

Tonight, Dr. Frances Dipper will talk about the work that she and Liz Wood have been involved with out there in setting up the protected areas. Frances will also be showing a short DVD of the park and its stunning marine life.

Frances will also have copies of her latest book; co written with Paul Kay entitled 'A Field Guide to Marine Fishes of Wales and Adjacent Waters'.

8th June - Jennifer Lonsdale, cetacean officer of the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) will inform us of the latest proposal going before the Annual meeting of the Whaling Commission later in June which would legitimise some of the controls on commercial whaling

13th July - JP Trenque the chairman of British Society of Underwater Photographers (BSoUP) has been to Gibraltar looking at the Pilot whale populations and will report on his findings.

10th August - A social evening or maybe a talk.

Press Releases

6th May - Before you vote:

MCS wants to see the next government do three things: protect 30% of our seas from all damaging activities in Marine Protected Areas; push for radical reform of the Common Fisheries Policy and take action on marine litter starting with a Marine Litter Action Plan.

MCS asked the main parties for their views and commitments on key marine issues. Their answers were published in *Marine Conservation Magazine* Spring 2009.

Melissa Moore, MCS Senior Policy Officer said: "We must make the next five years count for the future of our seas and coastal life – you can start to make those changes now by ensuring the MP and party you choose on May 6th is marine aware."

After the success of the UK Marine & Coastal Access Bill for England, the Scottish Parliament voted unanimously for a Scottish Marine Bill in February therefore hopefully giving protection to marine areas throughout the British Isles.

Also, don't forget to vote for a marine site for protection by going to the 'Your Seas, Your Voice' page on the MCS website www.mcsuk.org

After the results of the Beachwatch campaign, there is a short video clip on the MCS website taken recently by an MCS member in Brixham, Devon of a seagull choking on a plastic food bag. Just more evidence of the dangers to our wildlife.

Other Dates for your Diary

Low Tide Day is held every year on a Saturday in May with the lowest tide, to give people the opportunity to explore and celebrate local inter-tidal sites around our coasts.

5th June - World Environment Day, a day on which United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment

8th June - World Oceans Day is an annual event aimed at raising awareness of the marine environment.

28th May - 5th September - 'The Deep', a special exhibition at the Natural History Museum in London. Plunge into the abyss 11,000 meters down in the ocean. Less explored than the surface of the moon. See bizarre creatures, astonishing images and real specimens, some on display for the first time.

Southampton Oceanographic Centre

If you're in the Southampton area, Dr. Ken Collins of the Southampton Oceanographic Center arranges talks at 7.30pm on the first Thursday of each month. Times and subjects can be found on his website www.soc.ac.uk

6th May - Wave and tidal power: combating climate change – Steph Merry

3rd June - Durlston Dolphins – Ed harland

Marine Life Courses

Marine Life Identification Courses:

19-20th June, 17-18th July, 21-22nd August and 4-5th September

These popular courses include learning about the identification and basic biology of most of the marine species to be found by divers in UK waters. Saturday afternoon is spent under Swanage Pier, our very own underwater classroom, studying the marine life and some specimens are taken back to the lab for closer scrutiny under the microscope.

Underwater Photography Course: 18-19th September

A weekend course aimed at those just starting out with underwater cameras but also for those who want to improve their knowledge and skills.

Marine Ecology Course: 16-17th October

This is a follow-on course from the Marine Life identification course and covers marine habitats, communities and their environment.

All these courses are held at Leeson House Field Studies Centre, Langton Matravers, near Swanage, Dorset. The cost £75, includes course notes and refreshments during classroom sessions.

N.B: All these courses also qualify as Seasearch Specialist courses.

The courses all include a dive under Swanage Pier (our underwater classroom) or a shore walk for non-divers, to carry out practical coursework. For more details and booking information please contact Gerry Casey on 01923 231575 or gerrycasey.mcs@btinternet.com Booking forms for these courses are downloadable from our website at www.marine-conservation.org.uk

We are also prepared to travel to other locations around the country to run the marine life and ecology courses should it be required. Please contact Gerry Casey for details.



Information about this project including dates and venues for training courses and surveys in 2010 can be found on the following website www.seasearch.org.uk which is regularly updated. The training courses cover the Seasearch Observer and Seasearch Surveyor qualifications with the aim of getting individual divers and dive clubs involved.

At present there are **16 Observer courses** and **6 Surveyor courses** arranged at a number of locations around the country.

There are **8 specialist courses** planned for this year so far including sponges, seaweeds, nudibranchs and fish ID (see the Seasearch website) as well as well as the **6 MCS SE Group specialist courses** at Swanage throughout the summer (see above).

Should you wish to organize a Seasearch course for your dive club then contact Chris Wood on chris@seasearch.org.uk who will put you in touch with a tutor in your area. You can also join in with a course as an individual. If you are on the Seasearch distribution list, information of cancellations and last minute spaces on surveys will be emailed to you.

Seasearch dives are organized at a variety of locations around the UK and details will be found on the Seasearch website. Below are some of those to be found in the south east area:

[Hants and IOW Seasearch](#)

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust run Seasearch courses. They also organizes 'Shoresearch', a project for non divers with an interest in gathering data of marine life found along the seashore as well as Seasearch dives at weekends and week days for those of you near the coast. These include dives around the Isle of Wight. For dates and further information contact Amy Dale on amyd@hwt.org.uk or phone on 01489 774444.

[Dorset Seasearch](#)

Projects here are organized by Kathryn Dawson and Peter Tinsley from Dorset Wildlife Trust in the Kimmeridge Bay area. Contact Kathryn Dawson on kdawson@dorsetwildlife.co.uk or phone on 01305 217979. [Dorset Autumn 2009 Newsletter](#)

Sussex Seasearch

For Sussex Seasearch courses, survey locations and booking, please contact Chris Williams, Natural England on Christian.Williams@naturalengland.org.uk or phone on 0300 060 0324.

Kent Seasearch

The Kent Wildlife Trust organizes a number of Seasearch courses in the Kent area. These include Observer, Surveyor plus some specialist courses. Survey dives follow on throughout the year but are dependant sea conditions and water clarity.

For more details of survey locations and dates please contact Bryony Chapman at bryony.chapman@kentwildlife.org.uk or phone on 01622 662012.

East Anglian Seasearch

The East Anglian Seasearch group is run by Dawn Watson and Rob Spray and can be contacted on divemouse@btinternet.com or phone on 01728 600598. The group runs courses and dives throughout the year. Also visit their website at: [East Anglia Seasearch Website](#)

MCS Members Dives 2010

Last year's dive program covered most of the UK coastline as well as some further a field. Details of these dives can be found on the dedicated website www.mcsuk.org/mcsaction/diverspages/mcs+members+dives This site also includes reports from these dives and will give details of the 2010 schedule.

If you would like details of future dives, booking details and updates via email then simply enter your details on the following mailing list: chris@seasearch.org.uk or phone 07776 142096. Occasionally spaces come up at the last minute and these will be emailed out to everyone.

Other News and Events

The MCS 'Fishonline' website is a follow on from the book 'The Good Fish Guide'. The website is designed to inform people on how to select the most environmentally sustainable species and sources of seafood. It can be accessed on www.fishonline.org

MCS Campaigns

Balloon Releases – Just a reminder that MCS are continuing to campaign against mass balloon releases used for other charitable events. The campaign is called 'Don't Let Go'. Although not against using balloons to promote events, when released, many find there way into the sea where they can be eaten by turtles and sea birds, causing serious injury and death. The amount of balloon debris found around our coasts has tripled in the last ten years. A coloured leaflets and posters with details of this campaign are available from the MCS head office.

Have you seen these Species?

Information on the following species is required:

Have you seen the Carpet Sea Squirt?

The Carpet Sea Squirt (*Didemnum vexillum*) was only confirmed in British waters in 2008. However, there are strong concerns that it will quickly colonise a much wider area as it has been found to do in other countries such as New Zealand and the USA.

Along with other problems, based on current predictions this species could cost mussel farming between £1.3 and £6.8 million over the next ten years. Other impacts include potentially clogging fishing equipment, biofouling boats and smothering native reef habitats. It grows at a phenomenal rate smothering all other native life forms.

It was found in Holyhead Harbour in North Wales in 2008 and more recently in marinas of the Clyde and on the Argyll coast. In March this year it was found at marinas in Gosport, Lymington and Cowes.



Other species to look out for: the **Crawfish**, Any sightings, past and present are required and there is a survey form on the 'Seasearch' website.

Seahorses – The Seasearch project is calling on all divers to look out for and record sightings of all pipefish and seahorses they see on their dives around the UK. In last couple of years there has been a big increase in diver sightings of the snake pipefish and both species of seahorses.

Formerly rarely seen, the snake pipefish has become abundant at certain times of year, especially on North Sea coasts, but unusual numbers of juveniles have been seen in the Atlantic as well. A recording form can be downloaded from the Seasearch website.

Jellyfish: A UK jellyfish survey has been set up by MCS. Survey forms are obtainable from head office as well as an A4, colour identification sheet. Jellyfish are vital food sources to turtles, of which a number of species are being sighted around the British Isles; see 'Basking Sharks and Turtles' below.

Fanshell: MCS are still conducting surveys into sightings of the large Fanshell (*Atrina fragilis*). Location, size, numbers and damage are required. A leaflet is available from head office. The fanshell lives partially buried in soft mud and sand around the coasts of Britain, the Mediterranean and the east Atlantic. These shells, related to mussels and clams, can reach up 480mm in length.

Basking Sharks and Turtles: Very little is known about these magnificent animals, so should you be out and about, on and under British waters during the year, 'Basking Shark and Turtle Watch' Sighting Report Cards are available from MCS, along with a report on the findings so far.

MCS SE Group Contacts

The MCS head office website at www.mcsuk.org will give up to the minute information on events and news in the marine world as well as details of the local groups in the UK.

The South East Group website can be found on www.marine-conservation.org.uk

The South East Group and MCS Head Office now have links on 'Facebook' should you wish to contact other members.

For more information about any of the above please contact Paul Biggin (Chairman SE group) on **01923 662248** or e-mail at paulbiggin2@googlemail.com

Details for the Marine Life courses run by the South East Group can be obtained from Gerry Casey (Course coordinator) at gerrycasey.mcs@btinternet.com

British Society Of Underwater Photographers

For those of you with an interest in underwater photography details of the British Society of Underwater Photographers (BSOUP) can be found at www.bsoup.org They also hold meetings in the Holland Club at Imperial College on the third Wednesday of each month. The evening consists of talks on a number of subjects and a competition of member's photos.