



# Polzeath Marine Conservation Group

## Annual Report

### April 2019-April 2020

The Polzeath Marine Conservation Group (PMCG) is a strong and passionate local group made up of volunteers and related organisations from the area working towards the conservation and improvement of the local marine environment, as well as raising awareness with the wider public of the need for marine conservation in Polzeath. We also support a unique and special Marine Centre set in the heart of Polzeath village, the only independent Marine Centre in Cornwall.

The group primarily supports Polzeath's Voluntary Marine Conservation Area (VMCA) which was launched in 1995 by Cornwall Council. It includes the 'inter-tidal areas' (those exposed at low tide) between Pentire Point and Trebetherick Point, plus it also takes in the splash zone from north of Baby Bay to Pentire Point.

As a voluntary designation, the role of the VMCA is not to impose restrictions, but to engage communities and encourage sensible use of the natural resources in the area. In doing so, the marine environment will be protected for future generations to enjoy.

The VMCA aims are to:

- Protect and conserve
- Raise awareness and increase understanding of the marine environment
- Encourage education and research.

The large numbers of visitors to Polzeath combined with valuable and vulnerable wildlife make this form of education and marine conservation essential for the protection of such an important ecological and economic resource. To achieve our key aims, PMCG carries out a variety of activities including:

- An annual programme of public events and school education visits aimed to engage people of all ages and abilities in the marine environment and the importance of its protection.
- A varied volunteer programme, ranging from training sessions to surveys and socials, to guide volunteers in taking a larger role actively conserving Polzeath's coast and sea, and to support 2 volunteer student Beach rangers
- An active role working with local community groups and conservation issues, such as Your Shore Beach Rangers, National Trust, Polzeath Area Residents' Association and Polzeath Voice, commenting on any planning and consultation applications that may arise, particularly those that require an environmental perspective.

The opening of our Marine Centre to the public, throughout the year, to offer opportunities for the public to learn about marine wildlife and speak directly with the Groups' volunteers about the work that we do.

This report has been made up of written contributions from members of the 2019 committee and our seasonal beach ranger.



## Summary of year 2019/20

In 2019 we engaged with more than **6250** people. We ran **24** published events plus many other ad hoc events, carried out **1** Shoresearch survey, funded **1** boat survey and we took part in **8** training sessions. We had 6 members on the committee, **61** family members, **12** single memberships and **2** business members. We have 58 email contacts on our mailing list and approximately **18** actively involved volunteers; PMCG volunteers also took part in **10** Beachcare beach cleans and we ran **2** Mega beach cleans with National Trust and Keep Britain Tidy/Beachcare, one in April and one in September. More than **4200** volunteer hours were donated in 2019. This year we also independently supported **2** Summer Beach Rangers who joined us from June – September.

### Marine Centre figures

(The comparisons from 2018 do not represent a true picture as 2018's figures were for a 15 month period)

The Marine Centre was open on **135** days (which was **14** days less than 2018), for a total of **732** hours (which was **59** hours less than 2018), and was open for at least 6 hours a day, 7 days a week for the whole of July and August and welcomed **5404** visitors through the door, (which was **1913** more than in 2018).

The Centre supports and is supported by **19 volunteers** of which **5** open the centre regularly and **2 volunteer rangers** who helped us throughout the summer.

### PMCG Volunteers

A massive thank you to all the volunteers with their hugely different life experiences and skills, without whom the Polzeath Marine Conservation Group would not be able to function. They gave a total of more than **4200** voluntary hours in 2019/20 not only staffing the Marine Centre but attending training sessions, conferences and volunteering fairs, maintaining the marine centre, preparing for the next year's events with all the admin that has to go with that, rebuilding the shed which was destroyed in the storms, and beach cleaning.

### Beach Rangers

This year we were able to support 2 university students, Sammy for 12 weeks and Charlie for 6 weeks. As told by the figures the support of these students allows us to engage with so many more of the public and therefore spread the importance of marine conservation.

Having university students is so important to the group as it not only encourages younger people to visit the centre but also increases the volunteer's knowledge and keeps the group up to date with social media, as well as providing an invaluable opportunity for the students.

### The Marine Centre

The marine centre had no planned maintenance this winter after last years renovations, however in the storms in December our equipment store was destroyed so another one was purchased with the insurance money, a base was built and further reinforcement given to the new shed to prevent problems in the future. Thank you to Hugh and Dis for all the work they put into this and to St. Minver Highlands and Lowlands Parish Councils for grants to carry out the work. Also our hugely talented artist Laura decided that the internal walls were looking a bit bare. Not anymore as you can see from the photo.



## Events and Activities

In 2019 the group organised a total of 24 published events including Marine Discovery Day, 2 Mega beach cleans in conjunction with Beachcare, Keep Britain Tidy and National trust, supported the Seaquest public sea watch, and helped with or hosted 8 school visits.

### Rockpool Rambles

There were 13 Rockpool rambles, with the night time ramble having to be cancelled due to bad weather. The total number of visitors taken on the rambles was 461. These rambles as usual were greatly enjoyed by both volunteers and visitors and St. Piran's hermit crabs were found for the first time in Polzeath which is hugely exciting.

### Get Crafty

Get Crafty sessions continued in their usual Wednesday morning slot with the Marine Centre packed out each week often with returning budding artists from the year before to create some outstanding marine based works of art. Thank you to Kathy and Di for masterminding and supervising this hugely popular event.

Beach rangers Sammy and Charlie also held craft sessions at the weekends upcycling plastic bottles into sharks and jellyfish which the children loved.

### Beach and Coastal Events

A group of volunteers trekked out onto The Rumps for the annual Seaquest Sea Watch Survey on Easter Sunday on a beautiful day, all information was recorded and sent back to Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT) for collation.

Each month some of the volunteers joined with Dr Mike Kent to help him with his Seaweed v Limpet survey which will be conducted biannually, and he is also carrying out monthly beach babies and crab surveys, these identify the reproduction of seaweed and is giving us an understanding of the creatures inhabiting the rockpools. Mike is correlating this information and we will display it in the marine centre.

Wadebridge school fundraised to buy us a trommel to sift the sand to remove the ever increasing amount of microplastic. While this has proved a very time consuming activity it has been an excellent educational tool. We have used it on all the school visits and the children have been both shocked and amazed to see the amount of microplastics in what appeared clean sand, we also use it on the monthly beach cleans and ad hoc throughout the summer holidays.

### Talks

We decided to not have any talks this year but have 2 scheduled for 2020.

### Marine Discovery Day

Our biggest annual event once again brought a wonderful sunny, hot day. 21 organisations joined us for a hugely successful day. The beach was packed with visitors as well as gazebos from groups including Cornwall Wildlife Trust and Your Shore Beach Rangers, National Trust, Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust, Fathoms Free, RNLI, British Divers Marine Life Rescue, The Wave Project, Shark Trust, Surfers Against Sewage, Cleaner seas project, RSPB, Bude marine Group, Environment Agency, HM Coastguard, Marine Conservation Society, Helford Marine Conservation Group, One Bag Beach Clean, Marine Biological Association and Newquay Marine Group. The stalls on the beach and the marine centre were busy all day and put on a great selection of educational games and activities with most areas of marine conservation and life covered in a fun way. A massive thank you to all who attended and helped on a day that is so important for us.

## School visits

We welcomed 8 school groups to the Marine Centre this year. The visits usually involve a Rockpool Ramble, tides permitting, litter pick and trommel activity, a quiz, sand sculptures and a visit to the Marine Centre where the mural quiz is always hotly contested, but as we had one visit on July 17th when the beach was already packed with holiday makers it was decided that we would move the visit to Baby Bay which would be quieter. The coach parked in the carpark in New Polzeath and the children used the factices which were clean, dry and fully stocked before walking down to the beach. It was Wadebridge school who have had school visits to the beach in previous years and the lead teacher who has lead these trips before said that from her point of view it was a much better venue. We had another school who had been before come in September who also agreed, so as long as we can obtain the beach owners permission we will do all of our visits there from now on. The volunteers all love helping with these visits and seeing the children so interested in marine conservation

## Boat survey

Polzeath Photo Identification Project (POLPIP) April 2019 – March 2020 Summary - Sarah Millward, POLPIP Co-ordinator

Polzeath Marine Conservation Group (PMCG) collaborates with Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust (CSGRT), Newquay Sea Safaris and Fishing (NSSF) and Cornwall Marine Microplastic Researchers (CMMR) on the POLPIP surveys.

POLPIP is a hugely successful conservation project, leading to large amounts of scientific data on mobile species and habitat use which has contributed to the designation of the Padstow Bay and Surrounds - and the Hartland Point to Tintagel Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) and the Bristol Channel Approaches Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

PMCG funded one survey during the financial year 2019 – 2020. Two surveys were carried out during this period; in the months of April and July. Surveys were scheduled for October 2019 and January 2020; these were rescheduled and subsequently cancelled due to forecast conditions

POLPIP surveys have been made possible by the support of a strong group of dedicated volunteers donating their time and money to the project. From April 2019 to March 2020 over 250 volunteer hours were put into these surveys.

In total 139 seals were recorded during the two surveys of which fourteen were re-identified from the CSGRT ID catalogue. Four new seals were added to the ID catalogue so we can monitor their movements in subsequent surveys. Three observed seals were net entangled.

Amongst other marine wildlife we reported to CWT Seaquest were:

- 30 common dolphins

- 1 unknown dolphin species

- 6 barrel jellyfish and varying sized smacks of other jellyfish including moon jellyfish and blue jellyfish

Detailed analysis of birds and bird nesting ledges was also undertaken each survey by bird expert, Dave Williams for submission to the British Trust for Ornithology.

Ghost fishing gear was consistently observed in birds' nests and on important seal haul out sites. Where possible ghost fishing gear was removed from the sea along the survey transect.

Microplastic trawls were carried out on both POLPIP surveys; the resulting data was fed back to the 5 Gyres Global Trawlshare program via CMMR.

Human activity is also monitored and recorded on each survey. Detailed reports are written for all data collected on each POLPIP survey.

CSGRT are very proud of the POLPIP partnership project with PMCG begun in 2011. POLPIP surveys will continue to run quarterly in 2020, forecasts permitting.

CSGRT are hugely grateful to PMCG for funding surveys and to all volunteer participants who paid towards the cost of future boat surveys. Together we are making a huge contribution towards the conservation of our precious marine environment by gathering the research evidence required to support designation decisions!

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## **Publicity**

The events leaflet was produced by Vickie and distributed far and wide, but we have decided going forward that we won't print the events leaflet in 2020, but will put a copy on the Marine Centre computer, a copy in the Marine Centre window and publish all the events on the website and on social media, as well as a poster of each event in the "A" frame at the end of Coronation Gardens. A massive thank you to Haley for re designing the website, [www.polzeathmarineconservation.com](http://www.polzeathmarineconservation.com), to Mike for informing the press plus local publications and to Sammy, Tina and Vickie for our Facebook page (search Polzeath Marine Conservation Group and Centre) which now has 1506 followers, our Instagram polzeath.marine.group with 857 followers and a Twitter account which we still have yet to master, oh well there's always next year!

## **Donators of funds and time**

Once again we have had a financially successful year which will enable us to continue with our work and support 2 student beach rangers for another year. We especially thank Spar who donated the 5p carrier bag charge to us to help fund the Beach Rangers accommodation for 2020, Polzeath Resident's Area Association for their continued support in helping our students with their expenses and donating a camera so that the aquarium can be streamed on social media, David Atfield for quiz mastering 2 quizzes and Bridge Bistro and Jamie Yoki at Sandbar for hosting them, Barnecutts for supplying refreshments at our events, The National Trust for always being there with spades etc. when we need signs erecting and ground clearing and Cornwall Wildlife Trust and Your Shore Beach Rangers for their support throughout the year with advice, training courses and resources. Although the above organisations support our ongoing projects, it is due to our continued support from annual membership, small public donations and sales of ReFill bottles, books etc. and the ever popular knitted jellyfish from the marine centre that provide the funds for the everyday running of our centre.

## Conclusion

We had another fantastic year in 2019 none of which would have been achievable without our volunteers who gave up literally 100s of hours of their free time whether it be helping with events, staffing the centre, knitting jellyfish, making crafts to sell or generally helping out behind the scenes (I know we are always amazed at how many volunteering hours we give when we try to add it up at the end of the year). Every single one of you is fantastic and truly valued, between us we are a dynamic group of very different people with diverse life skills who can only not help in the education of marine conservation but also to help advise our students in their future careers.

At time of going to print we are in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic which has meant the we have had to turn off the water supply to both the H2O4free units, one on Polzeath Beach and the other by the Padstow to Rock ferry landing on the Rock side. All our events have been cancelled up to the beginning of June and we will post on social media and the website when we can resume these.

Everyone at PMCG sends you and your families best wishes and good health at this difficult time and very much look forward to seeing you as soon as possible.