

**POLZEATH MARINE
CONSERVATION GROUP
ANNUAL REPORT
JANUARY 2018-April 2019**



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
- An active role working with local community groups and conservation issues, such as 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 2018 committee and our seasonal beach ranger.

We thank them all for their dedication and support. Our figures have been taken from daily records taken of event participants and visitors.

Summary of year 2018

In 2018 we engaged with more than **4000** people. We ran **31** events, carried out **1** shore search survey, funded **2** boat surveys and we took part in **4** training sessions. We had **8** members on the committee, **58** family members, **20** single memberships and **2** business members. We have 96 contacts on our mailing list and approximately **21** actively involved volunteers; PMCG volunteers also took part in **10** Beachcare beach cleans and we ran **2** Mega beach cleans with Clean Cornwall and Keep Britain Tidy/Beachcare, one in April and one in September. More than **3777** volunteer hours were donated in 2018. This year we also independently supported **1** Summer Beach Rangers who joined us from July – September.

The Marine Centre

The Marine Centre was open on **149 days** (which was **11 days** less than 2017, for a total of **791 hours** (which was **141 hours** more than 2017). We managed to have the centre open for at least 6 hours a day, 7 days a week for the whole of July and August and welcomed **3541 visitors** through the door, which amazingly was **925** more than in 2017 (probably due to a clicker to count)

The Centre supports and is supported by **19 volunteers** of which **8** open the centre regularly as well as **1 volunteer ranger** who helped us throughout the summer period as part of her university placement.

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 **3777** voluntary hours in the 15-month period not only staffing the Marine Centre but attending training sessions and conferences, working on the educational windbreaks and interpretation board, maintaining the marine centre, preparing for the next year's events with all the admin that has to go with that and the making of the jellyfish rubbish sculpture who is keeping Sharkey company outside the marine centre, designed once again by Laura. A special mention must go to Tina Robinson who has spent the last 2 years researching the possibility of installing a water bottle refill station on Polzeath beach and then fund raising for the purchase and installation. She has been so successful that we were able to install 2 units, 1 in Polzeath and the other in Rock.

Beach Rangers

This year Holly, a marine biology and oceanography student from Plymouth University joined us for part of her placement year. She taught us so much about the anatomy and physiology of the creatures in our Rockpools and managed the day to day life of our aquarium inmates, keeping them to a strict feeding regime and making them feel so secure that the Snakelocks anemone cloned and Clara the crab moulted.

Having a university student 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 placement opportunity for the students.

Events and Activities

In 2018 the group organised a total of 37 published events including Marine Discovery Day, 2 Mega beach cleans in conjunction with Clean Cornwall, Polzeath Beachcare and Keep Britain Tidy, supported the Seaquest Public Sea watch, Cornwall Wildlife Trust with beach visits, and helped with or hosted 5 school visits.

H2O4free and interpretation board

The opening of the 2 units, the 1st at Polzeath opened by Doc Martin actor Joe Absalom, the 2nd at Rock opened by Councillor Carol Mould and MP Scott Mann and the sighting of the long awaited interpretation board were without doubt the highlight of the year. Thank you so much to Tina Robinson for the determination to make her vision of providing free drinking water to all the locals and visitors to Polzeath 24hrs a day a reality, and to Andrew Hucklesby for designing the beautiful interpretation board.

Rockpool Rambles

There were 15 Rockpool rambles, which was 4 more than 2017. The total number of visitors taken on the rambles was 472 which funnily enough was only 5 more than last year, but as the groups were slightly smaller meant the volunteers could spend more time with each group to explain the wonderful creatures in our teeming rockpools.

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.

Ranger Holly also decided this year to add a second craft session on Sundays which were very popular and hopefully we may continue if next summer's rangers are budding artists.

Beach and Coastal Events

It was decided that we would add a weekly sand sculpture competition to our programme during the summer holidays. This had a varied amount of success, but did make the presence of the PMCG known to people who hadn't seen the marine centre, and were very interested about the work we do.

August found a small group of volunteers down on the rockpools participating in the Big Seaweed Search, where all the data recorded is sent to the Marine Conservation Society and then the Natural History Museum. Another group trekked out onto The Rumps for the annual Seaquest Sea Watch Survey where the weather was much better than last year and a large pod of Dolphins was spotted, all information was recorded and sent back to CWT for collation.

In October 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.

Talks

The first talk of the year was from Dr Mike Kent - "Seashore studies beyond rock pool rambles". We had such an informative evening with Mike that some of our volunteers are now involved in his monthly surveys

Richard Peirce came to talk to us about "Nicole, the greatest shark story ever told" and what a story it was. We were absolutely shocked to hear about the shark fin trade and fascinated about Nicole's journey from South Africa to Australia and back.

Andy Hughes' talk "Plastic waste in art- art and advocacy" was a fascinating evening with a forerunner in the plastic pollution issue. How astute he was to foresee the problems that were to come and document them all in his photographs.

Sue Sayer's talk entitled "All at Sea—Seals, Cetaceans, and Seabirds" showed us the harm that marine pollution can cause to our sea creatures and birds. We all left vowing to do more to try and help stop this suffering.

Marine Discovery Day

Our biggest annual event once again brought a wonderful sunny, hot day. 18 organisations joined us for a hugely successful day. The beach was packed with visitors as well as gazebos from groups including Cornwall Wildlife Trust Wildlife Watch and Your Shore Rangers, National Trust, Cornwall Seal Group, Fathoms Free, RNLI, British Divers Marine Live Rescue, The wave Project, Shark Trust, Surfers against sewage, Cleaner seas project, RSPB, Refill Cornwall, Cleaner Bude, Marine Conservation Society. 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 thankyou to all who attended and helped on a day that is so important for us.

School visits

We welcomed 5 school groups to the marine centre this year. The visits usually involve a Rockpool Ramble, tides permitting, litter pick and quiz, sand sculptures and a visit to the Marine Centre where the mural quiz is always hotly contested. The volunteers all love helping with these visits and seeing the children so interested in marine conservation.

Publicity

The events leaflet was produced by Vickie and distributed far and wide. Thank you to all the local businesses who allow us to publicise all our events on their notice boards and in their windows, to Mike for giving them the information to Haley for managing our website www.polzeathmarineconservation.com and to Tina, Vickie and Holly for our Facebook page (search Polzeath Marine Conservation Group and Centre) which now has 1337 followers We also

now have Instagram polzeath.marine.group with 507 followers and a Twitter account which we have yet to master which will defiantly be next summer's rangers challenge!

Boat Surveys

POLPIP January 2018 – March 2019 Summary

By Sarah Millward, POLPIP Co-ordinator

Polzeath Marine Conservation Group (PMCG) collaborates with Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust (CSGRT) and Newquay Sea Safaris and Fishing (NSSF) 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.

During 2016, PMCG and CSGRT worked together to produce a detailed report of all harbour porpoise sightings during POLPIP surveys in support of the designation of proposed SAC in the Bristol Channel Approaches. The site spans the Bristol Channel between the northern coast of Cornwall into Carmarthen Bay in Wales. In February 2019 the Bristol Channel Approaches became a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Tesco Bags of Help Scheme and Patagonia funded POLPIP surveys during this period in 2018/2019. Surveys were carried out quarterly, during the months of January, April, July and October in 2018 as well as in January 2019.

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 January 2018 – March 2019 over 625 volunteer hours were put into these surveys.

In total 541 seals were recorded during the five surveys of which one was identified from the CSGRT ID catalogue. Two seals were added to the ID catalogue so we can monitor their movements in subsequent surveys. Amongst other marine wildlife we reported to CWT Seaquest were:

- 86 Common dolphins
- 24 Harbour porpoise
- 1 Bottlenose dolphin
- 5 unknown dolphin species
- 36 Barrel jellyfish and 250 other 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.

In addition to this, POLPIP surveyors recorded 251 items of ghost fishing gear; ranging in size from less than a metre to more than five metres in length or diameter. Ghost gear was consistently

observed in birds' nests and on important seal haul out sites. Risk ratings were assessed for each piece of ghost fishing gear observed. Where possible ghost fishing gear was removed.

2018 saw the addition of Micro plastic sampling on POLPIP surveys. This began with the 'Babylegs' project instigated by Tina Robinson from PMCG. Babylegs were made from baby tights, plastic containers and other inexpensive and easy to find materials. Babylegs, can be used to trawl for floating marine micro plastics from a boat. Babylegs was a huge success and as a result in

April 2018 Cornwall Marine Micro plastic Researchers (CMMR) were founded. CMMR is a collaborative project between CSGRT, Newquay Marine Group, NSSF, PMCG and St Agnes Marine Conservation Group; co-ordinated by Liz Clark. An application was made and funding was secured to take part in the 5 Gyres Global Trawlshare program (www.5gyres.org) allowing CMMR to obtain a high-speed manta trawl and protocol to participate in the global project and become the first project examining micro plastics systematically and repeatedly across a long transect of the north Cornish coast.

CMMR have been providing research evidence about the extent of micro plastics on the north Cornish coast; investigating the spatial and temporal distribution, quantity and type of micro plastics using regular boat trawls and analysis of materials found. Trawls take place on all three CSGRT boat PIPs in addition to the pilot Babylegs trawls; as well as additional dedicated Trawlshare surveys. This has been a one-year project and the data has been fed into 5 Gyres global dataset 'Global Estimate of Marine Plastic Pollution' and used locally by the participating groups. Following its success CMMR are able to continue this research for a further year. CMMR's Trawlshare project is the only project of its kind on the west of the UK!

Environmental DNA (eDNA) samples were also taken and analysed in a collaborative project with the University of Exeter. Environmental DNA is a relatively new method, where small quantities of sea water (around 1L) are filtered and used to survey for the presence of different marine species that are in or have been in the surrounding area during the previous week.

On each survey, conditions permitting, a Secchi disc was deployed to measure the density of marine phytoplankton and this data was fed back to a database via the Secchi marine phytoplankton app.

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 2019.

We are hugely grateful to PMCG members who sourced funding from the Tesco's Bags of Help scheme to cover the POLPIP survey expenses. 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!

Sue Sayer from CSGRT would like to thank everyone involved in the 2018/19 POLPIP surveys, but particularly Sarah Millward who voluntarily coordinates this scientific research project on behalf of all the partner organisations.

Here's to many more!

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 a student beach ranger for another year.

We especially thank Fusion and Spar who donated the 5p carrier bag charge to us to help fund the interpretation board and the Beach Rangers accommodation for 2019, St. Minver Highlands and Lowlands parish councils, Carol Mould for her community chest grant, Graham Meacher and Aviva, Polzeath residents Area Association and The Fletcher family for their grants to help us improve the outside area of the Marine Centre, to make it safe for hosting larger groups, and to Jules and Adrian Stenning and Tess and Mark Beaumont for helping to paint it. Nathan Outlaw, Padstow Harbour commission, Quinnian Trust, South West Water, Luke and Dingle Ltd and Peter Watson for funding and time given for the installation of the Rock H₂O₄free unit. Andrew Hucklesby for designing the interpretation and H₂O₄free boards, David Atfield for quiz mastering 2 quizzes and Bridge Bistro and Jamie Yoki at Sandbar for hosting them. Your Shore Beach Rangers for helping to fund accommodation for our student beach ranger, Sharps brewery, and Barnecutts for supplying refreshments at our events, Tesco's bags of help and Link magazine for funding a series of educational windbreaks. The Tubestation for hosting our talks and allowing us to use their marquee in inclement weather. The National Trust for always being there with spades etc. when we need signs erecting and ground clearing and Cornwall Wildlife Trust for their support throughout the year.

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. from the marine centre that provide the funds for the everyday running of our centre.

Conclusion

We had a fantastic year in 2018, helped by the lovely weather. The highlight of the year has to be the opening of the 2 H₂O₄free units, but there were many more events that kept all our wonderful volunteers on their toes. Without these volunteers who give literally hundreds of hours of their own time to the group either public facing or quietly in the background none of what we achieve would be possible.

