

Polzeath Marine Conservation Group



polzeath.marine.group



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polzeathmc@gmail.com



www.polzeathmarineconservation.com

Newsletter 2021

Once again we have had to deal with covid restrictions this year, not as strict as last year but we decided that with the huge influx of tourists that we would still keep the marine centre to one family in marine centre to see the aquarium only.

The outside area was as busy as previously with the plaque painting remaining hugely popular and the photo surf board being the background hundreds of holiday photos.

Rockpool rambles were able to return to a more normal format but we restricted the numbers to a maximum of 25 people. This will now become the norm as we feel that this is a much easier sized group to manage, gives the attendees more access to our volunteers and more importantly keeps large groups out of the rockpools which we must remember is the creatures home.

A new activity, beachcombing, was started by volunteer Dis. He and our student ranger Caroline took very small groups to the strandline to see what they could find.

Only one school visit could go ahead but we were delighted to welcome a small group of home schooled children for a marine discovery day and will definitely be offering more of these sessions in the future.

As ever I can't thank my small group of volunteers enough for all the hours they have given of their time to support the group. None of what we achieve would be possible without every single one of them.

Marine centre

Sharky and the jellyfish rubbish sculptures had a bit of a bad time in the storms, so it was decided by master sculpture Laura to dismantle them, rebuild Sharky and make a different sculpture to replace the jellyfish. Dis's crab and star fish and his added photo booth surf board continue to be hugely popular for photo opportunities, especially amongst the adults(!) and they will all be lit up with the rest of the village for Christmas.



Rockpool rambles.

Rockpool rambles returned increasing from single family groups to a group format with a maximum of 25 people over 11 events. This is the way we will continue in the future, even though many families are disappointed as the sessions are always fully booked, (usually weeks ahead with booking on line or via social media the most favoured route), we feel that this is a more ethical way of rockpooling. However we still managed to take 259 people down to the rockpools where we encouraged our visitors to enjoy the rockpools while respecting and protecting the creatures and plants living there. As ever each ramble differed massively depending on amounts of seaweed in the pools and the weather conditions, but overall we seemed to find many more different species than usual but did notice that the sizes of crabs we found very generally smaller than in previous years. This has been reported to the team at Cornwall Wildlife Trust and we will continue to monitor.



Sea lemon-*Archidoris pseudoargus*



Chiton- *Polyplacophora*



Yellow edged polycera-
Polycera quadrilineata



Shore
crab



Star sea squirt-*Botryllus schlosseri*

Morchellium argus

Beachcombing

48 people joined in with our 5 beachcombing events lead by Dis. The strandline in baby bay was searched to see what could be found with the attendees amazed at finds such as mermaids purses— shark and ray egg cases— Sea glass, cuttlefish bones, by the wind sailors and so much more. They were also kept engrossed by Dis's stories of marine animals lives with masses of facts some of which are rather gory! One child managed to do his whole school project on his beachcombing trip and gained an A grade.



By the wind sailor-
Velella velella



Beach cleans

Once again the ocean has returned to the beaches a mass of assorted waste, from whole bottles, cans, fishermen's boxes, and lobster pots to miniscule pieces of plastic and rope. This has kept our volunteers and local beach cleaner's extremely busy every day of the year. As well as this we have had 12 organised beach clean events on the beach which encourages people visiting the area to help in the never ending clean up. Many thanks to Barnecutts for providing pasties and cakes for the litter pickers after the March and September events. This year proved particularly problematic as travel aboard was still difficult, with large groups gathering on the beach nightly and leaving an unimaginable amount of bottles and cans spread around the beach. A special thank you to the groups of holiday makers who helped clean the beach very early each morning. The beach management team is looking into ways that this problem can be dealt with if the increased numbers of 18– 21yr olds return next summer.



Ranger

What a joy it was to have Caroline as our student ranger this year, Her enthusiasm for everything in the marine biological world was totally infectious, be it getting children so excited by the sea and what lives in it, or actually wading into the rockpools fully dressed to return the hermit crab to the big rockpool which we thought would be most suitable even though the tide was coming in! She taught us so much and I hope she found her placement useful. The marine centre has been very quiet and disorganised since she left. We all wish her the best of luck in her final year at university and in her future career.



Aquarium

The aquarium was as popular as ever this year. When we brought the 1st large stones with a Strawberry and Snakelocks anemone up to the aquarium in April we didn't realise that there was a tiny Snakelocks on the underneath of one of the rocks much smaller than a little finger nail. When the aquarium was emptied at the beginning of September the anemone had cloned itself 6 times. It obviously enjoyed its time with us during the summer.

4 cloned Snakelocks

There was also a tiny Yellow ringed sea squirt on the same rock that we didn't even notice for a few weeks



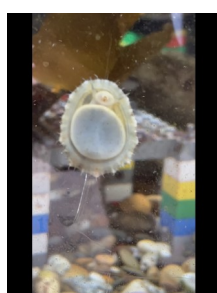
The hermit crabs were as always entertaining, changing shells regularly and popping almost totally out of the shell they were living in to "say hello" to the children. One of the hermit crabs we found was missing most of its legs so we tried to look after him in the marine centre. It did ok for a few days eating a muscle soup but unfortunately died. RIP Henry



Some of the other creatures in the tank spent most of the days eating the algae off the glass which not only helped to keep the tank sparkling clean but also enabled our visitors to see them under their shells which can't be done in the rock pools



Cushion star



Limpet



Chiton



Grey topshell

Surveys

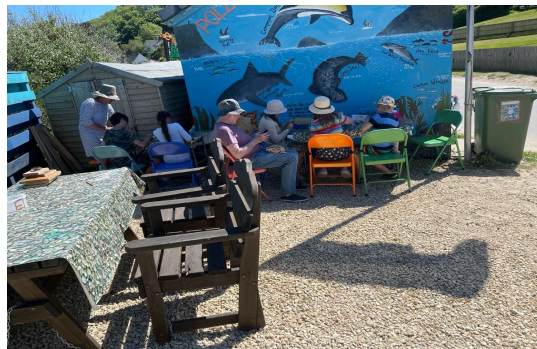
Towards the end of last year we realised that even though we were spending masses of time in the rockpools we weren't actually recording our finds— After discussions and training with Matt Slater and Josh Symes from Cornwall Wildlife Trusts Shoresearch project, we now carry out rocky shore surveys monthly where data is inputted into their new app. If anyone would like to join us on these surveys please let us know. Many thanks to Kathy Alford and Janet Deane for spending many hours inputting the information gathered before the app was up and running.



Plaque and shell painting

Once again we chose to run all our activities from outside the marine centre to keep our volunteers safer from the increasing number of Covid 19 cases. We offered plaque and shell painting daily and this as last year was massively popular with some exceptional paintings by both children and adults. These were displayed on the fence with some of 2020's batch being displayed on totem poles. As more than 400 were painted some will be recycled for next year and some added to the totem poles.

We have been donated a large quantity of scallop shells by Porthilly shellfish. a massive thank you to them, Dis is just finding the best paint to use so that these can be made into Christmas ornaments or mobiles.



2021 Donors and supporters

A massive thank you to everyone who has helped to make 2021 such a successful year, even though we have still been, to a certain extent ruled by the pandemic. Our team of knitters, craft makers and painters have been working frantically all year, so a massive thank you to Jane Marsh, Corrine Tourney, Kathy Alford, Susannah Melvin and Vickie Toland. To our maintenance crew Dis Disbury, Mike Alford, Adrian Stenning and Hugh Toland for the many hours not only spent on general maintenance but also designing new activities for our visitors. The marine centre was opened for a minimum of 6 hours a day 7 days a week throughout the holidays, and 15 events were carried out so thank you to Janet Deane, Jules and Dis Disbury, Tina Robinson, Kathy Alford, Monica Harper, Suzanna Melvin, Jules Stenning, Hugh and Vickie Toland and of course Caroline for enabling us to do this.

The group could obviously not continue without funding and we thank Arnold Clarke Community fund, Local Givings' Magic Little Grants, Cornwall Wildlife Trusts Yourshore project and of course everyone who has supported us by attending our events and by giving donations.

The motley crew

