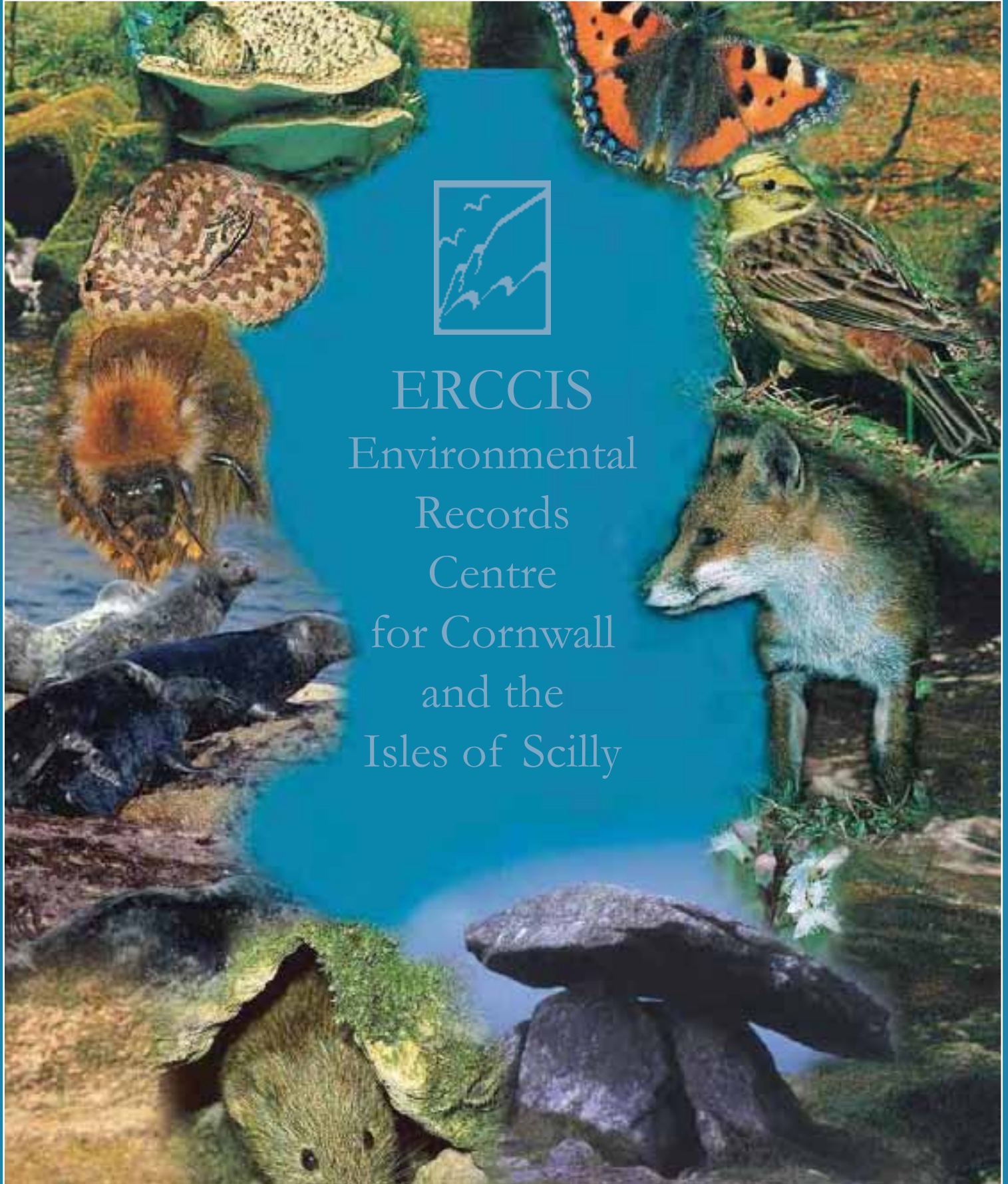


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Newsletter of the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

Spring/Summer 2010



ERCCIS
Environmental
Records
Centre
for Cornwall
and the
Isles of Scilly



Introduction

2010 is already well underway and the first newsletter of the new decade is here. It is ERCCIS' intention to produce a biannual update of things of interest to our partners, stakeholders and the wider recording community. We are

always on the lookout for articles to publish, particularly from authors outside ERCCIS or CWT staff. If you have anything of interest please contact Gary Lewis.



The Last 18 Months

It has been a busy year and there have been a number of developments throughout the organisation. On the staff side, Jo Williams left her post as Data Officer to take up a position in Exeter with Natural England. She has been replaced by Martin Goodall, ex Environment Agency, who started on 5 January. Paul McCartney retired in December 2009; however you cannot keep a good man down and he will continue to work on a short term contract this year.

Project staff increased and we welcome Lisa Rennocks who is with ERCCIS until March 2011 working on an invasives plant project in conjunction with the Environment Agency.

Tamara Weeks is back providing input to County Wildlife Site information; she will be here until July.

Both ERCCIS and CWT are in the process of formulating their strategic development plans for the period 2011-2015. With this in mind, during this year there will be consultation with all strands of the ERCCIS community to ensure that all stakeholders have an opportunity to contribute to our future plans. Initially, there will be a workshop for stakeholders and key CISFBR members on 24th February and this will provide a template for the future direction the Records Centre.



ERCCIS staff

Manager – Gary Lewis

gary@cornwt.demon.co.uk

- Responsible for the strategic development and budget management of ERCCIS
- Recorder support and liaison. Sits on the committee of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Federation of Biological Recorders
- Manages and services the ERCCIS Advisory Board

Data Officer – Martin Goodall

martin@cornwt.demon.co.uk

- Dataset Management/GIS Layer management
- Input of biological records
- Volunteer management and support

Wildlife Information Service (WIS) – Nic Harrison-White

nic@cornwt.demon.co.uk

- Production of desk studies for stakeholders, commercial companies & students
- Manages WIS – provides wildlife information for the public

Assistant WIS – Sue Scott

sues@cornwt.demon.co.uk

- Provides support for Wildlife Information Service
- Organises Workshop/Events programme





Recorder news and data updates

ERICA

ERICA has recently uploaded its 2 millionth record. This is a fantastic achievement and great testimony to the hard work of Colin French and all the dedicated recorders out there. ERCCIS benefits from these records thanks to the continuing agreement for ERICA records to be made available to us.

ERCCIS Records

Thanks to our dedicated group of volunteers, the last outstanding paper records held at ERCCIS have been placed on Recorder 6 and are now being checked for accuracy. Additionally, all new records are being entered as they are received.

Wildlife Information Service

Nic Harrison-White and Sue Scott continue to provide a sterling service; they are supported by 2 hard-working volunteers – John

Rance and Jax Metcalfe – who have taken on the role of dealing with public enquiries. 2009 saw WIS deal with 1509 requests of which 674 were from the public.

ERCCIS Website

Just a reminder to keep looking at the ERCCIS website as new information is added regularly. You can enter an individual record online or attach an electronic copy of your records through the site; these will go directly to the Data Officer who will input them onto Recorder 6.

2010 Workshops

There is a comprehensive range of beginner and advanced workshops planned for this year in conjunction with Duchy College. A full list will be on the ERCCIS website or you can contact Sue Scott on 01872 273939 ex 240 to book a place.





ERCCIS Investigates Invasives - What's in your pond?

Non native invasive species can pose a great threat to the environment and biodiversity. They often displace native wildlife, changing the structure of habitats and can have a substantial ecological and economic impact if they enter the wider environment.

Non native plant species associated with freshwaters are often more vigorous than native species forming dense mats that can choke up natural waterbodies, disrupt water flow, impede drainage systems, increasing the risk of flooding and hindering both amenity and navigational access. Shading caused by dense vegetation can result in deoxygenation of the water leading to the death of aquatic plants and animals. The smallest fragment, inadvertently or knowingly spread, can cause an invasion.

Garden ponds are a potential source of invasive aquatic plants that could invade the countryside.

To tackle this problem ERCCIS is launching Pond Check, a free service to raise awareness of and help the public to identify the worse pond invaders. Pond Check wants to know which invasive non native pond plants are present in garden and local community ponds and offer help and advice on how to manage and safely dispose of them.



Curly waterweed *Lagarosiphon major*



New Zealand pygmy weed *Crassula hlemsii*. Photo: Trevor Renals



Pond Check is targeting six of the most invasive aquatic plants,

Creeping water primrose *Ludwigia peploides/grandiflora/hexapetala*

Floating pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*

Parrot's feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum*

New Zealand pygmy weed *Crassula hlemsii*

Large-flowered waterweed *Egeria densa*

Curly waterweed *Lagarosiphon major*

Unfortunately a number of these species are still on sale in some garden centres, aquarists and DIY stores . Defra are currently considering proposals to ban the sale of certain species to prevent further introductions to the wider environment. In preparation, Pond Check will be engaging with Cornish retailers



Floating pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*



Large-flowered waterweed *Egeria densa*.

Photo: Environment Agency

promoting the sale of alternative native plants and helping them advise on the safe disposal of invasive species.

We are urging everyone who thinks they may have these species to get involved. You may be concerned about your own pond or one in your local community, either way Pond Check wants to hear from you.

If you are unsure which plant you have let us identify it by emailing pondcheck@cornwt.demon.co.uk or texting POND to 60300 with your name postcode and a clear image. You can also download recording forms if you wish to survey a local pond or fill in our online survey form. Find out more by visiting www.erasis.co.uk/projects/investigate_invasives/pondcheck

If you are able to support the project by displaying a poster or leaflets please contact Lisa on (01872) 240777 ex 242.

POND CHECK

protecting our countryside from invasive species.



Creeping water primrose *Ludwigia peploides/grandiflora/hexapetala*. Photo: Trevor Renals



Discodoris rosi. Photo: Angie Gall

Exciting new marine discoveries in the Isles of Scilly

The Isles of Scilly Marine Biodiversity Project has now been running for a year and during this year it has involved a wide variety of people from local fishermen and school children to polychaete worm taxonomists and even a German film crew.



Crawfish. Photo: George Gall

Focussing on the marine Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, surveys have been conducted on the reefs, seagrass beds, tideswept channels and rocky shores around the islands. Surveys are run using a combination of marine experts and local volunteers, ensuring that knowledge is shared and skills are passed on to the community.

There have been a number of exciting species found, some of which have been reported by the public – like a leatherback turtle *Dermochelys coriacea* seen off St Mary's and a curled octopus *Eledone cirrhosa* caught on rod and line. We also had a number of reports of Portuguese man o'war jellyfish *Physalia physalis* during the summer, often found washed up on beaches after windy spells.

On the islands' shores we found large numbers of stalked jellyfish *Lucernariopsis campanulata* which are a Biodiversity Action Plan species. In Tresco channel we came across featherstars



Featherstar. Photo: Colm O'Connor



Flame shell. Photo: Mark Warren

Antedon bifida during a low spring tide, it is very unusual to find them intertidally. We also recorded scarlet and gold star corals *Balanophyllia regia* and Devonshire cup corals *Carophyllia smithii* as well as a wide variety of anemones on our shores.

The undersides of our intertidal boulders are often covered with a mosaic of colourful seasquirts, bryozoans and sponges. One interesting species, the orange peel bryozoan *Turbicellepora magnicostata* is common in Scilly but occurs nowhere else in the UK.



Red blenny. Photo: Mark Warren

Doug Herdson has been working on the project, encouraging local fishermen to send in records or to let us know when they catch something unusual. Meanwhile Paul Semmens has been conducting a marine life survey from the Scillonian, recording cetaceans, basking sharks and sunfish seen from the bridge.

Seasearch divers have surveyed over twenty reefs around the islands, including some very biodiverse sites near the Eastern Isles. Experts in sponges, marine worms and corals have helped to train local and other recreational divers in identifying and



Sunset coral. Photo: Keith Hiscock



Curled octopus. Photo: Ren Hathway

collecting these animals. Dr Claire Goodwin from National Museums Northern Ireland discovered a Southern species of yellow sponge *Axinella flustra* at a reef called Ridge. This species has never before been recorded from Britain or Ireland. Even more excitingly she found another Axinellid sponge which is probably an undescribed species. There are many other sponge samples still to be looked at in the laboratory so it will be interesting to see what else turns up.

Dr Keith Hiscock from the Marine Biological Association of the UK joined in with many of the diving surveys, using his considerable experience of seabed communities in Scilly to help guide the work. He discovered a rare stalked seasquirt *Bolteniopsis prenanti* on the reefs. Dr Hiscock also took genetic samples of sunset corals *Leptopsammia pruvoti* as part of a comparative



Axinella flustra. Photo: Claire Goodwin

study of their populations here and in Brittany. But it was not just the experts who made exciting discoveries during diving surveys, Seasearch divers also found the seaslug *Discodoris rosi* which had only twice been recorded in the UK.

The rare slime sponge *Desmacidon fruticosum* was recorded at a number of sites off St Mary's and the Eastern Isles. Seasearchers also recorded and pressed samples of the non-native red seaweed *Pilea californica* which occurs nowhere else in the UK, it is postulated that it arrived from the Pacific on the underside of flying boats during the Second World War.

The lacy hydroid *Polyplumaria flabellata* is another rare species we recorded for the first time in Scilly this year. We also found a flame shell *Limaria bians*, a species normally associated with forming beds in Scottish sea lochs, under a boulder at the base of a reef. Red blennies *Parablennius ruber* which have probably been under recorded due to confusion with the commoner tompot blenny *Parablennius gattorugine* were photographed on the dives. Crawfish (or Crayfish) *Palinurus elephas*, once a common species in these waters, were seen on a few of the dives.



Rare slime sponge. Photo: Angie Gall

The project is being run by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust and will continue in 2010. It is funded by Defra's Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund and The Crown Estate's Marine Communities Fund. We have produced a waterproof ID guide to selected marine species of the Isles of Scilly. If you would like a free copy please contact Angie Gall: angiegall@IOS-wildlifetrust.org.uk or 01872 240777 ext 243.



Portuguese man o'war. Photo: Angie Gall



Coastal heathland. Photo: Rory Goodall

A Living Landscape in Wild Penwith

Living Landscapes is Cornwall Wildlife Trusts' big plan to work at the landscape scale. Conservation often centres on nature reserves, SSSIs and other areas of quality wildlife habitat, and whilst it is undoubtedly important to protect and preserve these areas, the Living Landscapes concept aims to go a step further, through restoring and re-connecting them. Linking existing habitats is key to allow wildlife to move around the countryside, giving it a better chance to adapt to changes, such as development pressures or climate change. Without such links, habitats become fragmented and populations isolated, making wildlife more vulnerable. People as well as wildlife stand to benefit from Living Landscapes which perform other functions, such as water and carbon storage, making our countryside more robust and resilient and better able to withstand storms or flooding.

Cornwall Wildlife Trust's first Living Landscapes project, Wild Penwith, is a five year programme funded by the Tubney Charitable Trust and Natural England. The project is based in West Penwith, where we will be working to reconnect and restore fragmented habitats from high rough ground and heathland, across the wetlands of the Drift catchment and down to the coast.

We will be working with landowners, the Farming Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and Natural England to encourage positive management and restoration of habitats. Wild Penwith farm visits will provide landowners with advice and guidance

for the sensitive management of their wildlife habitats and help and encourage them to enrol into agri-environment schemes. Agri-environment schemes such as the Higher Level Scheme, are government incentives programmes that provide funds to farmers who farm in an environmentally sensitive way. The schemes run for either five or ten years and can help secure the future of valuable habitats.

Drift Reservoir, in the centre of the project area, is known to be affected by diffuse agricultural pollution; as well as habitat enhancement, the project will also focus on water quality. We will work with the Environment Agency to monitor water quality, and with FWAG to advise farmers on issues such as soil and water management, to enhance watercourse and wetland health. Cornwall Wildlife Trust has a small capital grant available to landowners in the project area for management operations to care for their wildlife habitats. Wild Penwith provides landowners with free soil tests which can flag up potential pollution issues on farms, such as soil compaction or over-use of fertilizers. Such issues are costly to farmers and detrimental to water quality and wildlife; using soil tests to identify these is beneficial for wildlife and farmers alike.

For more information about the Wild Penwith project please contact Liz Cox at the Cornwall Wildlife Trust liz@cornwt.demon.co.uk tel: 01872 273939 ext 209.

Liz Cox, Wild Penwith Project Manager



Coastal heathland. Photo: Alex Howie

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