

In Reserve



Liza Cole, Ranger at the St Abbs & Eyemouth VMR reporting on events at the Reserve

AS I WRITE this piece I am looking forward to my first full season at St Abbs. Starting the job in the middle of the season last year, with the Splash-In looming on the horizon, meant that everything was just a little frantic and I didn't get down to the harbour as much as I would have liked. However, I did get to meet up with a few of you, and am hoping to meet even more of you this year.

For those of you who want to see what I look like so you can spot me at the harbour, take a look at the Diver Profile in last year's July/August edition where there is a glamorous photo of me! But enough pre-amble, what you really want to know is what is happening down here at St Abbs, so here is a brief run down.

The big project for the year, which I am working on at the moment, is the VMR Interpretation Trailer. The idea is rather than having a Visitor Centre that is fixed in one place so people have to come to us, we can take the information to the people. The plan is to get it on the road for June, so look out for it down at the Harbour and other sites in the VMR.

Those of you who have been diving the Reserve for years will know that we have always been keen to encourage you to help us gather information about the area. You will, no doubt, have filled in many a Diver Exit form in your time, and maybe even a Wolf Fish survey form or two in the last couple of years.

So, just to keep you on your toes, we've changed things a bit again this year! Basically we have decided to focus on a few indicator species, some warm water,

some cold water and some that are commercially important. A couple of the warm water species may raise a few quizzical eyebrows, namely the Jewel Anemone and the Yellow Cluster Anemone, both stated in the literature as being mostly restricted to the south and west of Britain.

However, over the years there have been rumours of Jewel Anemones being seen in the VMR, and I have recently seen a photo of Yellow Cluster Anemones reputed to have been taken in the



Reserve. There has been much scepticism about these reports but we do have a finger of the gulf stream that brings warm water species here to St Abbs, and we all know that strange things do happen at sea. So keep your eyes peeled and provide photographic evidence and maybe you can push back the frontiers of modern science!

We are also keen to get more Seasearch recording done in the VMR, so if there are any Seasearchers out there, don't forget that any dive can be a Seasearch dive! If you are not a qualified Seasearcher but are interested in getting involved, then I am hoping to run some training later in the year so please get in touch if you fancy it.

It would be great to get more of you involved in the VMR in lots of ways, after all, the diving community played a huge part in instigating the Reserve in the first place. A 'friends of' group has been talked about for many years now. I would love to know if people would be interested in becoming 'friends' and, if so, what they would think being a friend would mean. Or if you have any other ideas as to how you can become more involved, then please do let me know.

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CREATURE FEATURE

Jewel Anemone,
Corynactis viridis.

Although Jewel Anemones are diminutive in size, each individual only growing to a maximum of 10mm across and 15mm high, they make up for this in number and colour. They come in a huge variety of colours including green, pink, orange, yellow or white & sometimes they are multicoloured.

Each anemone has a ring of stinging tentacles around the mouth (as do all in the phylum *Cnidaria*, which means nettle in latin) to stun and catch food floating past. Jewel Anemones have up to 100 relatively short tentacles with knobs on the end. These knobs look like drops of dew or even jewels, which is where they get their name.

Jewel Anemones grow on rock faces, often vertical ones, and you are unlikely to see a single individual on its own as they grow in large aggregations. This is because they reproduce by dividing longitudinally, budding off clones of themselves which cram in next to their parent.

anemone images courtesy of Jim Greenfield



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image courtesy of Arthur Kingdon