

SHOTLINES



Norwegian Deep Water Treat For MCS Divers

A TEAM of 7 divers from the Marine Conservation Society has just returned from Norway, where they were given the opportunity to dive the only deep water temperate coral reefs that occur within normal diving depths. Here in the UK cold water coral reefs occur at depths or 200 metres or more but in Tondheimsfjord, uniquely, they can be found as shallow as 40 metres.

The reefs are based on the branching colonial coral *Lophelia pertusa*, which is bright white because of the lack of microscopic plants that give tropical corals their colour. In addition to the coral itself, the reefs support a rich population of sponges, sea fans, crabs, squat lobsters and tubeworms. They are also home to a number of fishes including the deep water Norway redfish and the rabbitfish or chimaera, relative of the sharks.

Only 200 or so divers in the world who have seen these cold water reefs, first-hand so the MCS divers were incredibly grateful to be given the opportunity to see them up close. The reefs in Trondheimsfjord are

protected under Norwegian law - in 1999 Norway became the first country to introduce laws to protect these deep sea coral reefs.

The UK protects part of the Darwin Mounds off north-west Scotland where a permanent ban on bottom trawling came into force in August 2004 - the first area to have Europe-wide fishing restrictions imposed. However, like so much of our marine wildlife heritage, these reefs are threatened almost everywhere else they occur by deep water trawling, oil and gas exploration, pipelines and cables; disturbing reports have been heard of tyres being dragged across the coral to break it up and make it easier to trawl.

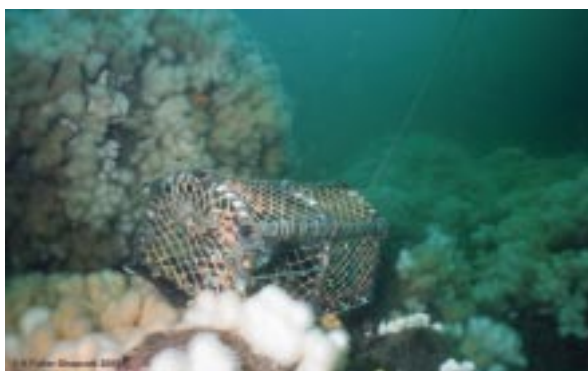
In many ways these cold water reefs are even more threatened than the tropical coral ones which we hear so much more about. They are equally as delicate, grow much more slowly in the cold, dark waters and thou-

sands of years of growth can be destroyed in hours without anybody being aware of it.

In the January/February edition of **SCOTTISH DIVER** we will feature a first hand account from one of the lucky few MCS team members who experienced the reef in Trondheimsfjord.



MCS diver on the Lophelia reef



Damage to lobster pots is putting a strain on relationships between divers and the local community at St Abbs

Splash-In Marred By Slashings

AUGUST BANK Holiday weekend at St Abbs was somewhat marred by the fact that several local fishermen had their lobster pots slashed open by divers. Understandably, they are extremely angry about this wanton vandalism to their property and the effect

that it has on their livelihoods.

Although the damage was the result of the actions of a few individuals, it is putting a strain on the good relationship between the local community and the diving community.

Marine Ranger, Liza Cole, asks for divers to help stamp

out this totally unacceptable behaviour by keeping their eyes open and their ears to the ground.

Please help prevent the actions of a few from spoiling the enjoyment of many by reporting any details to Liza or the Harbour Master.

St Abbs Parking Charges Fury

DIVERS HAVE reacted angrily to premium parking charges at St Abbs, the popular east coast dive destination.

Enthusiastic local diver and regular **SCOTTISH DIVER** contributor Alison Fuller Shapcott is a critic of the high cost of parking in the town:

"It's my opinion, that the charge for parking all day on Saturday, Sunday and Monday in the Scottish Borders Council Car Park at St Abbs must be the most expensive parking outside of central London. After a quick trawl through the internet, I found that it's cheaper to park at Edinburgh Airport for the day than to park on a Saturday at St Abbs harbour. The only other place outside of London that I could find which was more expensive was a 12 hour stay in a car park at Heathrow Airport.

"Being a local diver to St Abbs, I have the advantage of being able to pick my diving times to avoid these punitive charges, but I can see that these charges are not giving

visiting divers a good impression of the area and worse still affecting the trade for the four dive boats that operate out of St Abbs.

"During the August weekend of the Splash-in I canvassed the opinion of visiting divers on the car park charges with a simple petition which is to be handed in to the Scottish Borders Council at the end of the year. The petition registers objections to the charge of £10 with respect to the facilities provided by the council. To my amazement over 100 divers signed it and the support and encouragement I received was overwhelming. Since then another 190 other divers have signed on to it.

"It's not that us divers don't want to pay for parking; all we want is to be treated fairly and charged a fair price for the facilities offered. The toilets at St Abbs are very basic and there are no disabled facilities, yet half a mile along the coast, the surfers and visitors to Coldingham Bay pay nothing



St Abbs - the most expensive car park outside central London?

to park, yet the same council provide much better facilities which include a disabled toilet baby changing facilities and a shower.

"If you or your club would like to add your support to my petition, copies of it and further information can be obtained from myself at alison@1sweethope.fsnet.co.uk

Meanwhile if you are planning to visit St Abbs, can I

urge you to use the Harbour Trust Car Park, which is half the price of the Council Car Park on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, and donation only for the rest of the week. The money raised by the Harbour Trust is much needed and goes back into the upkeep of the harbour, which will ultimately benefit all us divers."

The Good Fish Guide



THE Marine Conservation Society has just launched its latest online guide to buying eco-friendly fish and a handy Pocket Good Fish Guide has also been produced. Both online and in the book you will be able to source information on 150 species of seafood, with revised lists of 'Fish to Eat' with a clearer conscience and 'Fish to Avoid' from unsustainable and damaging fisheries. Now you really won't be confused about what to buy and what not to.

Species that are new on the Fish to Avoid list include: the European Eel as stocks are at an all time low and closure of the fishery is recommended, anchovy from the

Bay of Biscay, langoustine from north and north west Spain and the Portuguese coast; and herring and Greenland halibut from overfished stocks.

Conversely fishermen from the south west are leading the way with several species caught in the area now listed as 'Fish to Eat', including: pilchards or sardines from Cornish waters, fished using a traditional method known as 'ring-netting'; pot-caught crab from waters off Start Point, Devon; and line-caught and tagged pollack and seabass from Cornwall.

New farmed species on the 'Fish to Eat' list include abalone, organically farmed cod, and tilapia. Dawn

Purchase, MCS Mariculture Officer told **SCOTTISH DIVER**: "As with the capture industry, the aquaculture industry is continuing to make progress towards improving its overall environmental performance. MCS aims to highlight those producers within the industry that are leading the way by farming to higher environmental standards".

If you would like to visit the website go to: www.fishonline.org alternatively if you would like a free copy of the MCS Pocket Good Fish Guide then send a SAE to MCS, call 01989 566017, e-mail info@mcsuk.org or download a copy from the website.

Red Tide Danger In North-West

DIVERS IN the North-West coast of Scotland witnessed the effects of a red tide caused by *Karenia Mikimotoi* in August.

Bridie Pursey of Ullapool SAC reports: "It is a dinoflagellate bloom that results in oxygen depletion and death of invertebrates; some finfish may also suffer. It also affected the waters around Orkney this summer.

Bridie has asked divers in Scotland to report any unusual-looking changes on the seabed to the Marine Conservation Society.

IF YOU HAVE A STORY FOR SHOTLINES THEN CALL LOUISE ON 0141 332 3933 or email freetime@tfti.demon.co.uk