

# The Outsider's View

## Seasearch West Coast coordinator Owen Paisley shares the valuable habitats of Loch Fyne with some appreciative continental marine life enthusiasts ...

AFTER AN amazing spring where the sun shone and the sea was calm I'm looking forward to a summer of Seasearch on the west coast. Having a young family at home I need to have a pretty good excuse for heading off into the blue and fortunately an understanding wife and the world wide reputation enjoyed by Seasearch provides the necessary weekend passes. OK world wide reputation might be pushing it a bit but the reputation of Seasearch is spreading well beyond our shores.

Recently I organised some Seasearch diving in upper Loch Fyne looking to increase our knowledge about the abundance and distribution of the rare fireworks anemones. I had the usual group of volunteers coming along, retired forester, social worker, nuclear engineer and government conservationists.

A week before the dive I also received an e-mail from a couple of Dutch divers asking if they could join us. I was a little dubious as I had no experience of Dutch sub-aqua training but they assured me they were used to diving in cold dark water. So I duly sent them the necessary information and arranged to meet at the Oyster Bar car park in Cairndow.

At the carpark it was easy to pick them out their Dutch registered car and a copy of the Seasearch anemone guide on the back seat. Their diving kit was a

little different to the usual west coast stuff. Marco was using a battered but serviceable ABLJ (ask anyone who learned to dive back in the 1980's) and Marianne had a small magnifying glass and very powerful torch attached to her kit.

The first thing they said to me was that they had heard that we normally dived for no more than 40 minutes and would I mind if they stayed in for an hour. Anyone who can stay underwater in Loch Fyne in the early spring for an hour demands respect! Sure enough they stayed in for an hour and came out looking cold but happy having seen at least 10 fireworks anemone and as an added bonus a rare Fries Goby.

Chatting to them afterwards, I discovered that they had dived all over the world but had never seen anything like our fireworks anemone beds. In fact they had made a special journey to Scotland to see, amongst other things, fireworks anemones and maerl.

I've dived in upper Loch Fyne many times and perhaps had become a bit blasé about the anemones. Listening to the enthusiasm of our Dutch friends was quite sobering. We often forget just how special our marine life is and the responsibility we have to the wider diving community to safeguard and protect it. Perhaps the impending Scottish Marine Bill will finally allow us to meet our obligations, bringing protection for Scotland's special areas and halt the relentless decline in marine biodiversity.

As you read, the Scottish Marine Bill will be out for consultation, and should include a lot of what we at the Marine Conservation Society have been lobbying for. I would urge you to respond in support of Nationally Important Marine Areas and other protection measures to ensure future generations can share our enjoyment of these valued places.



Velvet swimming crab and featherstars at St Molio's Bay (Howard Wood)



Spectacular fireworks anemones live up to their name while a spider crab takes shelter (Owen Paisley)



Marion Perutz, Euan Ronald, Alastair Grierson, Brent Harrald and Calum Duncan after diving at Elie in Fife (MCS)

Images overpage:

Left - Howard Wood, Calum Duncan and Sean Ferris after their Seasearch dive at Holy Island, Arran  
(credit Moira Hickey/MCS)

Right - Soft coral, hydroids, bryozoans and black brittlestars at St Molios Bay  
(credit Howard Wood)

## SEASEARCH TRIPS PLANNED FOR 2008

July 5-6 South-eastern Moray Firth  
August 29-31 Wick  
October 3-6 Loch Nevis (full)

For general Seasearch enquiries visit [www.seasearch.org.uk](http://www.seasearch.org.uk) or contact Calum on: 0131 226 6360, email [scotland@mcsuk.org](mailto:scotland@mcsuk.org) or visit.

For more details on Seasearch diving on the west coast contact Owen Paisley on 01546 600209 or [seasearch.west@btinternet.com](mailto:seasearch.west@btinternet.com).

Our northeast Scotland Seasearch coordinator Marion Perutz is on 07745 656978 or [seasearch\\_nescotland@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:seasearch_nescotland@yahoo.co.uk).

See also

- > [www.mcsuk.org](http://www.mcsuk.org)
- > [www.marlin.ac.uk/species/adult\\_distrib\\_Sabellariaspinuspinulosa.htm](http://www.marlin.ac.uk/species/adult_distrib_Sabellariaspinuspinulosa.htm)
- > [www.arrancoast.co.uk](http://www.arrancoast.co.uk)