



# IN RESERVE

## Liza Cole, Ranger at the St Abbs & Eyemouth VMR looks back on 2008 at the Reserve

Ever improving technology means that I can now update the website with great ease from the Rangers' Office so I would love to receive any news and sightings that you have from the Reserve and would like to share with others.

Many of you may think of me as being a lone ranger (cringe!) and literally speaking, as far as the VMR is

concerned, that is the case. However, there is no way that I can carry out all the tasks that need to be done single-handed. I am lucky enough to have the assistance of many people, not least the Rangers for St Abb's Head and various members of the Marine Reserve committee, but each year I also take on a long-term volunteer as a Seasonal Ranger. This year, this took the form of Karen Collins who was fresh out of university and wanting to build up experience in the field of countryside management. The relationship works well, the Reserve gets an extra pair of hands and the volunteer on-the-job training.

Karen helped out in lots of ways, but was particularly keen on the educational side of the job, assisting with sessions with school groups and guided walks with the general public, and helping to man the information trailer when we took it to relevant festivals. It is always difficult to think of new ways to get people engaged with marine conservation, but this year I came up with the idea of an edible boat race, which was a first for Britain (and perhaps the world!). The idea was to promote the VMR and the message that nothing should be put into the sea that would come back to haunt us. I thought it would just be a madcap and rather fun addition to the Eyemouth Herring Queen celebrations, little did I know that people would embrace the idea with such gusto! About 100 people of all ages turned up to launch 40 vessels, all of

which were ingenious and unique in design. There were two film crews and two radio stations covering the event and journalists from all over the world contacted me. Amazing, what publicity, and great fun too! The other big event of the year was the annual Splash In, but you heard all about that in the last issue!

In the autumn months the events tail off but there are still plenty of things to keep me busy. I make the most of the big tides in September to carry out intertidal monitoring on various shores along the length of the Reserve, just to keep a track on what is going on and see if there are any major changes in the marine life. It is also a great time of year to see cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) so I do a bit of sea-watching to monitor these too. Plus, the third Saturday in September is Beachwatch weekend, a national beach clean coordinated by the Marine Conservation Society. I have three beaches that I clean with help from the local community, so that keeps me busy too!

Winter is about planning for the coming year (when everyday chores allow!) – and 2009 is going to be a big one, as the Reserve will be celebrating its Silver Jubilee but more of that later ...

**Liza can be contacted at The Rangers' Office, Northfield, St Abbs, Eyemouth, Berwickshire, TD14 5QF. Tel: (0844) 493 2256. email: lcole@nts.org.uk or at [www.marine-reserve.co.uk](http://www.marine-reserve.co.uk)**

THE YEAR started on a positive note with my contract of employment with the National Trust for Scotland being renewed, securing the Marine Ranger post for another three years. This followed a year or so of writing work plans, project proposals and submitting fund-raising applications – all a million miles from what most people think I do on a day to day basis (ie paddle about in rockpools and hang around the harbour chatting to divers!) but nevertheless, very necessary.

With the post secure, I could get down to work on the projects that I had planned for the year, the first being a complete overhaul of the Reserve website. The idea was to make the most of the stunning images that have been taken over the years by Splash In photographers in order to bring the underwater world to life for those that cannot explore it themselves; and to make sure that there is plenty of downloadable information for people of all ages, with an emphasis on educational materials to engage the younger generations who will be the future guardians of the sea.

Scotland's only Voluntary Marine Reserve would not have a full time Marine Ranger without the generous support of The National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, The Crown Estate and the Esme Fairbairn Foundation.

THE CROWN  
ESTATE

SCOTTISH  
NATURAL  
HERITAGE



the National Trust  
for Scotland  
a place for everyone



Esme  
Fairbairn  
FOUNDATION



*The edible boat race - image courtesy David Devine*

## CREATURE FEATURE

# The Secret Life of the Lobster

THE HUMBLE lobster is a creature that as divers we all tend to take very much for granted as they are ever present and we only tend to comment on them if we see one that is out of the ordinary, of particularly large size for instance. But I was reminded as to how exciting they really are when I came across one in a large rock pool with a group of school children, and they were blown away by the experience. So let's take a closer look into their private lives.

The common lobster belongs to the phylum *Crustacea* (from the latin *crusta* for shell). As the name suggests, it, like other members of the phylum (such as crabs, prawns and shrimps) has a hard shell which it has to moult periodically in order to grow. Most crustaceans are found in the sea, but there are one or two land crustaceans, perhaps the most familiar being the woodlouse.

Lobsters like to live on rocky seabeds and you will find them in holes and

excavated tunnels from the lower shore down to about 60 m depth. A large lobster can grow up to one metre in length, but 50 cm is more common. They are a commercially important species all around Britain.

Lobsters are blue-coloured with off-white spots above and of a yellowish colour below. Lobsters are scavengers, using the pincers on the end of the first pair of walking legs to manipulate food. These pincers are often of unequal size; one being used to cut food, the other for crushing it.

Lobsters are thought to live to over 15 years. They reach sexual maturity at the

age of 6 and then spawning occurs once a year in the summer. After mating, the female carries the eggs on the underside of her abdomen. The eggs look like small black berries, and so a female carrying them is known as being berried. Any berried females caught by fishermen must be returned to the sea.

After 9 months the eggs hatch into planktonic larvae, which settle out of the plankton about 3 weeks after hatching. Young lobsters are not often found, and very little is known of the behaviour of this stage, but it is believed that they live in coarse sediments and fine mud, where they construct burrows.



Common lobster  
(*homarus gammarus*)  
image courtesy Bob  
Soames

Main photo overpage  
Rockpools at Linkim  
Shore - image  
courtesy Liza Cole

# Lochaline Dive Centre

*At the heart of the Sound of Mull*

[www.lochalinedivecentre.co.uk](http://www.lochalinedivecentre.co.uk)

Tel: 01967 421627

E-mail: [lochaline.divecentre@virgin.net](mailto:lochaline.divecentre@virgin.net)

- IANTD technical & PADI diver training facility
- Classic wreck and wall dives in easy reach
- Specialist maritime archaeological courses
- Historic Wreck visits arranged
- O2 compatible air to 300Bar
- Moorings free to residents
- Specialist remote sensing courses
- Sheltered water location - dive in all but the very worst weather
- Comfortable purpose built accommodation for 34
- Pier, hotel bar, shop & restaurant nearby
- Cooked breakfasts & evening meals now available
- Trimix & nitrox blending
- Drying room
- Dive shop
- Launching facilities



Historic Shipwreck of Mull (www.lochalinedivecentre.co.uk)