

THE SHELLFISH NETWORK
NEWSLETTER, Autumn 2007



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My very dear friends, I had hoped that everything would be resolved by the time I wrote this newsletter, but unfortunately it still goes on. We were raided by the police in May along with lots of other innocent AR people, and all our Shellfish info, addresses, etc were taken and we still haven't got them back. To put your minds at rest, we have done nothing wrong, simply gave a home for a few weeks to one of the SHAC prisoners who was out on tag. The prison service came and vetted our home and considered us suitable people to do this, but during the big May raid we were included as we know some of the SHAC people! So that is the story so far. If you know of anyone who would normally receive our newsletter but is not on e-mail, could you possibly make sure they get a copy of this? We are always polite and do not break the law and have even met with various ministers and MPs and gave oral submissions to the Animal Welfare people when discussing the new Act. And we are not asking for the moon, simply to have some of these poor creatures to be included in the Act so that they are given proper welfare considerations. This is obviously extreme stuff!! Oh yes, the last letter should have been 'Summer', but I was not sure if I would be up and running by then as our computer was taken as well.

*Just to let you know that I have also moved home (adds to life's rich tapestry) and the address etc. are above. We are also on broadband now. Yipee!! Julie.



CRABS AND LOBSTERS

A diver wrestled with a 3ft lobster after it attacked him, when he was diving. The creature weighs 10lb 4oz and was near Weymouth jetty, in Dorset. The diver, Chris Hovard, managed to get the 50 year old lobster into a string bag and took him to the Weymouth Sea Life Park, where has gone on display (presumably the lobster, not Chris Hovard! Ed.) Source: *Aberdeen Press & Journal*. 11.7. 07

*A spiny lobster measuring nearly two feet and weighing more than 9lb was caught off the Cornish coast recently. Source: *The Ind*. 19.9. 07

*West coast crab fishermen are concerned after a government decision which allows Irish fishing boats to catch crab in UK waters. The agreement was reached in exchange for a share in Ireland's cod, haddock and plaice quota to supplement producer organisation allocations for 2007. (I wonder who the crabs would prefer to be caught by – Scots or Irish? But I'm sure the cod, haddock etc are delighted. Ed.) Source: *P & J* 6. 4. 07

*Beijing in China is expecting to enjoy a bumper crop of the favourite seasonal delicacy (sic) the hairy crab. Earlier this year it was thought that the crabs had been poisoned by outbreaks of algae on China's lakes, but apparently the breeders say that this year's crops are bigger than ever and safe to eat. The creatures are associated with harmony and prosperity! Source: *The Independent* 15. 9. 07



OCEAN LIFE

It seems that millions of toxic jellyfish have laid siege to the beaches of the Mediterranean from Cannes to the Costa del Sol. The article in *The Ind*.

27. 7. 07 written by John Lichfield and Elizabeth Nash says 'Like dozens of other resorts along the north Mediterranean coast, Cannes is under siege from a monstrous-looking primeval creature from the depths.' The coast is facing a plague of an especially poisonous species of jellyfish, the 'mauve stinger' or *Pelagia noctiluca*. It is luminous at night and its sting can paralyse humans. The reason, some ecological campaigners explain, for the prevalence in jellyfish numbers is the rise in average sea temperatures. Lack of rain has meant a shortage of cold fresh water entering the sea from rivers, which results in warmer, saltier seas that put off larger creatures but is well-suited to these jellyfish. Human sewage, together with fertilisers from intensive farming along the Med. Coast, produce a rich soup of nitrogen and phosphates that the jellyfish also like. There is also the argument that natural jellyfish predators, such as the bluefin tuna and the turtle, have been driven almost to extinction due to overfishing and pollution. Jellyfish are not fish, but a class of marine invertebrates called the Scyphozoans. They start out as simple polyps attached to rocks but develop into floating creatures. There are several kinds: Lion's mane jellyfish, Moon jellyfish, Blue jellyfish and the Portuguese man-of-war among others. Source: *Ind. Extra* 27. 7. 0



*The most unusual fish in Antarctic waters, ice fish are the only vertebrates whose blood entirely lacks haemoglobin, the red oxygen-carrying pigment. They have to compensate for this with other adaptations to low temperatures. They use less energy and have a larger heart which pumps more blood around their bodies. The omnivorous *Odontaster validus*, or red starfish, feeds on another sea star species, the larger *Acodontaster conspicuus*. Some starfish also congregate beneath seals' breathing holes, where they eat their faeces. And the jellyfish *scyphomedusa*, often seen in Antarctic waters, has tentacles that are over 9m long and a body that can grow to over 1m in diameter. Source: *Ind.* 26. 9. 07

*In February, In Defense of Animals reported that the US Defense Department had officially exempted the Navy from compliance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) for the next two years. This enables them to go ahead with sonar training exercises off California's channel Islands and these are a grave threat to whales and other marine mammals. The US Navy planned to ignore the California Coastal Commissions recommendations to protect the creatures from ear-shattering military sonar during war games scheduled to start in August. However, a federal judge in Los Angeles issued a preliminary injunction barring the Navy from carrying out the sonar blasts. US District Judge Marie Cooper also warned that the exercises had the potential to cause widespread damage to nearly 30 species of marine mammals. Whales exposed to high-intensity sonar have been found bleed from the eyes and ears, with lesions to their organ tissue. Marine biologists worry that whales found dying on beaches are only the tip of the iceberg and that many more are dying at sea.

Five environmental organizations filed a lawsuit in March against the Navy and the National Marine Fisheries Service stating the blasts violated the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act in an attempt to halt the exercises. But the Department of Defense exempted the Navy from complying with federal laws due to national security needs. Source *IDA* 15. 8. 07

SCIENCE INFO.

*.Fish and shellfish allergies tend to affect older children and adults. About 2% of the population believe that they have an allergy to fish and shellfish, yet only a few of these are likely to have an immediate-onset allergy. (I can speak from experience. We both got shingles from eating soup from a takeaway that had put crushed shells [chitin] it for flavour! We only found out later, so beware when buying soup from some takeaways!! We were assured it was vegan. Ed.) Source: *Ind* 17. 7. 07

*Deep ocean seafloors have recently been found to support small mineral-rich oases which are thriving with life. Unlike any other known ecosystems, these self-sufficient communities of marine animals survive on energy derived not from the sun but from the earth's interior. It is volcanic energy which makes this life possible, by driving a global

hydrothermal circulation system at spreading centres. These are regions where tectonic forces slowly wrench apart crustal plates. Although scientists first discovered these deep-sea communities in the more active spreading centres of the Pacific Ocean, recently they found an oasis swarming with eyeless shrimp along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. As earth's giant plates separate, magma beneath the crust wells up to fill the gap, spilling onto the seafloor and creating new ocean crust. As it cools in the cold water, the newly formed crust develops cracks and fissures into which cold seawater seeps. Great heat from underlying magma causes the water to leach minerals from surrounding rocks. These build 'chimneys' as high as 50 meters. Proof that such vents occur first came in 1977 380 km northeast of the Galápagos Islands where an astonishing density of life was surrounding the vents. Bunches of two-foot-long tube worms with bright red plumes swayed in the currents, clustered around limpet-encrusted lava vents and a few feet away, foot-long white clams and clumps of yellow-brown mussels filled crevices in the lava. Ghostly white crabs scrambled blindly over rocks, scavenging for food. The reason for their existence is that fluids escaping from undersea vents contain high levels of hydrogen sulfide. Although this gas is toxic to most life, certain bacteria can metabolise it. Some of the higher organisms, such as the tube worms and clams, maintain symbiotic relationships with bacteria that live inside their bodies and provide them with a steady food source. Later it has been discovered that vents differ markedly. At a site called 21°N, giant white clams cover an area the size of a football field. And across the Pacific, snails by the hundreds crowd chimney sides in the Lau basin, near Fiji. But when a vent dies out, so do the animals that depend on it. That such complex biological ecosystems can exist without sunlight raises new questions about the origin of life on earth. Source: *National Geographic Magazine*, June 1992



TESCO

As you will all know, we have been encouraging Tesco to stop selling live turtles and frogs in their Chinese stores. I have been sent an email from their customer services (customer.service@tesco.co.uk) explaining that they are in the process of developing a public awareness campaign to help consumers to understand animal welfare and to give advice on the best treatment of turtles and frogs. They have also identified one species of turtle which is popular with customers and can be killed in a more humane way. They also state that, although they currently have no plans to stop selling live turtles and frogs, they are continually monitoring customer feedback about the issue and that our comments will be taken on board. So politely COMMENT! Quoting TES3834336X Source: *Customer Service email* 30. 7. 07

*A security alert on Saturday, 14 July, closed 14 Tesco stores. Witnesses claimed they had been told of a bomb scare, while reports ranged from a financial motive to threats by animal rights lobbyists. Source: *Ind* 16. 7. 07

INDUSTRY

*Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF) chief executive Bertie Armstrong has said that a trade off between the UK and German government fisheries officials was tantamount to theft. It seems that the deal sees Germany getting 375 tonnes of the UK's annual quota for North Sea prawns. About 1.5% of the UK's total North Sea prawn allowance has been sacrificed in exchange for 150 tonnes of extra quota for North Sea sole. (Sacrificed? A new word for gluttony? Ed.) Source: *P & J* 20. 3. 07

*However, the SFF told a joint hearing of the European Parliament on future maritime policy that 'responsibility and balance are the key ingredients for success' (Hoorah, say the prawns and sole. We are to be responsibly balanced. What on, the end of a fork? Ed.) Source: *P & J* 20. 3. 07

*Fishermen in the Highlands are taking action to stop a vicious predator permanently moving into their waters next year (Oh, goodness, here

come the Sassenachs again!) Well, no, it is in fact the American signal crayfish which is known for eating eggs of trout and salmon and attacking young fish (how dare it!) It was introduced into Britain for commercial farming (well there's a surprise) in the 1970s, but a number escaped into the wild and have begun colonising rivers in England. Charlie Black, a Nairn Angling Association committee member, said 'we are all concerned. They are quite destructive and can ruin a river' Source: *P & J* 26. 12. 06



This is a lobster!

* Eight delegates representing the Danish shellfish-growing industry have been to Shetland on a fact-finding mission to discover best production techniques for growing mussels. (I bet the mussels could show them a thing or two, or at least have fun trying!! Ed.)

Ultimately it is hoped that the two regions will forge a strong relationship that will see both participate in a proposed collaborative project led by North Atlantic Co-operation, NORA, an organisation aimed at improving the framework and conditions for industry, trade and development in the Nordic Atlantic region.

Source: *P & J* 1. 3. 07

* The Order banning dredging for scallops on the Firth of Lorn near Oban was laid before parliament by Ross Finnie, minister for environment and rural development, following advice from conservation groups and Scottish Natural Heritage that dredging would damage rare corals and the seabed ecosystem in the Firth. However, two highland MSPs are attempting to overturn the ban. Source: *P & J* 28. 3. 07

*However, the appeal fell on deaf ears as MSPs voted six to three to ban scallop fishing in the firth. The fishermen are furious. Source: *P & J* 29. 3. 07

*In April of this year Scottish shellfish growers launched a mini-manifesto for the country's politicians to gain more recognition of the industry's potential. The Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers (ASSG) said it needed 'the financial support it deserves' to allow the industry to compete effectively on the international stage. The plea came as new figures showed increasing demand for Scottish shellfish. Source: *P & J* 26. 4. 07



*Seafood Shetland's shellfish businesses have agreed to implement a code of practice that provides guidelines for their industry. The code covers a multitude of issues to guide shellfish growers to work in a sustainable and environmentally friendly (sic) fashion. Chief executive Ruth Henderson said '...Shellfish farmers depend upon clean water and will endeavour to work with other users of the marine environment, public bodies and the wider community to protect and sustain this resource. The document covers many areas, including 'staffing and respect for wildlife'. (Ever seen a tame shellfish? Ed.) Source: *P & J* 30. 3. 07

*Councils who took over the planning responsibilities for the coastal zone in Argyll are planning to raise charges to start a shellfish farm from £400 to £5,100. The farmers are now warning that this could halt any planned expansion of their industry. Source: *P & J* 20. 6. 07

*A new type of prawn trawl developed by the Sea Fish Industry Authority (Seafish) is expected to improve the quality of catch, while at the same time reducing bycatch of white fish. The nephrops sector (our lot) is under increased pressure from conservation groups and European Commission (EC) officials who claim that prawn vessels are responsible for a significant bycatch of endangered species. Source: *P & J* 24. 4. 07

*A company is planning to replace the traditional net coverings of lobster, crab and prawn creels with snap-on plastic panelling. Netting on creels can get damaged and is labour intensive to repair. Stornoway Plastics managing director Gordon MacLennan said ‘...We have replaced the netting with clip-on plastic panels. These are easy to put on and will take around 10 minutes.’ (Wonder how long it will take the lobsters to figure it out? Ed.) Source P & J 10. 5. 07

*And finally, folks, from the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 21. 7. 07 it seems that Scottish shellfish farmers have called on the EC to introduce new health checks for their ‘product’. Current methods of testing are outdated and hampering the industry’s growth, they claim. The Ass. Of Scottish Shellfish Growers (ASSG) argued that shellfish farming was environmentally benign (!) and provided an effective source of nutritious, high-quality seafood which could contribute to improvements in the European diet. (Along with PSP, DSP, MSP and ASP, all forms of shellfish poisoning! Ed.) They add that stricter anti-pollution controls would help the sector.

*By the way, the NIRA Water Adventure Park and tropical biotope is still going ahead as far as I know. I’m not sure if it is too late, but you can try to contact them politely if you are against water zoos! Nirah.Team@bedsoc.gov.uk. Ed.

*On 31 July 07 four people from a Washington County fishing household were hospitalised with symptoms of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) after sharing a meal of mussels. Maine Center for disease Control (Maine CDC sent a health alert to health care providers and is now assisting the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) to determine the source of the mussels and to assure that any harvested shellfish available to the public continue to be safe to eat. PSP is also known as red tide and is a marine biotoxin associated with certain types of algae blooms in coastal waters. Concentrations of the toxin can cause serious illness or death if eaten by humans. The red tide is now classified and given the name *Karenia brevis* or *K.brevis*. 3. 8. 07 (Thanks Bernie for that).

*The Great Barrier Reef may survive a rise in sea temperatures, caused by global warming, better than first thought because some coral algae are more heat-tolerant than was realised, Australian scientists said. Source: *Ind.* 14. 7. 07

* In approving a plan to allow drilling in the Arctic national Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), President Bush has ignored a letter signed by more than 1,000 scientists and resource managers warning of the dire consequences that could result. The drilling would despoil this pristine habitat, home to numerous animals, from polar and grizzly bears, wolves and caribou to more than 130 species of birds. A single oil spill would be a disaster of epic proportions for animals such as migratory whales and other marine mammals who thrive in the waters there. Source: *In Defense of Animals eNews* 25. 7. 07

*However, great news, The National Resources Defence Council (NRDC) has informed me firstly that a federal court has temporarily blocked the Shell oil company from drilling wells this summer off the coast of the ANWR. And secondly at NRDC’s request, a federal judge has stepped in and blocked the Navy use of the sonar. They add, ‘these twin victories are very important steps forward in our campaign to thwart the Bush administration’s ongoing assault on America’s wildlife and wild places. Thanks to NRDC 9. 8. 07

*Sadly, on the 8th August, the baiji, a species of freshwater dolphin found only in the Yangtze river in China, was declared extinct. The last sighting was in 2002 and an intensive six-week search of the river in December failed to find any more. Source: *Ind* 9. 8. 07

*Australian scientists have identified a massive underwater current they say is the missing link in a ‘global conveyor belt’ that connects the world’s oceans and regulates climate around the planet. The current is a component of the ‘engine room’ of the global climate system. The current is called the Tasman Outflow and is found at a depth of 2,600 to 3,300 ft. Source: *Ind.* 16. 8. 07

*According to an article in *The Ind.* 13. 9. 07, thousands of species are sliding towards extinction and that includes marine creatures such as the Banggai cardinalfish (*Pterapogon*

kauderni) which is over-exploited in Indonesia for the aquarium trade. 1 in 3 of them are threatened. The main threats to these species are the effects of the El Niño warm water phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean, and climate change.

*Thames Water had admitted that it was responsible for killing thousands of fish in the River Wandle. Officers visiting the site discovered dead chub, barbell and eels as a result of the pollution and say that they are fully expecting that species of invertebrates and plant life have also been affected. Source: *Ind. 22. 9. 07*

*Pipes hanging in the ocean might bring global warming under control say Prof. James Lovelock and Dr Chris Rapley. By mixing deeper water with surface water, they could help the sea absorb vastly more carbon dioxide, the principal greenhouse gas. They add 'we can't cure the planet but we might be able to make it go in reverse.' (The article is long, interesting but very scientific but if anyone wants a copy do let me know. Ed.) Source: *Ind. 27. 9. 07*



FISH

*The EC says undeclared over-fishing is causing a decline in fish stocks and has banned the fishing of the endangered bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean for the rest of the year. 20. 9. 07 (Thanks to Debbie for that.)

*Basking sharks which visit the British coast to feed off plankton are threatened by an upsurge in sightseers. The Marine Conservation Society (MCS) is calling for 'highly protected' marine reserves to be set up along the British coastline to help save the sharks. So far one shark was reported to have died after being caught in nets, and another had two fins sliced off by a speedboat propeller. Source: *Ind 10. 9. 07*

*In a letter to the *Sidmouth Herald*, 3. 8. 07, a reader shows her concern that the Environment Agency is actively encouraging angling by offering free fishing lessons. She says 'My partner and I find the spectacle of needless

suffering being inflicted on our marine wildlife in the name of 'sport' quite distressing, and we are far from alone in this view.' She adds that she is not suggesting that anglers are deliberately cruel, but because fish make no sound it is assumed they feel no pain. (She is most certainly not alone in this view – leave beaches for swimming and building sandcastles as she suggests. Ed.)

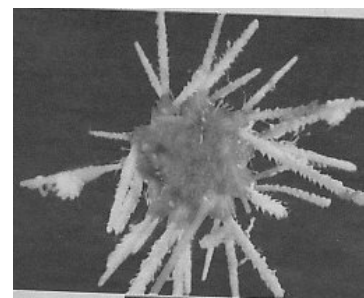
NEAR AND FAR

Seagrass, sea weeds, coral weed
And the flowers of the sea
Harbour the life
And poisons obscene
Humans expiring and never freed.

Vital plankton, the microscopic plants
Still mysteries in a mysterious underworld
Shellfish most varied
Sponges and worms
Inhabitants living, sea life of their own.

And as the tides rise and flow
And the planets so far
Must know a life that is theirs
Must gain a rights from hostilities that cruelly
Mar

John Amsden



Antarctic Creature

Keep the info coming in. Stay well and thanks for all your support.

Julie