

MarBEF Communications & Outreach

Outreach needs you!

By Róisín Nash

The coming twelve months will be very important for the MarBEF network, with all the RMPS up and running and results starting to flow in. It will undoubtedly be one of MarBEF's most productive years, and the Outreach office expects to be kept busy. With so much happening, it is difficult for us to keep track of everything and we rely upon MarBEF members to provide us with information on what they are doing. So, let us begin with an open invitation to all members and associate members to provide us with news of meetings, conferences, research projects and other initiatives so that we can forward them to the rest of the MarBEF community and the world.

Likewise, if you are running a marine biodiversity outreach event, or even considering such an event, please contact us here at outreach@marbef.org for our help and support.

Your press releases... where are they?

We have a press office that is currently under-used! Each week, we read on the news bulletin about new research papers being released in top international scientific journals, and yet the authors don't believe that their results are newsworthy! Where the press office has been used, it has been successful. For example, one press release, "Marine biology meets information technology: a new era in marine biology begins," has scored 1,555 hits on the website to date!

We now need to start to project our results beyond the MarBEF realm and Europe and to announce our results internationally. I am going to actively contact researchers once they have published, if I see any potential for further dissemination of their work in a press release – so be warned! However, if I overlook

something which you think is worthy of a press release, then be sure and contact me.

With the press office in mind, I have identified a communications course which I think would best suit members of our network – SciConnect Ltd. This two-day training course covers communication in a broad range of contexts, from writing popular articles and giving broadcast media interviews to preparing public lectures and using new media such as blogging and podcasting. This course may be of particular interest to those who have put their name forward as a media contact for their RMP. Anyone who is interested in attending such a course can email me at outreach@marbef.org and once we have a sufficient number we can arrange an appropriate date for the course.

Progress

So, what have we been up to since our last newsletter, you may ask? To start with, we presented our six-month outreach plan at the third general assembly in Lecce, where a conference-style meeting was held. This meeting was a great success, much of which can be attributed to the organising committee.

Posters

We are working on two series of posters, both of which will be available to download from the outreach web pages. The first series is a set of six A1-size posters to promote the MarBEF network. This series will be added to as new results become available. The older posters will continue to be updated.

The second series is a selection of educational posters covering all aspects of marine biodiversity. These posters will be A3 size, reducing the cost of printing/reproduction, for schools and education centres. This series is in its infancy and will continue to be built upon with time. If you have any specific needs for posters, please e-mail me and I will offer all the help I can.

Competition

We have launched a marine biodiversity competition, which is advertised in this issue (see page 24). We are distributing this advertisement through a number of networks, including the European network of science centres and museums, and aquaria. We have sent flyers to Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, Ireland, England and Denmark. Once we receive translations of the advert, we will extend our distribution to all European countries. Many of you have children; please ask them to take a copy of the advert to their teachers and encourage them to participate.

We have extended the kids pages on the website to include more puzzles and interactive pages with downloadable pictures, etc, and a basic section on marine creatures. We are also involved in a week of talks to schoolchildren on marine biodiversity for Science Week at the SeaLife aquarium in Bray, Co Dublin, Ireland, in conjunction with Sarah Varian from Marine Dimensions.

Reviews

The completion of the European marine biodiversity website review and the European school curriculum, both on their final drafts, will help us to do a gap analysis study on what areas of marine biodiversity are most lacking on the internet. It will also help us to guide the structure of the content of the educational outreach pages to be most beneficial to its users. This winter will see us focus on the education section on the website and forging new collaborations with several organisations, including MarLIN, Hermes and the Census of Marine Life (CoML). We have arranged a meeting to discuss developing educational projects and outreach materials which may be complementary to all involved.

Presentations

Outreach has been busy attending a number of scientific conferences to promote the network, including the First European Conference on Conservation Biology in Eger, Hungary; the European Marine Biological Society meeting in Cork, Ireland; and the Baltic Sea and European Marine Strategy – Linking Science and Policy meeting in Helsinki, Finland. More information on all these conferences can be found in the 'Out and About with MarBEF' section.

In 2007, Outreach will be attending educational events in Europe to promote the new education section of MarBEF. We are also planning an outreach event in Poland prior to the GA in May. 2007 is International Polar Year and the Outreach team will begin its promotion of MarBEF in Norway, where Tromsø is hosting the Arctic Frontiers conference.

If you or your institution are involved in organising a conference or an educational event in 2007, where you would like to see MarBEF members present, please remember to



MarBEF booth at Helsinki (see report, page 41).

enter information on your events calendar on the website <http://www.marbef.org/modules.php?name=Calendar>. By the time you receive this newsletter you will be able to download a two-sided A4 brochure on MarBEF, which can be printed in either colour or black and white, to use at your event or events which you will be attending to help to further promote the network.

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Communication culture

Last year, the press release 'Marine biology meets information technology: a new era in marine biology begins' was released. The authors discuss the initiation of change in science culture. Also, at the science communication conference in London last July, the organisers were encouraging participants to change the culture of science communication. While discussing research culture, it was highlighted that there was a need to engage younger scientists in outreach activities and to involve communication in research training.

Taking this on board, we are trying to encourage younger scientists within MarBEF to improve their communication skills for non-specialist audiences, and to develop their 'outreach' potential. Thus, we are giving them an opportunity to write an article in 'popular' English on their current research.

You will find within this issue a number of articles from current PhD students. We would further encourage articles from young scientists, both for the newsletter and the website. The Outreach office will be available to help where possible.

I am looking for people to review books for our newsletter. Currently we have two books being reviewed for our Spring 2007 newsletter (*Aquatic Food Webs* and *Respiration in Aquatic Ecosystems*). If you would be interested in reviewing books, please forward an e-mail with your area of expertise and I will add your name to my reference list.

Updates to our programme and events are posted regularly on the MarBEF website, but please feel free to contact us directly at outreach@marbef.org.

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MARBEF PROGRESS

MarBEF Training & Integration

Short-term sabbaticals

A call for applications from MarBEF members and associate members

By Jens Harder

The Scientific Steering Committee of MarBEF decided at its October 2006 meeting to support short-term sabbaticals from the central budget.

What is a short-term sabbatical?

A short-term sabbatical is a visit of a person (technician, student, postdoc or scientist) from one MarBEF institute to a second MarBEF institute for a period of two weeks to three months. Short-term sabbaticals are a MarBEF initiative to support integration in Europe. Detailed guidelines are available on <http://www.marbef.org/modules.php?name=Rules>. MarBEF members can use their institutional MarBEF account for short-term sabbaticals.

Why has the Scientific Steering Committee decided to support short-term sabbaticals from the central budget?

The action integrates MarBEF associate members.

Who can apply for a short-term sabbatical grant?

Persons from MarBEF institutes and MarBEF associated institutes.

How do I apply for a short-term sabbatical support from the central budget?

Write an application according to the MarBEF rules and guidelines (<http://www.marbef.org/modules.php?name=Rules>), including the financial request, and add a support letter from the hosting institution. Send the application to Jens Harder (marbef@mpi-bremen.de) and a copy to the management office (marbef@nioo.knaw.nl).

Deadlines for applications are December 31, 2006; March 31, 2007; June 30, 2007;

September 03, 2007; December 31, 2007; and March 31, 2008. Applications will be reviewed by a small committee of MarBEF members and the results will be announced one month after each deadline.

Short-term sabbaticals have to be performed till December 31, 2008. Reports on the short-term sabbaticals have to be sent to Jens Harder within four weeks of completion of the sabbatical.

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