

MarBEF Communications & Outreach

By **Róisín Nash**

FOR THOSE OF YOU who may not be aware, there has been a change in the communications & outreach officer for MarBEF. Olive Heffernan has left to further her career as an associate editor with *Marine Scientist* and we would like to take this opportunity to wish her the very best of luck. I have recently taken up her position with MarBEF, and so, as you can imagine and understand, I am catching up with a project that is expanding at a rate of knots, not only with new associated members but also with regard to the amount of results being produced each month. I would just like to run through where we are with regard to outreach at the moment, and where we are going in the next few months.

All of the outreach material available on the web has been updated to include all our new associate members, and we are also working on producing new posters and presentations for your use. If you have any specific needs, please send me an email at the usual address (outreach@marbef.org).

Over the coming weeks, our outreach site will develop, with additions to all sections. I will be contacting some of you for material, particularly those involved in the RMP projects, the aim being to prepare a page on each aspect of biodiversity being researched under this programme.

We will be following up on a request for translation of the school curricula from a number of countries in the next few weeks in order to complete our review of the European school curricula. This is a vital component in our educational outreach section where we can assess what is currently being done and where we can potentially introduce marine biodiversity education at both primary and secondary level throughout Europe. It is extremely important to encourage future generations to take an interest in their environment from a very young age, and, as education is a continual process, it is important to both nourish and maintain this level of enthusiasm throughout their schooling years and beyond.

MarBEF is progressing rapidly and the time has now come to establish a working press office. In order to create an efficient and operational press office, we need to co-ordinate with all the working research groups within MarBEF. Currently we are creating a list of 'experts' within their field from all the MarBEF participants. This will be updated in the near future via the website Register of Resources (RoR). This involves

members filling out an expertise form, which simply identifies their field of expertise and whether they would be interested in being a media/outreach contact point for their area. A number of members already filled out these forms at the Manuela kick-off workshop.

Each RMP will also have one contact who will act as a media/outreach liaison. This will involve feeding information from the project to the communications & outreach officer and, when necessary, handling media enquiries or providing information for media relations should the need arise.

The press office will provide assistance to RMP contacts with writing or editing press releases. In order to assist in developing each media contact, we will look into organising a two-day media-training course for scientists within the coming year.

The main aim of our press office will be to distribute press releases to as many target audiences as possible. Therefore, we have registered MarBEF with the International Press Centre Biodiversity Research (IPCB) (<http://www.biodiversityresearch.net/>) whose main goal is to offer a portal on biodiversity research news to the international press community. The site will offer the latest news related to biodiversity research, press releases on recent findings, background documents on important biodiversity research issues and links to important information sources on biodiversity. We will use this site to promote key MarBEF-specific news, events and press releases. We would like to propose that we carry out this task from the outreach office and that items for inclusion are sent to us first. This way, we will avoid duplication of effort and relieve you of the effort of visiting the site. We will also scan the MarBEF site for appropriate events that can be copied to the IPCB site. We would like to suggest that you use this service for your own institute's press releases, events and news items on biodiversity research. Subscription is free!

Some of you will also be aware of an International Day for Biological Diversity, announced by the UN for the 22nd of May 2006. Although the topic for the day is the "Protection of biodiversity in drylands" (a challenging subject for marine biologists to cover), we feel that MarBEF should definitely be active on this date. Watch the



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A diligent participant at the Porifera training course.

website and newsletter alerts for any MarBEF activities planned for this event in the coming weeks. There will be a number of posters and other outreach material available to download from the outreach site, highlighting this occasion. All suggestions and ideas can be forwarded to outreach@marbef.org.

Another date for your diary is the 41st European Marine Biology Symposium, 4-8th September 2006, which will be held in University College Cork, Ireland. The theme this year is "Challenges to Marine Ecosystems." This symposium aims to encourage a wider interest in marine biology and an awareness of the need for the proper management of European seas and coasts among politicians, managers, industrialists, environmental planners and the general public. MarBEF has been granted permission to host an exhibition booth at this symposium, and this is a perfect opportunity to publicise the progress MarBEF has achieved in the last two years among the scientific community.

• Updates to our programme and events are posted regularly on the MarBEF website. Or contact us directly at outreach@marbef.org.

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