

MARBEF outreach and publishing activities

By Chris Emblow

COMMUNICATING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE is a difficult task. Sharing findings, if not data, between scientists is relatively well developed. But we should not be limited to communicating within the scientific community. It is a waste and foolish not to raise interest in the work and ideas we spend so much time in developing to as wide an audience as possible.

More and more scientific work is being carried out in order to answer specific questions raised by policy-makers and environmental managers. Completing the research is not enough – communicating the results to those who need it to make decisions, and perhaps provide more funding, is vital.

Increasing the general public's awareness of marine biodiversity issues, particularly those not directly affecting them, takes time. Unfortunately, experiences are generally limited, through the media, to pollution incidents, e.g., the *Prestige* disaster; to broader international issues, e.g., threats to coral reefs; to articles where high-profile species are at the centre of the story, e.g., the "march of the invasive giant spider crabs," or if the issues can



Marine biodiversity open days attract a lot of public attention.

be seen to directly affect livelihoods, e.g., overfishing resulting in area closures and loss of jobs. These stories are interesting because they are visual and to a certain extent shocking. Little publicity is afforded to the general marine biodiversity issues and consequently public awareness is limited; this needs to be corrected.

One of the most effective ways of communicating marine biodiversity science is through formal education. Young people are very capable of absorbing and communicating their ideas and ultimately developing an awareness and 'ownership' of marine biodiversity. However, how much marine biodiversity science is taught in schools and colleges?

The objective of this component of MARBEF is to firstly develop a high-profile image of the network and co-ordinate all publication and outreach activities. Make MARBEF a household name. Secondly, we will provide tools which partners can use to promote and communicate their work to the general public, end-users, students and schoolchildren, scientists, industry, etc.

Such tools include e-conferences and mailing lists allowing stakeholders, end-users and other interested parties to interact with the network. This direct contact will allow feedback on the strategies and direction of the project at regular intervals throughout the course of the programme. We will actively focus on providing a platform and an e-conference for interaction between MARBEF scientists and SMEs from sectors such as aquaculture, fisheries, instrument-building, environmental impact assessment, chemical products, etc.

Firstly, we will produce a strategy document outlining how to provide a structured approach to disseminating information from the network. We will facilitate communication between network participants and the wider scientific and non-scientific community. This is

partly done through the website, a review of existing web-based material carried out, but also through the production of full-colour multi-lingual brochures outlining the objectives and strategy behind MARBEF and a series of full-colour branded newsletters. (This is the first.) If you wish to present an article, please contact the author, Chris Emblow.

In addition, we will examine the extent to which marine biodiversity is formally taught in Europe. A thorough review of the European school curriculum will be made. We will provide web-based material promoting the MARBEF network and marine biodiversity issues and topics to the broader public, college students and schoolchildren, ultimately producing a range of full-colour posters and display material for distribution at conferences and workshops, outlining the aims of the network and key issues in European marine biodiversity schools, museums and aquaria.

Oceanografica exhibition: the Canaria por una Costa Viva project.



Finally, with the co-operation of local groups, aquaria marine biodiversity roadshows will be organised by the outreach officer, with school and college visits and poster displays in museums, aquaria and at local marine biodiversity days.

One of the initial tasks is to list who is currently involved in outreach activities in Europe. This includes educational officers, teachers, local nature groups, NGOs, members of the press and press officers. If you would like to be kept informed or wish to be involved, this might range from just having a website link to your outreach webpage on the MARBEF site, providing an article for the newsletter, or potentially hosting a MARBEF roadshow. Please contact Chris Emblow (cemblow@ecoserve.ie) and we will place you on the outreach register. ●

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Publications

First MARBEF scientific paper published

Geoff Boxshall

The first scientific paper published under the MARBEF banner graced the pages of the *Nature* issue for 27 May 2004 (Volume 429: 403-407). A team of collaborators led by MARBEF co-chair, Dr Adrianna Ianora from the Stazione Zoologica 'Anton Dohrn' in Naples, investigated aldehyde suppression of copepod recruitment in blooms of the ubiquitous planktonic diatom *Skeletonema costatum*. They found that development was arrested in all *Calanus helgolandicus* larvae in which both mothers and their larvae were fed on the diatom, and that this teratogenic effect was elicited by aldehydes activated by crushing of the algal cell. This insidious mechanism, which does not deter the herbivore from feeding but impairs its recruitment, will restrain cohort size of the next generation.

Well done, Adrianna – really excellent work and a great example for the rest of us.

P.S. – Please, will all MARBEF partners remember to let us have the details of all publications under the MARBEF banner.

MARBEF website

www.marbef.org

By Ward Appeltans

THE NEW MARBEF SITE WAS officially launched on 30 April. Since then, we have had an average of about 100 visitors a day looking at approximately 10 pages per visit (one visit is counted on the basis of the visitor's IP address; a second visit by the same person, or PC, will only be counted after one hour). The website is a great success in terms of hits and therefore has become the most important tool for disseminating information. In this respect, the site forms the virtual link within the network.

The site continuously gets new updating information. Regularly checking the home page, the events page and the forum for recent news is recommended. However, we cannot expect everyone to check the entire site for new items, so we send out a 'MARBEF web news' email once a week. That email, in fact, does not only contain web news but is also used to announce important news to the MARBEF community. The info@marbef.org address is used for these mailings. Messages that are sent to this address are not automatically forwarded to the MARBEF mailing list. Depending on the information, the webmaster will add the information to the news items on the homepage or include a short paragraph in the weekly email. When urgent, such as with sharp deadlines, the message can be mailed separately. Requests or questions on anything that is related, even indirectly, to the working of MARBEF must be posted on the forum. This request forum has already been used for some important queries such as MARBEF questionnaires, for asking collaboration within responsive mode projects or for giving input to protocols. This forum is very important for the networking and for carrying out the commitments and deliverables within the project.

The forum is also used for electronic conferences. We had our first e-conference on 3-14 May 2004 on the Taxonomic Clearing System. There are several other e-conferences planned. The organisers should get in touch with the data management team of VLIZ some adequate time in advance to set up the forum and announce the event.



Events (meetings, workshops, e-conferences, training courses and others) can be added to the website via a submission form which is located at the bottom of the event page. The events are moderated and released by the webmaster. In the case of MARBEF-supported events – events that require funding or reimbursement from MARBEF – the project management team at NIOO will check and release the event on the website.

After the event has taken place, the documents (reports, minutes, presentations, list of participants) will be available on the same page as the event announcement. In that case the page can be found in the 'past events' section.

To be able to post messages on the forum, to add an event to the website or to get access to restricted pages, you need to be logged on with a user account. Everyone can create an account from the website. After submitting the account request you will receive an email with a link to confirm your user name and password.

The Register of Resources (RoR) will be a major information system within the network. The purpose of RoR is to create a marine biodiversity library by integrating literature, person information and contact details, information on datasets, etc. For now, it includes person and affiliation details from the partners, some relevant publications, and information on expertise that partners can contribute to the different research themes. The information has been extracted from the Description of Work document and from the theme questionnaires. There are currently 390 people recorded in the register, but there are definitely more to add, so we would like to ask those to send us their full contact details. If you have corrections, please send them to info@marbef.org.

All the documents, such as project proposals, report deliverables, protocols, presentations and press reports, are downloadable from 'Documents' in the menu. Besides documents, also links, vacancies and pictures can be added to the website by mailing the information to info@marbef.org. ●

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