



# Exe Press

Newsletter of the EXE Estuary Partnership

ISSUE 19 • WINTER 2009/10

## How Well Do You Know the Exe's Winter Visitors?

See Page 2 for Answers



### ***In this issue:***

***Exe Estuary Forum Event Details***

***New Matford Nature Reserve***

***Your Estuary Knowledge Needed***

***New Marine Act to Protect Our Seas***

***Launch of New Educational Resource***

# Festive Greetings from the Exe Estuary Partnership Forum Chair's Comments

It's been another busy year on the Exe that has seen many achievements, events and developments. The Partnership has been busy working on a wide variety of projects throughout the year, such as the disturbance study, as well as representing the Exe's communities and interests at Local and National policy meetings.

We are proud to list a few of our achievements from 2009 below. If you would like to find out more about the work of the Exe Estuary Partnership and how you can get involved please visit our website at [www.exe-estuary.org.uk](http://www.exe-estuary.org.uk)

- This year heralded our first ever Exe Estuary Festival, an event to celebrate and showcase all that the Exe has to offer. The event was very well supported and will be developed further for next year's festival in Dawlish Warren.
- This year we trialled our Newsletter as a quarterly edition rather than biannual to improve the relevance and frequency of information available. I am pleased to announce that this has proved very popular and we will therefore continue with quarterly editions next year.
- More than 70 hours of education were delivered on the Exmouth Local Nature Reserve to more than 2,000 pupils from local schools.
- Our Clean up events continue to be a great success with the evidence of our efforts clear to see
- Our Exe Explorer leaflet continues to be one of the most popular leaflets in local Tourist Information Centres providing up to date information about all of the cycle ways, footpaths, ferry services and public transport routes around the Exe.

We plan to continue our good work into 2010 with a new year of educational sessions, volunteer events, forums and festivals to look forward to. We wouldn't be able to do this without the support and advice of all of our partners and in particular the Partnership's Chairman; Councillor Bernard Hughes OBE.

The work of the Partnership is delivered through our enthusiastic and capable Estuary Officer, Jenny Lockett. If you have any queries or concerns about the Exe or would like to contribute to the work of the Partnership then she will be happy to hear from you at the contact details below.

Our very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year  
Neil Downes, Forum Chair, on behalf of the Exe Estuary Partnership

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## New What's About Spotters Tool Available

If you enjoy wildlife spotting on the Exe then share your sightings with others by adding them to the Exe Estuary website. It is quick and easy and you can add your images as well. Any unusual sightings will be shown in the next edition of the newsletter along with a summary of what has been seen on the Exe.

## How Well Did You Do?

Front cover birds from left to right are:

- Black tailed Godwit by John Anderson
- Redshank by Andy Hay ([rspb-images.com](http://rspb-images.com))
- Avocet by Mike Tuckett, [www.miketuckett.com](http://www.miketuckett.com)
- Brent Goose by Chris Gomersall ([rspb-images.com](http://rspb-images.com))
- Lapwing by Andy Hay ([rspb-images.com](http://rspb-images.com))

- Teal by Sue Tranter ([rspb-images.com](http://rspb-images.com))
- Wigeon by Sue Tranter ([rspb-images.com](http://rspb-images.com))
- Background Image: Stone Circle by Pauline Dyer, [www.movingnature.co.uk](http://www.movingnature.co.uk)

# Topsham Primary School goes international with the RSPB



Children at Topsham Primary School have been sharing experiences of their local wildlife and culture with pupils in Iceland and Ireland thanks to an exciting project involving staff from the RSPB's Exe Estuary reserves.

The children have been learning about the inspiring tales and remarkable travels of the black-tailed godwit. These elegant long-legged wading birds are superbly adapted to feeding on the muddy shores of the Exe estuary, but migrate each spring to Iceland where they breed.

With the help of the RSPB's wildlife hide at Bowling Green Marsh, the children have been lucky enough to see godwits at close quarters, learning about what they feed on during the winter, and the importance of the estuary and its neighbouring habitats to their ongoing survival. But it is the godwits annual migration that has opened up an exciting new learning experience for the children.

Each spring, the black-tailed godwits head far to the north to breed in Iceland. A few godwits have had coloured rings placed on their legs, so that they can be easily tracked during this difficult migration. It transpires that many of these birds use sites in Iceland, Ireland and the Exe Estuary, so Topsham School has now been invited to join the International Godwit Project, a very special honour. The children are now communicating with their Icelandic and Irish school friends, comparing notes on "their" godwits, as well as finding out about the weather, what they eat, wear and do in their spare time.

This novel project has linked young people across different cultures, which all have godwits in common, and Topsham School and the RSPB are looking forward to comparing notes throughout the winter.

You too can follow the progress of the project using the following link:

<http://www.scoiliosaefnaofa.com/Godwit.htm>

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# New RSPB Matford nature reserve in the making.

Say Matford and most people think of the sprawling business estate, but for the last few years, the RSPB has been creating a new nature reserve here - and you can now visit it! Sandwiched between industrial units and the ring road, RSPB Matford is a small but important remnant of the wetland that once covered most of this area.

Exciting new works have been undertaken there this autumn. Large machines have been put to work to reinstate and enhance old ditches and water features, linking up areas and creating shallow gradients and scrapes. This will not only encourage more wetland wildlife but has provided an opportunity to make it better for people too.

A new viewing platform has been installed, providing excellent, slightly raised views over the newly created wet features. The platform links to the cycle track across the reserve, which in itself is a spur off the main route 2, the Exe Estuary Trail. We've put up a new information panel and soon there will be benches too.



We've got lots more improvements planned, so why not call in and have a look? Matford is already attracting lots of wildlife - as winter progresses, wigeon and teal numbers build, shoveler and gadwall can often be seen, as can godwits and sandpipers. And as spring approaches, we will be listening out for the football-rattle call of the garganey, a very special little duck that we hope will soon breed here.

Many thanks to Rok, from who we lease the land, and to Devon County Council for part funding this work and enabling us to transform RSPB Matford into what is now becoming a rather special place.

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# Olympic Flair at the Exe Regatta

The River Exe Regatta is run jointly by the four sailing clubs on the Exe: Exe Sailing Club, Lympstone Sailing Club, Starcross Yacht Club and Topsham Sailing Club. Each year one of the clubs takes the lead in organising the event and hosting the social events. The 2009 event was hosted by Exe Sailing Club over the weekend of 27th and 28th June.

The 98 dinghies and 16 yachts were rewarded on the Saturday by a strong sea breeze, sunshine and some playful waves. Sunday's conditions were not quite as sparkling but there was enough breeze to complete a full race programme.

On the Saturday, competitors were treated to an exhibition of high speed sailing by Stevie Morrison and Ben Rhodes, racing their 49er at home for the first time since last year's Olympics.

For the cruisers this year's regatta entailed a return race from the mouth of the Exe to Torquay, for which there were 16 entries in two fleets. Sailors revelled in brisk conditions and headwinds of up to 18 knots on the outbound race, but the race home on Sunday was a much quieter affair.

The younger children met at Exe SC on Saturday morning to be set a challenge involving the transport of a fox, a chicken and a bag of corn, using a fleet of Toppers rigged for paddling.

Twenty windsurfers enjoyed some excellent racing in the "duckpond", organised by Peter Manfield of Waterfront Sports. The competitors ranged in experience from near beginner to expert, including Marie Buchanan, a close contender for the Team GBR place at the last Olympics.

For the first time this year the regatta included an offshore fishing contest, organised by Exmouth Deep Sea Fishing Club and Starcross Fishing and Cruising Club. Thirty six competitors and eighteen boats entered the event, which started at 7am on Saturday. The winning fish was a ballan wrasse of 3lbs 15.6oz, with second and third places both lesser spotted dogfish.

Prizes were presented after tea on the Sunday at Exe SC by Exmouth's Deputy Mayor, Sandra Sutton. The Regatta was kindly supported by Exmouth Town Council, Penny's Estate Agents, Sailsport and All Gadgets Marine as well as the many local firms who advertised in the brochure. Remaining funds will help to train sailors from all of the River Exe clubs.

Next year's regatta, the tenth anniversary, will be hosted by Topsham SC over the weekend 3rd and 4th July.

Full results and pictures can be seen on the regatta website at [www.river-exe-regatta.org.uk](http://www.river-exe-regatta.org.uk).



Martin Minter sailing single-handed in his yacht "Fist Sight"



Stevie Morrison and Ben Rhodes (49er) flying their Olympic spinnaker

# All aboard! Launch of a new educational resource bringing the undersea world into the classroom

East Devon District Council launched its latest educational resource for schools in October with a premier screening of the film "Think Deep" which preempts the film's distribution to all schools in the South West free of charge.

"Think Deep" is an East Devon District Council collaborative project with Exmouth Community College and Natural England produced by local media production company Pangaea TV, and looks to bring the undersea world of the South West into the classroom. Principals of consumption and sustainability, to be taught in the Key Stage 3 Geography Science and Citizenship curricula are illustrated by local business case studies.

The film is presented by three Exmouth Community College students and stars local celebrity chef Michael Caines, who sets the students a challenge to find out more about where the fish they eat comes from. During this challenge the students visit Beer crab fisherman Kim Aplin, Exmouth mussel farmer Myles Blood Smyth and local fishmonger Dave Kurley.

Double Michelin awarded chef Michael Caines explains his motivation for appearing in the film: "The South West lands some of the best seafood in Europe, and I am keen to support projects which



encourage young people to take a more active interest in local food and sustainability."

The film opens with a mini-documentary of the Devon undersea world, which has been described as East Devon's little "Blue Planet". From watching this documentary the students are inspired to find out more about the fish they eat, and meet up with Michael Caines as they search the local food scene. Through the discovery of local fishing practices, the three main principals of sustainability are touched upon and the film provides real life examples of how fishing businesses are currently exhibiting best practice.

The film benefited from use of stunning underwater footage made available by Natural England, filmed by Blue Planet cameraman Doug Anderson.

"Using underwater photography, filmed in high-definition, of animals living just off our local beaches made all the difference to the final film. It added the gloss to the documentary to make it stand out as a lavish professional film, which discerning teenage audiences have come to expect from media production," explained James Chubb, East Devon District Council Education Ranger (07734568985).

## Exe Shellfish Runners-up in Prestigious Food Awards

Our very own Exmouth Mussels, the largest commercial fishery on the Exe, were nominated for the hotly contested Best Food Producer category of the BBC Radio 4 Food & Farming Awards. Although they didn't win the top prize it is still a credit to their hard work and sustainable approach to have been nominated and short-listed for the award and helps to raise the profile of the Exe Estuary.

The awards, that celebrate the people and organisations behind the best of British food, are nominated by BBC audiences and judged by food critics. The nomination came as a complete surprise to Myles and Lisa, the husband and wife team behind Exmouth Mussels, who were thrilled to have been nominated but remain curious as to who their sponsor was.

Mussels, clams, oysters and cockles are all

farmed on the Exe Estuary by the team of 12 who rent land from Lord Devon. Myles added "We have a strong sustainable farming ethos and work hard to ensure that our practices don't interfere with nature but where possible actually benefit it, such as by spreading mussel seed. We work closely with Devon Sea Fisheries and Natural England, the relevant monitoring bodies, to ensure that our practices are as sustainable as possible, as well as the Exe Estuary Management Partnership to guarantee that our role on the estuary fits with the overall management of the site. They help to raise awareness about our practices and to keep us informed about new policies that may affect us."

The hard-working team operates all year round and in all weather conditions and instead of using traditional dredging techniques they employ more eco-friendly practices by way of a self-fluidising elevator

which uses water to displace clams and mussels from their muddy beds with minimal impact to the overall habitat. Having fed all year on the plankton-rich waters of the River Exe the mussels are at their finest from about mid-June, remaining in this excellent condition until the spawning season in the spring.

"Shellfish from Exmouth Mussels can be eaten with the added pleasure of knowing that these totally organic products are being sustainably farmed by people with an equal passion for food and the environment," said Myles Blood Smyth.

You can find out more about Exmouth Mussels at the Exe Forum on Thursday 28th January 2010 as well as at the Exe Festival next summer when you will have a chance to sample some of the culinary delights farmed on the Exe.



## REGIONAL AND NATIONAL MARITIME NEWS

### **Brought to you by the Devon Maritime Forum**

#### **Marine and Coastal Access Act**

The Marine and Coastal Access Bill received Royal Assent on 12th November 2009 making the UK the first country in the world to successfully introduce a single piece of legislation to protect the marine environment. The Act will create a new marine planning system designed to bring together the conservation, social and economic needs of our seas. This will aim to create a network of Marine Conservation Zones, establish a new Marine Management Organisation (MMO), and create a single coastal footpath around England.

For more information and a link to the Marine and Coastal Access Act visit: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/legislation/index.htm>

#### **Consultation on marine plan areas for English Inshore and English Offshore Marine Regions**

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) will have responsibility for preparing marine plans in the English inshore and offshore marine regions. The Government has opened a public consultation to help identify the appropriate boundaries to divide the regions into plan areas and invites your views through the consultation document available at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/marine-plan/index.htm>

Closing date: 16 February 2010.

#### **Finding Sanctuary**

Finding Sanctuary are giving stakeholders the opportunity to have input into the development of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ). Devon Maritime Forum is currently facilitating a MCZ County Group, ensuring that the wide range of sectors in Devon will be involved in the project. If the outcomes of this project could affect you and you would like to help shape the network of MCZs, you are invited to share your knowledge and views at:

[www.finding-sanctuary.org](http://www.finding-sanctuary.org)

#### **Devon Maritime Forum**

The Devon Maritime Forum meeting at Saunton Sands Hotel on the 4th November 2009 resulted in another successful and engaging event, focussing on marine planning as the major driving force behind the implementation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act. Through workshops, members identified some valid gaps in marine planning and coastal management in which the Devon Maritime Forum might best be placed to address. Future projects related to this meeting will be updated on the DMF website.

The next Forum meeting will be held next spring.

Visit the DMF website for Maritime related news and more information from the autumn Forum meeting: [www.devonmaritimeforum.org](http://www.devonmaritimeforum.org)

**Stephanie Clark**  
Acting Devon Maritime Forum Coordinator  
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## A Collaborative Approach benefits Local Schools

Stuart Line Cruises has seen a boom in bookings from local schools and education groups thanks to joining forces with Jenny Lockett of the Exe Estuary Partnership and James Chubb of East Devon District Council.

By working together these three education providers have been able to offer schools the opportunity to combine an interactive learning experience on the Estuary with an informative cruise on the River.

“This approach works perfectly as education provision on the estuary itself is limited by the tide and tends to only allow for a 3 to 4 hour session. By working with Stuart Line Cruises we have been able to offer school groups a much broader experience and beat the tide to create a full day of activities, which is often much easier for the schools to arrange.”

“Our sessions touch on the geography and history of the area but largely focus on the ecology of the site where as the cruises are a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the geography and heritage while seeing it for themselves”, said Jenny Lockett

“Doing something is the best way to learn” commented a pupil from Brixington School. The school were able to take full advantage of the sessions available combining an estuary session with a cruise on four occasions during the summer term allowing the majority of the school to participate and benefit from this educational experience.

“We think the combination of time on and by the water makes for a fantastic educational day for the children” said Ian Stuart. “What better way to ensure the future of the Exe Estuary than to educate the next generation about it?”

To find out more about educational sessions available on the Exe please contact Jenny, James or Helen.

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**Helen Newton, Stuart Line Cruises**  
Tel: 01395 222144

## Finding Sanctuary for Marine Activities and Wildlife

### What areas of the Sea are Important to you and your club / activity?

Whether you are a boater, water sport enthusiast, a member of a club or have a marine related business the Finding Sanctuary project is encouraging you to tell them which areas of sea around the south-west are important to you

In November this year, the new Marine and Coastal Access Act became law. Amongst other things, the Act will introduce new protected areas called Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). These MCZs will aim to protect marine animals, plants, and habitats around the coasts and seas of England, by managing how we use particular parts of the sea.

Boating is one of the activities that could be restricted within MCZs in certain ways, which may in turn affect some activities. Therefore it's important you have the opportunity to have your say on where MCZs should be located around the south-west region. Exeter-based project, Finding Sanctuary, has been set up to help you to do just this. Through working with local sea users to understand how different groups use the sea, the project will ensure MCZs in the south-west are planned in a way that minimises conflicts with human uses and at the same time meet the country's conservation goals.

Finding Sanctuary are conducting face to face mapping interviews with sea users throughout the region to record your knowledge of your local area, information on which areas of sea you use, and any

concerns you may have. By sharing your knowledge and information with Finding Sanctuary, you are ensuring that your interests can be taken into account.

To find out more or arrange an interview or a presentation about Finding Sanctuary for your club / organisation please call Beth Henshall.

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## Economic reality hits home for Exmouth Visitor Centre Project

Following a series of disappointments the Exmouth Visitor Centre project has received another funding blow after the announcement that it has not been successful in securing £1 million worth of funding from CABE's Sea Change programme.

Tracey Guiry, East Devon VC Project Development Manager, said: “We are obviously disappointed that for a combination of reasons our joint bids (the Exmouth bid was linked with a similar one for Seaton) were not successful, especially after the withdrawal of SWRDA funding earlier this year. It's clear that times are getting tougher and we cannot rely on Government funding for projects such as these.”

However, the passion and determination of the Visitor Centre Trust, the local group helping to drive the vision, and the Visitor Centre Board, which includes relevant local organisations such as East Devon District Council and Exmouth Town Council, has not diminished.

Tracey added: “Fortunately, we do have a ‘Plan B’ so we are not feeling completely at a loss despite the bad news. Thanks to funding from Devon County Council a slightly more modest building can still go ahead, with a very strong local flavour at Mamhead Slipway and it is hoped that the visitor experience would be associated with boat trips run in partnership with Stuart Line Cruises.”

“The good news is that we have a strong business association with the Carter family who are willing to work with us to create something which will still be interesting and a first step on the road to a visitor centre. It is planned to see this in place before the 2011 Summer Season begins so it is an exciting next step and from disappointment springs determination to achieve”,

John Wokersien of Town Council added, “Plan B - will not only deliver the Mamhead 'Taster' Experience - fore runner to the longer term vision to establish the Exmouth Visitor Centre on the Imperial Recreation Ground - but continue to identify other funding sources.”

David Conway, Chair of the EVC Trust says. “The Exmouth Visitor Centre Trust's Programme of Events continues unchanged with a view to the future - and with enthusiasm and commitment completely undiminished by the disappointing news. This Programme, to demonstrate some of the themes that will be experienced in the Exmouth Visitor Centre when complete, is proving very successful, with the latest presentation by Dr Lynsey McColl on Climate Change and Biodiversity being extremely well-received.

For more information of these free and informative events please visit the Exmouth Visitor Centre website at [www.exmouthvisitorcentre.co.uk](http://www.exmouthvisitorcentre.co.uk) or contact **David Conway 01395 264520** or **Rod Lawrence 01884 34135**.

# YOUR KNOWLEDGE, YOUR EXPERIENCE AND YOUR VIEWS ARE WANTED!

Through this winter, and much of next year, there is a study taking place to explore how people and wildlife use the estuary. While much of the work involves long (and often damp) hours counting birds and recording their behaviour, a crucial part of the work will be understanding how different activities take place across the estuary. The study therefore includes counts of people and talking to different types of users.

With so many different activities taking place, both on the water and the shore, it is a hard task to try and collate why people tend to go to particular areas for particular activities. But it is just as important for us to understand why and how people use the estuary as it is for us to understand why and how birds do, as well as the interaction between the two.

Therefore we are asking for you to share your knowledge, experience and views of the Exe with us and make sure that your activity / club has a voice!

**Its as easy as 1,2,3....**

After you've been out on the estuary; walking, cycling, canoeing, sailing, windsurfing or any other activity, just visit our website at

[www.exe-estuary.org](http://www.exe-estuary.org) and fill in a diary form about your trip, such as where you started, where you went and what the weather conditions were like. And its all confidential, we don't even need your name!

To find out more and discuss other ways that you can help please contact either Jenny Lockett or Durwyn Liley (contact details below). Jenny and Durwyn are keen to find volunteers who would be prepared to provide more detailed information relating to their time on the water.

Teignbridge District Council is also keen to learn about how you enjoy Dawlish Warren whether for walking, bird watching, picnics or any other activities. To complete a short survey please visit: <http://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=11846>

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## The Exe Estuary Forum

### Your Free and Informative Opportunity to find out about:

- **The Impacts of New Marine Legislation for the Exe's Communities and Businesses**
- **Planning the Exe, the Shoreline Management Plan and Forthcoming Exe Strategy**
- **The Role of Fisheries within the Exe**
- **The Exe Disturbance Study**
- **Progress of Turbine Trial in the Exe**
- **And much more.....**

Book your place for this year's Exe Forum to find out about some of the key issues affecting the estuary, local businesses, clubs and communities. With new legislation, studies and monitoring to tell you about, this year's event is shaping up to be a jam packed session of information, policy guidance and most importantly a chance for you to feed in to studies and policies that will affect you, your business / club / community as well as ask questions and raise concerns with the people delivering this work.

To book your free place email or call Jenny on the contact details below. Places are available on a first come first served basis so book early to avoid disappointment. Where possible please limit representation of one club or organisation to 3 people to ensure an equal opportunity for all of the local businesses and clubs around the Exe to attend.

Date: **Thursday 28th January 2010**

Time: **6.30pm till 9.30pm**

Venue: **Coaver club, County Hall, Exeter**

#### Draft Agenda

Slight changes may need to be made as plans are still being formed. The final agenda will be available on the website from 14th December or on request when booking your place. Some speakers are still to be confirmed

**6.30 Arrival, refreshments available. Information panels on display and an opportunity to see new Educational Film; Think Deep! Created by EDDC**

**6.55 Final admittance – Please note doors are locked at 6.55**

**7.00 Introduction: Neil Downes, Forum Chair**

**7.10 Marine and Coastal Act, How it May Affect You: Jim Masters, Devon Maritime Forum**

**7.20 Finding Sanctuary and the need to add your knowledge: Beth Henshall, Finding Sanctuary**

**7.30 Questions to Jim and Beth**

**7.40 SMP and the Exe Strategy: Graeme Smith, TDC (EA presenter tbc)**

**7.50 Questions to Graeme and EA representative**

**8.00 Disturbance Study: Durwyn Liley, Footprint Ecology**

**8.10 Workshops**

**8.45 Reconvene Soapbox sessions**

**8.50 Progress of Turbine trial on the Exe**

**8.55 The role of Fisheries on the Exe - Devon Sea Fisheries**

**9.00 Case study: Exmouth Mussels**

**9.05 Monitoring the Exe's fish**

**9.10 Questions to soapbox presenters**

**9.30 Close**