

ERT Helping to Save Puffins

Some time ago, the upper echelons of Channel 4 put their heads together to create an unbelievably fantastic new television series. Hence, after hours of discussions and endless cups of tea, 'Wild Thing, I Love You' was born. Focussing on practical aspects of conservation around the British Isles, the inconspicuous, though massively important, island of Craigleith soon came to their attention.

At the turn of the century approximately 25 000 pairs of puffins were known to be nesting on this rock in the Firth of Forth. Actually, burrowing really. However, a recent explosion in the amount of tree mallow has caused these iconic birds a slight housekeeping problem. Tree mallow (*Lavatera arborea*), can stand taller than a full grown adult, and has strikingly beautiful pink-purple flowers. Trouble is, the poor wee puffins don't care for it too much, as the roots invade their burrows and make rearing young somewhat difficult, if not impossible. Due to this, puffin numbers on the island have plummeted since 2000. Beginning this year, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, together with the Scottish Seabird Centre, have set about ridding the island of this invasive species.

As soon as the decision was taken to shoot the programme on Craigleith, the powers that be thought to themselves "Right. We simply *must* get ERT (Scotland) Ltd involved in this somehow". Early on two chilly September mornings, staff members found themselves surrounded by cameras, waiting at North Berwick harbour for a boat to ferry them the short distance to Craigleith. When the island was eventually reached, and after a long, hard morning standing around drinking coffee, the order was given: "Work with a purpose". ERT staff members, alongside lesser stars of the show, tore through the tree mallow like a whirlwind through, well, through tree mallow. By teatime the work was done, the heroic and, by this time, tired volunteers were able to stand back, admire the destruction and think, "I did that".

A job well done!

Matt McCabe

For more information on the Tree Mallow project visit:

<http://www.ceh.ac.uk/treemallow/management/index.html>



Craigleith Island - busy with the mallow (Inset)



"Wow that's the biggest mallow I've ever seen!"



*A well deserved rest
(from left) Matt McCabe, Jacco Veenboer, Gregor McNiven,
Elinor McKenzie and Matt Dalkin*

ERT Wins Contract to Explore Irish Sea Offshore Rocky Reef Habitat

As part of the work to identify and locate draft Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for UK offshore waters, the location and extent of areas of possible Annex I habitat has been identified by JNCC. To date the JNCC has advised UK Government that eight of these areas should be designated as SACs. From the original list of Areas of Search (AoS) for Annex I habitat, there remain up to 21 areas to be assessed against the SAC selection criteria, but for which JNCC has insufficient or no data to enable such an assessment.

ERT has won one of two research contracts let by JNCC in 2006 to map the distribution, extent and quality of seabed habitats within the Irish Sea AoS. To provide the best possible service to JNCC, ERT has combined specialist expertise from the National Oceanographic Centre (NOC), Southampton and our own in-house survey team working from the University Marine Biological Station Millport's (UMBSM) research vessel *Aora*.

Survey work is due to be carried out in November with analysis and reporting scheduled for early 2007.

ERT has carried out habitat and biotope mapping surveys for UK national conservation agencies in coastal SACs, and has led, participated in, or advised on various offshore surveys relating to Annex 1 habitats at proposed sites of marine development.

ERT at NMBAQC 2007 Taxonomic Workshop

ERT biologists, Peter Campbell and Elinor McKenzie, recently attended the 2007 NMBAQC taxonomic workshop, which took place at Newcastle University's Dove Marine Laboratory in Cullercoats. The aim of the workshop was to focus on those taxa which have been highlighted by all involved as consistently 'difficult' to identify correctly. These taxa included polychaetes from the families Cirratulidae, Maldanidae, Glyceridae, Goniadidae and Syllidae, with new identification keys presented for each by specialists. The workshop involved a large amount of practical work such as:

- looking at many examples of species found within these families;
- putting the new keys and literature to test.

With many of the participants working in different areas of the UK, it allowed specimens from different regions to be observed. These workshops are vital to the progression of marine biology in the UK and highlight that, even though we have been studying the waters around the UK for hundreds of years, there is still much to learn.

ERM CVS ISO 14001 Lead Auditors Training

Ingeborg McNicoll undertook the ISO 14001 lead auditors training in Kuala Lumpur in October 2006. Here is the photograph of Ingeborg with her (exhausted) fellow classmates after the 2 hour written exam.



Ingeborg McNicoll and fellow classmates

New Arrivals!

Congratulations to two staff members for the new additions to their families. Ruth Webster, Assistant Environmental Biologist, started the ball rolling with a little girl named Freya born 26 October 2006.

Following closely was Jacco Veenboer, Senior Environmental Consultant, who became a proud father on 6 November 2006, of a little boy named Jake Kornelis.



Jacco and son Jake Kornelis

Gordon Todd, Senior Chemist at ERT presented a paper "Comparing on-column injection with PTV injection for the OSPAR GC-FID oil in water analysis method" at the NEL Oil-in-Water Monitoring Workshop on 21 September 2006 in Aberdeen.

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