

YNU Marine and Coastal Section Report of 2011 Training Courses



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Introduction to Marine Life Course

On the 21st and 22nd May, eighteen people brushed up their ID skills for the Scarborough BioBlitz by taking part in an introductory course on marine wildlife organised by the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union with funding from OPAL. The course was led by Dr Frances Dipper, an independent marine consultant, underwater photographer, author and lecturer who has been studying marine life for over 30 years.

Frances delivered excellent presentations on British marine and coastal species, incorporating practical exercises such as seaweed pressing and the identification of marine shells and other strandline finds. This was followed by visits to the rocky shore at South Bay to observe and identify species *in situ* and to collect specimens for identification in the classroom. Much use was made of the YNU's new projecting microscope which was purchased with funding from OPAL.

Course participants included YNU members, students from the University of York and divers and snorkelers from Scarborough Sub Aqua Club. Some were complete beginners, while others had previous experience of marine biology through their studies or personal interests, but everyone agreed they had learnt a lot from the course and were amazed by how many species they discovered during the trips to the shore each day.

A total of 77 species were recorded, including sponges, hydroids, bryozoans, crustaceans, molluscs, fishes and seaweeds. Some interesting finds included a lumpsucker (*Cyclopterus lumpus*), a tadpole-like fish known as a 'sea snail' (*Liparis montagui*) and the very attractive nudibranchs *Aeolidia papillosa* and *Onchidoris bilamellata*.

The Yorkshire Naturalists' Union is very grateful to the University of Hull for hosting this course on their Scarborough Campus. The spacious classroom had excellent AV facilities and provided extremely convenient access to South Bay.

Photos clockwise from top left: a young male lumpsucker in a rock pool, the grey sea slug *Aeolidia papillosa*, students hard at work on the shore...and back in the classroom!



Seaweed Identification course

Thursday 2nd June to Friday 3rd June

This course, led by Dr Lin Baldock, not only taught participants how to study and identify seaweeds, but also provided a very impressive list of 57 seaweeds to help boost the Scarborough BioBlitz species count!

After an excellent introductory presentation on the ecology and diversity of seaweeds, we headed for South Bay to take advantage of the low tide to record seaweeds in the intertidal zone. We collected specimens, taking care not to collect more than we needed, then returned to the classroom to study and identify them using Lin's extensive collection of keys and ID guides.

As identifications were confirmed, labelled specimens were placed in a large tray as shown in the photograph below.



Seaweed specimen tray with contributions from the whole class

On the following day, we learned how to build up our own reference collection by pressing seaweed specimens and by making another visit to the shore to photograph seaweeds *in situ*, during which we managed to find a few more species we hadn't seen on the previous day. Everyone enjoyed the course and went away keen to practice what they had learnt.

The Yorkshire Naturalists' Union is very grateful to the University of Hull for hosting this course on their Scarborough Campus. It was a pleasure to work in the spacious, well-equipped laboratory.



Lin Baldock and students on the shore at South Bay, Scarborough