

Spring Beach Clean: the annual community beach clean will start at Kintraw on Sunday 23rd April, culminating on Sunday 14th May at Craobh. Gloves, bags and lunch provided!

Coastal Research: the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) is training volunteers for CoCoast, the world's largest ever coastal citizen science project. Interested in helping? Visit www.capturingourcoast.co.uk or talk to Mark Holroyd or Tony Gill.

Skate Night: On 28th March at 6 pm at SAMS Jane Dodd of SNH will talk about skates, rays and sharks, and how looking for "mermaid's purses" is helping to conserve these species.

Boat Club Ceilidh: the Craignish Boat Club start of season Ceilidh will be at the Village Hall on 29th April—all welcome!

Benchmark Survey: To improve the local marine environment the first thing we will need is a 'benchmark' from which we can observe changes. So one of the projects we want to undertake is a marine survey. SNH can provide equipment and guidance, but to make it practical we will need local volunteers, ideally with their own boats, to survey the seabed using 'GoPro' cameras. Is that something you might be able to help with? If so, please contact us.

About CROMACH

CROMACH stands for Craignish Restoration of Marine and Coastal Habitats. Our group has been established to give voice to local people to help bring about effective marine management. We aim to encourage and promote sustainable use of local waters for recreation, fishing and other marine activities; to promote and carry out research, surveys and investigations of the local marine environment; to involve the community and raise awareness of marine issues and related cultural heritage; to educate and involve younger members of the community; and to protect and allow recovery of biodiversity and natural processes in Loch Craignish, the Sound of Jura and the Firth of Lorn, the seas of Scotland and the wider marine environment.

Want to help? Become a member - the more supporters we have the more we can do! You can find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/cromachgroup), or email cromachgroup@gmail.com

Talk to us: Antonia Baird, Angus Bevan, Rory Day, Will Goudy, Aidan Gregory, Philip Price, Jamie Spencer, and Caroline Younger.

CROMACH NEWS

No. 1 March 2017

Welcome to the first ever issue of CROMACH News, bringing you updates and information on the shore and the sea that surrounds us. As a new community group we have been amazed at how much is happening that will impact the small beautiful piece of the Atlantic on our doorstep.

We have met many people who are doing great work on the west coast. And we have found out about all sorts of opportunities to improve the prospects for our in-shore waters and for the people that use them. We hope this little newsletter will help share some of this news and encourage you to get involved, and that it will be the first of many.

Did you know we are in a Marine Protected Area?

Last year a new MPA (Marine Protected Area) was announced to protect the common skate, one of the world's most endangered fish. The Loch Sunart to the Sound of Jura Nature Conservation MPA encompasses the top half of the Sound of Jura, Scarba and the Garvellachs and runs north to the western entrance to the Sound of Mull. The common skate is the largest skate in the World - it can reach a length of 2.5 m and weigh over 100 kg. It used to be abundant all round the UK but now is restricted to areas of the west coast of Scotland and Orkney. The main cause of this has been unsustainable levels of fishing, and while there are major issues with enforcement and there are still areas in the mouth of Loch Craignish and on the west of the point where bottom-towed fishing is permitted in certain conditions, it is now banned in the majority of the area. Here is a [zoomable map](#).



Giant skate, Macclesfield Psalter (1330)

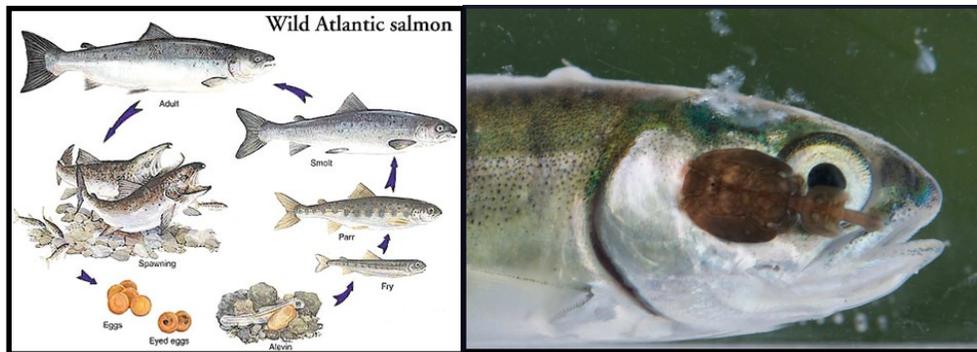


Good News for Dolphins & Porpoises

Record numbers of three dolphin species off Scotland's west coast were recorded by the Tobermory-based [Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust](#) in 2016. Volunteers and scientists recorded 2,303 individual common dolphins, 42 bottlenose dolphins and 94 Risso's dolphins – the figures for all three species being the highest ever recorded in its annual survey seasons. Average annual figures documented over the previous 14 years were 463 individual common dolphins, 14 bottlenose dolphins and 12 Risso's dolphins.



In more good news, Scotland's first [Special Area of Conservation \(SAC\) for harbour porpoise](#) was created in 2016 in the Inner Hebrides and Minches, reaching to the foot of Jura. It is 13,801 km² and supports over 5000 individuals.



New Fish Farm Proposed South of Crinan

Many of you will have heard about a new fish farm proposal which was discussed at the last Community Council meeting. The 12 x 50m cage 1.1 million fish facility would be offshore at Dounie, between Crinan and Carsaig. The site is inside the newly designated MPA for common skate, and it is also close to the mouth of the Add, one of the west coast's few remaining rivers with a good population of wild salmon and sea trout.

There are genuine widespread concerns that effluent from the farm will impact the skate population, and that sea lice (sea photo) from the farmed salmon will damage wild fish stocks. CROMACH opposes the proposal on these and other grounds. You can find out more from another recently established community marine protection group, the Friends of the Sound of Jura. They are campaigning against the proposal, and have set up a petition: www.facebook.com/friendsofthesoundofjura

How Should our Coast be Managed? Have your Say

With the devolution of the management of the Crown Estate in Scotland we have reached a major crossroads. As the government puts it; "This consultation is a once in a lifetime opportunity to help shape the future management of The Crown Estate in Scotland and how the revenue can be used to benefit Scotland and communities"



The Crown Estate manages, among other (non-coastal/marine) things, leasing of the seabed out to the 12 nautical mile limit; rights to renewable energy and CCS (Carbon Capture & Storage) to the 200 nautical mile limit; and around half the foreshore including 5,800 moorings, 750 aquaculture sites and salmon fishing rights.

Both groups and individuals are encouraged to make contributions through an online survey. The survey is quite long and involved, but at its heart there is a question of whether the current portfolio, which ranges from urban retail to rural tenancies to tidal energy research, should be broken up; also which of three different proposed management structures to select: 1) central 2) local (local authorities or communities) 3) hybrid. The consultation period began January 4th and closes soon, on 29 March. To access the survey [click here](#).

Coastal Communities: Working Together

When it comes to gathering information on shore and sea life, as well as influencing policy at either a local or a national level, numbers and coordination are key. And it is very reassuring to know that we are not alone.

Since CROMACH started, we have met up with a wide variety of representatives from community groups, both in Craignish and further afield. These include the Community Association of Lochs and Sounds (CAOLAS) which covers Sunart & Mull; the [Fair Isle Marine Environment & Tourism Initiative](#) (FIMETI); [Sea Change](#) from Wester Ross; and the [South Skye Seas Initiative](#) (SSSI). There are many other groups doing excellent work, and many more being launched as the opportunity to build a new active role for coastal communities emerges. Between us we aim to form a self-supporting network of community-led groups who share their findings, their expertise and their enthusiasm.

Key to getting the network going and giving advice have been international conservation charity [Fauna & Flora International](#) and (another group we visited) the exceptionally effective and hard-working [Community of Arran Seabed Trust \(COAST\)](#).