

Friends of Penzance B.S.A.C. Conservation Officer's Report May 2013

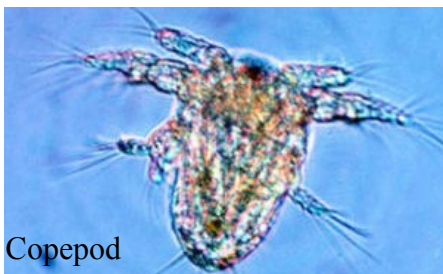


Tiny Sea creatures no bigger than thumbtacks are being credited for playing a key role in helping provide healthy habitats for many kinds of seafood, according to a new study. The little crustaceans, "grazers" some resembling tiny shrimps, are critical in protecting seagrasses from overgrowth by algae, helping keep these aquatic havens healthy for native and economically important species. The researchers found that these plant-eating animals feast on the nuisance algae that grow on seagrass, ultimately helping maintain the seagrass that provide nurseries for seafood. The grazers serve as food themselves for animals higher on the food chain. Drifting seaweed, usually thought of as a nuisance, also plays a part in this process, providing an important habitat for the grazing animals that keep the seagrass clean. Inconspicuous creatures often play big roles in supporting productive ecosystems.

Olympic swimmers aren't the only ones who change their stroke to escape competitors. To escape from the jaws and claws of predators in cold, viscous water, marine copepods switch from a wave-like



swimming stroke to big power strokes, a behaviour that has now been revealed thanks to 3-D high-speed digital holography. Copepods are tiny crustaceans found in nearly every aquatic environment on Earth. By some estimates, they are the most abundant animals on the planet. Their change in stroke in cold water helps them escape a slew of predators, from larval fish to crabs, oysters and jellyfish. Copepods are key components of marine food webs, eaten by just about everything. The big question is, "what doesn't eat copepods?" Understanding how the microscopic organisms might respond to



changes in the environment is important for assessing the health of oceans now and in the future.

Dancing is universal among humans, and until recently, it was thought to be unique to humans, and when some bird species were found to have a similar capability for rhythmic movement, it was linked to their ability to mimic sound,

but now we are seeing that even mammals with limited vocal ability can move in time with a beat. A three year old Californian sea lion, known as Ronan, bobs her head in time with music and when Ronan's musical dance was noticed a study was set up by researchers at the University of California. The original piece of music was a simple beat, but researchers tested Ronan with several different beats and found that Ronan really does know how to boogie to the beat. Anyone who watched the dressage competition at the London Olympics would also believe that some horses can dance.



There was only one positive sighting reported of Bottlenose Dolphins during April, that was a pod of 8 off Stepper Point near The Camel Estuary on the 26th. Another sighting of a solitary fin seen heading west past the Cowloe at Sennen, on the 27th, was also thought to be a Bottlenose. The first Basking Shark for the year was seen off St Anthony Head, Fal Bay on the 12th of the month. Two more were seen on the 20th, one off Lundy Island and another off Church Cove near The Lizard. Two more were seen at the end of the month, one off The Minack on the 29th and the last one on the 30th off Lundy Island. Harbour Porpoises were seen off The Lizard and on two occasions off Porthgwarra. There is a Grey Seal that spends much of its time just below the Coast Watch Station at Cape Cornwall, and I understand that the Watch Keepers have given it a name, I was told the name but have forgotten it, but on the 14th of the month a keen coast watcher reported seeing 12 Grey Seals off Cape Cornwall.