

Seaweek 1988-89

Communities Celebrating the Sea

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Illustration Courtesy WPI Paper

Understanding the theme

Introduction

Reaching back through the mists of time, I think the idea for Seaweek was born at a Victorian MESA conference at Tooradin in 1984. John Tomkin, Vic MESA president at the time had recently returned from an exchange in the US with lots of ideas and yanki' know-how, including a concept for a national week of sea celebrations.

In the early days of MESA (Marine Education Society Australasia), one of our greatest challenges was to get the marine environment onto the agenda, into the public psyche, onto school curricula. We set out to 'marinate' everything! We also felt a need to celebrate, rather than commiserate, promoting positive messages that would 'turn people on' to the sea. A national awareness promotion such as Seaweek seemed to fit the bill.

It took the creative energy and dedication of marine educator, Pauline Halpin at the Marine Discovery Centre in Queenscliff to get things started. Seaweek began as a local event, using crab surveys and an art competition to familiarise communities and schools with coastal habitats in their areas. With Pauline's sheer enthusiasm, the idea quickly spread around the states and we were inundated with art work from all over the country. Seaweek had become a national event. And so it began . . .

Julie Swartz

Exploring the theme - event ideas

Seaweek Touch Pool - An artificial, temporary rock pool created on the beach.

What

A free touch pool offered to the public.

Where

Little Parakeet Bay, Rottneet Island.

How

The Education Officer and a Ranger went diving and collected local marine life. These were brought carefully up onto the beach and placed in a makeshift rock pool. The pool was made by digging a hole in the sand, placing a tarp inside and filling it with water. This pool became a temporary marine habitat and of course, they were returned to the ocean at the end of the day. The Education Officer was on hand at the touch pool to encourage beach goers to look, touch and question all the weird and wonderful things of the local marine environment.

Why

The ocean is a very difficult environment to visit. Many people walk along the beach and get marine life clues by what they discover washed up as flotsam and jetsam or other tracks and traces but not so many people go snorkelling or diving down into the marine habitats. A chance to look and touch provides a wonderful opportunity to create interest and highlight the diversity of the local marine life. By bringing the ocean life up on to the beach with a touch pool, anyone has a chance to understanding and appreciate more about the marine plants and animals.

To stimulate people into developing concern and responsibility for marine conservation they need to be involved in some enjoyable and practical marine experiences. A touch pool is just one example of a way to inspire awareness of and actions for, the marine environment.



Illustration Courtesy WPI Paper

Extending the theme - classroom activities

These educational activities are adapted from the Marine Life Resources Kit of Seaweek 89 by the Marine Studies Centre, Queenscliff

Activity 1: What am I?

Aim

- To describe and recognise some marine life.

What to do

- Read the following clues and ask the students to identify the animal described:

When I am not feeding people think I am merely a blob. Unlike you, I have no skeleton to support me and I can only move slowly. I glide across my rocky home on my soft suction-cup bottom. When the tide comes in, I open out like a flower and wave my tentacles around to catch tiny animals that I cannot see. When they touch me, I poison them with stinging tentacles and put them into my mouth. It takes me all night to digest my dinner and I have to spit out the hard bits. I think I am a beautiful creature and I rarely get eaten by others because they are afraid of my tentacles.

- Ask the students to write their own - what am I, clues using posters and books as stimulus.
- Present all the clues to the whole class.



Illustration Courtesy VIMS

Activity 2: Living on the Edge

Aim

- to consider the problems facing animals living on the edge between land and sea.

What to do

- Discuss the beach and rocky shore as habitats. They are neither land nor sea, yet both. Refer to the movements of tides in and out twice a day.
- List some of the wildlife of these environments.
- Discuss the problems faced by those living there e.g. wave action, tidal movements, drying out, heating up, sunburn, salinity changes, exposure to predators, lack of food etc.
- Identify the adaptations possessed by the plants and animals that make life in these environments possible e.g. behaviour, feeding patterns, body shapes etc.

Activity 3: What's for Dinner?

Aim

- to understand why, how and on what some animals feed.

What to do

- Ask the students why they eat (for energy) and what they need energy for (moving, breathing etc.).
- Look at posters or in books and discuss how a marine animal might feed. You will need to consider their habitats (crab - rocky reef, anemone - rock pool and cowfish - seagrass bed) and their mobility (crab - slow crawler, anemone - almost stationary and cowfish - quick swimmer). Discuss what they could and could not eat. (Crabs scavenge on dead matter, anemone traps small fish and crustaceans and cowfish picks up small crabs and shrimps).
- Ask the students to mime the moving and feeding actions of a marine animal. Other students should guess what they are.

Activity 4: Sea Water Science

Aim

- to investigate some properties of sea water.

What to do

- Compare the taste of sea water and fresh water.
- Demonstrate dissolving salt in water.



Photo courtesy Reef HQ and GBHM/MPA

Street Parade by Cairns Primary Schools

- Evaporate sea water and fresh water in shallow jars (sun or heat source). Students should discover salt crystals from sea water.
- Look through a glass of water to see that it is transparent, then discuss why the ocean is blue.
- Leave a jar of water in a warm place until small oxygen bubbles form at the surface. Students should conclude that oxygen also is dissolved in water.
- Add a few drops of food dye to fresh water in a jar. Pour in sea water, it should sink below the coloured water because it is more dense (heavier), due to the dissolved minerals it contains.
- Test a variety of objects for buoyancy in sea and fresh water.

Personal actions

Turn your awareness into personal actions:

- Consider the beach as a home and habitat for numerous plants and animal. Remember to take only photographs and leave only foot prints.
- Have a minimal impact when visiting the coast e.g. use marked tracks and take all your rubbish home.
- Leave rock pool animals and plants in the water.
- Fix your car leaks, more oil ends up in the sea from urban run-off than from tanker spills.
- Stow it don't throw it, on fishing or boating trips ensure rubbish bins have lids and are emptied when you return home.

Life in the seagrass. A Pipefish and Cowfish. What are their needs? What are their adaptations? How do they survive?

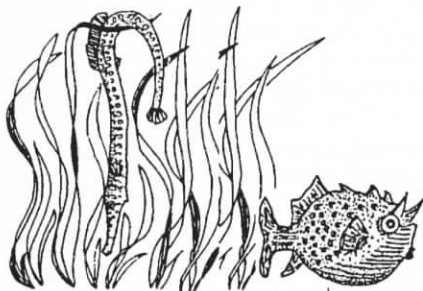


Illustration Courtesy: VIMS and M&PFI