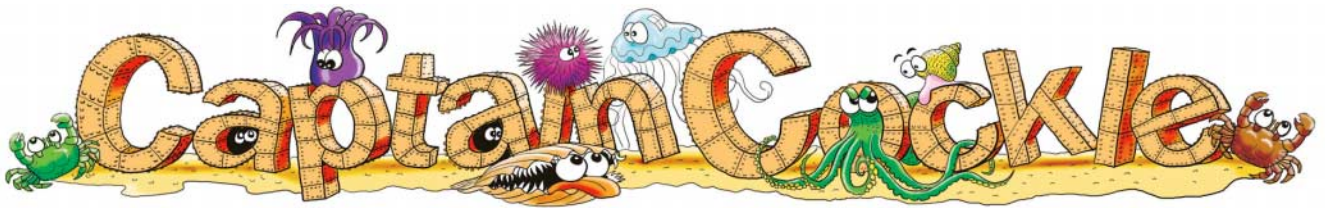


Special Feature



Marine Research in Ireland

by John Joyce

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For many years, Ireland has become a serious player in European marine research with the acquisition of two purpose-built research vessels - RV Celtic Voyager and the larger RV Celtic Explorer - capable of working anywhere in the world. Between them, these two vessels carry out essential



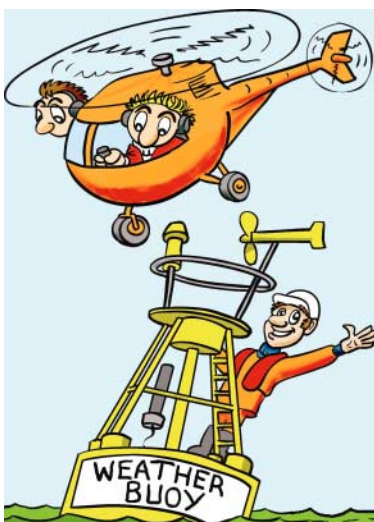
sampling and surveying to gather data used in fish stock assessment, the monitoring of harmful algal blooms and detection of chemical pollutants.

One major mission carried out over the last decade has been the detailed mapping of Ireland's 220 million acre seabed territory - an area ten times the land area of

Ireland and now referred to within the marine community as 'The Real Map of Ireland'. Information about the biological, chemical and physical resources to be found in this vast area will enable the sustainable development of Ireland's 'marine economy' and the provision of food, energy, mineral resources and tourism and leisure products into the future.

'Real Time' Information

To enable detailed information about the marine environment to be gathered on a continuous basis in all weathers, a network of automatic data buoys has been set up around the coast of Ireland with buoys at six locations around



the Irish coast, including one in the deep sea - some 210 nautical miles southwest of Slyne Head. As well as collecting vital weather data such as atmospheric pressure, temperature, wind speed and direction, the buoys also gather information on wave height and direction, as well as the 'wave period' (the time between each wave) and the temperature and salinity of seawater. This 'real time' information is vital for oceanographic research, since it enables scientists to validate their computer models of ocean behaviour, which in turn allows them to predict oceanographic events.



Taking Care of the Sea

Marine research is vital to our understanding of the Sea - a feature that covers 70% of our planet's surface. It provides 50% of the oxygen that we breathe, regulates our weather and gives us fresh water to drink by the evaporation of seawater into clouds, which in turn rain onto the land. The sea provides us with food, transports our goods in ships, and can supply us with electricity through wave and tidal energy generators. It is - by far - our most important natural resource.

The Sea is also a great provider of peace, enjoyment and wonder - as any child playing in the sand on a beach or SCUBA diver exploring Ireland's underwater seascape will tell you.

So let's commit to doing 'Just One Thing' every day - be it by safely disposing of plastic litter, wasting less water or even leaving the car at home to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide which, when absorbed into seawater produces acidity which in turn effects the delicate calcium shells of marine plankton.

Marine research has shown us how the Sea takes care of us - so let's use that knowledge and take care of the Sea.

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