

## News release

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Images are available in high resolution by request

## Mothecombe Beach nature inventory records over 700 species in 28 hours

With the help of local residents, schools and holiday-makers, scientists from the Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) project have recorded over 700 different species in just 28 hours at Mothecombe Beach. The inventory – or ‘bioblitz’ – which took place at the weekend has helped to identify exactly how important the area is to local wildlife by creating a list of all the plants, animals and fungi that live there.

Over 400 people attended across the weekend to take part in a number of different activities that were geared towards wildlife recording. From seaweed searches and bug hunts to strandline surveys and bat walks – there was a wide range of activities to cater for different interests, plus arts and crafts for children as well. Those taking part worked alongside a team of scientists from OPAL, The Natural History Museum, the Marine Biological Association and amateur naturalists from several local nature groups. They were on hand to help people with identifications and to ensure that everything found was added to the list.

Lucy Carter, OPAL Project Officer, Natural History Museum, said, “Events like the Mothecombe bioblitz are really important as they help to improve our understanding of the biodiversity in a given area. We’ve had some really interesting finds over the weekend, such as the Sand Dart moth (*Agrotis ripae*) which is only found in a couple of locations on the south Devon coast. Now that we know it is at Mothecombe, we can make sure that its sand dune habitat is protected. Hopefully, the bioblitz has encouraged lots of local people to enjoy, understand and protect the area for future generations.”

The Mothecombe bioblitz was part of the ‘National BioBlitz’ series celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity 2010. It was organised by the OPAL project, a Big Lottery Fund initiative that has received a grant of £11.75m to encourage people to explore nature through science-based events and activities.

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## Notes to editor

1. **Images are available in high resolution format, suggested caption: *rockpooling, fishing and bug-hunting – just some of the activities that were on offer at the Mothecombe Bioblitz***
2. **Lucy Carter is available for interviews**
3. Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) is a nation-wide partnership initiative that will inspire communities to discover, enjoy and protect their local environments. It aims to create a new generation of nature-lovers by stimulating interest through local and national projects which are accessible, fun and relevant to anyone who wants to take part.  
Website: [www.OPALexploreNature.org](http://www.OPALexploreNature.org)
4. The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme was launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments. The programme funds a range of activities from local food schemes and farmers markets, to education projects teaching people about the environment. Imperial College London (the leading OPAL partner) was awarded a **£11,760,783** Changing Spaces grant in August 2007
5. The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. It was established by Parliament on 1 December 2006. Full details of the work of the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards are available on the website: [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)
6. **Biodiversity is Life** The Mothecombe Bioblitz is part of the world-wide celebrations of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. The diversity of life on earth is crucial for human well-being and now is the time to act to preserve it. For information on events, initiatives and exhibitions across the UK visit [www.biodiversityislife.net](http://www.biodiversityislife.net)
7. Mothecombe Bay is owned by the Flete Estate, and it is with their kind permission that this event can take place.  
[www.flete.co.uk](http://www.flete.co.uk)
8. MBA (The Marine Biological Association) is a professional body for marine scientists with some 1,200 members world-wide. Since 1884 MBA has established itself as a leading marine biological research organisation – contributing to the work of several Nobel Laureates and over 170 Fellows of the Royal Society. For further information, visit [www.mba.ac.uk](http://www.mba.ac.uk) and [www.marlin.ac.uk](http://www.marlin.ac.uk) For information on recording and learning opportunities, visit <http://www.marlin.ac.uk/learningzone> The MBA is a founder member of the Plymouth Marine Sciences Partnership (PMSP) [www.pmsp.org.uk](http://www.pmsp.org.uk)