

News release

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Scientists invite local residents and holiday-makers to explore nature at Mothecombe Beach

Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) is inviting anyone near Mothecombe Beach and the Erme Estuary near Plymouth on 11 and 12 June to take part in a nature recording event called a 'bioblitz'. A bioblitz involves a group of people, including scientists, amateur naturalists, students and the public, coming together to survey as much wildlife as they can at a specified location, over a set time period. The Mothecombe bioblitz will run continuously for 28 hours, with some scientists recording wildlife right through the night. They hope to uncover new information about the biodiversity of the area by building a comprehensive list of all the plants, animals and fungi that live there.

The key activities for each day are listed below; all are free and suitable for all ages. Participants can either join an organised activity or take a 'mission pack' and go searching for wildlife with their family or friends. They can take photos of their finds and bring them back to basecamp where bioblitz experts will help with identifications so that their discoveries can be added to the species list.

Friday 11 June

- Daytime is a dedicated schools day (fully booked)
- Night time bat walks and moth trapping session are available*

Saturday 12 June (drop-in hours 10am until 3pm)

- Mass rockpool blitz
- Mass bug blitz
- The Big Seaweed Search
- Seine netting for fish
- Beetle walk
- Strandline survey
- Arts and crafts for kids

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The Mothecombe bioblitz is being led by the Natural History Museum (a partner in OPAL) and the Marine Biological Association. Lots of local wildlife groups will also be taking part, providing their expertise and a wealth of local knowledge.

Lucy Carter, OPAL Project Officer, Natural History Museum, said, "Bioblitzes are a great way to introduce people to wildlife recording and give them an opportunity to explore their local environment with experts on hand to help. Anyone who takes part will be collecting valuable scientific information about the wildlife in the Mothecombe area. Bioblitzes are also a great way to get people outdoors learning practical survey and identification skills - but above all else, a bioblitz is a really fun day out!"

The Mothecombe bioblitz is part of the 'National BioBlitz' series celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity 2010. It is being held at Mothecombe Beach and the Erme Estuary in Devon, just east of Plymouth. The postcode of the site is PL8 1LB and the area is owned by the Flete Estate, who have given their permission for the event to take place. Please note that anyone under 16 years of age will need to be accompanied by an adult, and no dogs are allowed on the beach.

*Events on the evening of Friday 11 June can be booked in advance by emailing lucy.carter@nhm.ac.uk

-Ends-

Notes to editor

1. **Lucy Carter is available for interviews week commencing 7 June 2010**
2. **Reporters and photographers are welcome on the evening of Friday 11 June and on Saturday 12 June, please let Laura Stowe know if you would like to attend (contact details at top of page)**
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
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
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
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

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 and 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