

EUSAC



IMPORTANT DATES

November

23rd - BSAC Boat Handling Webinar

December

2nd - BSAC 2019 Incident Report Webinar

3rd - EUSAC Xmas Dinner (details tbc)

7th - BSAC Sidemount Course Webinar

15th - BSAC "How to carry out a marine life transect survey" Webinar

*All BSAC events available via www.bsac.com/training/online-learning/webinars/

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

EUSAC has had a bustling start to the academic year. In this issue of the newsletter we cover the true return to diving, exciting socials, and a seagrass restoration project.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Hi all, a lot has happened since our last newsletter. We kicked off the start of the semester with our virtual freshers fair stall where we had great chats with loads of keen newbies. There were 72 attendees at our introductory meeting which is a fantastic turnout, especially given this year's circumstances. Even better, we had 37 Ocean Divers and 39 Crossovers sign up for the training ballot - we hate having to turn so many away but we're so so lucky to have so much engagement.

A special thanks is due to our training team, Alex Leaver and Sophie Allard, who've been working hard! We've had 2 Crossover trips so far and also a big thank you to instructors Matt from DUSAC (who came on both!), Sarah Chan, Ed Brooks (training on his birthday!) and Cara Nicholson, as well as our fantastic ADIs who have been going over and above to plan and make training run as smoothly as possible.

It's been great to see people diving creatively (read on for more) despite being restricted to the Lothian area. Looking forward, we've got a trip planning workshop (12th Nov) for all levels to encourage more to get out and teach you how to plan your own trips! Finally, thanks so much to Alex Philip for his massively creative online socials. The inter-family gameshow was a particular stand out - a great host with some fabulous challenges. Watch this space for more!

Hope everyone is keeping well, safe and sane,
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DIVING! DIVING! DIVING!

After a long, dry summer, many EUSAC members were relieved to dip their fins back into the water at the beginning of the academic year. Before going back into Tier 3 lockdown, we managed to fit in lots of diving, including two crossover trips for new members who had previously qualified with other organisations. Thanks to all of our instructors and ADIs who helped make these days possible, we hope all of you that came enjoyed yourselves and are looking forward to joining us again in the future for some more underwater adventures!

Seal Reef

Trip 1 took place on the 4th of October. With travel restrictions as they were at the time, the group managed to make it all the way out to the west coast! They went out to Seal Reef, on Loch Fyne where (in a very rare occurrence) a seal was actually spotted!

The group of four crossovers all managed to successfully complete their drysuit orientation and skills refresher. Congrats folks, hope to see you in the water again as soon as possible. Seal Reef, with it's array of marine life is a good, simple introduction to Scottish diving but you've barely scratched the surface, there's so much out there for you to see now.

Thanks to Sarah Chan and Matt Smith for instructing on this trip, as well as Adam Dunajski, Biddy Hyde and Charis Walton for assisting. Also, an extra special thank you to Biddy for providing an extra car at the very last minute. The trip wouldn't have been possible without them!

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It was well organised and had a nice, friendly and inclusive atmosphere. Instructors did a brilliant job of explaining everything clearly before each dive and patiently took us through skills training. Really enjoyed the whole experience.

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Prestonhill Quarry

The second trip was more local, though just as fun. On the 25th of October, instructors and crossovers made a quick trip across the Forth to Prestonhill Quarry, Inverkeithing.

As with the first trip, despite some flooding suits, all 8 trainees successfully crossed-over to BSAC. An extra level of excitement was added through meeting Mark Williamson and his submersible ROV on site. The video is available on the EUSAC social media pages as well as Mark's YouTube Channel (Toor Boy).

This also trip had the added advantage of landing on the day following Ed Brook's 30th, so we had a chance to celebrate with him. Thanks to Cara Nicholson for bringing some lovely cakes for the occasion!

Thanks to Cara, Ed and Matt Smith for instructing and to Adam, Biddy and Charis for assisting again.

Ocean Diver Course

EUSAC doesn't just cater to qualified divers, we also bring in a group of brand new trainees every year. Even with the additional challenges facing us this year, we are glad to be able to welcome the next generation of EUSAC divers.

The students among us are probably well-adjusted to the idea of virtual lectures by now, and our Ocean Diver course this year is no exception. We have 10 trainees in the cohort (as well as a few extra keen beans as per usual), attending the weekly lectures on Zoom. It's been great seeing them all taking notes and engaging with the material!

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 situation, they won't be able to begin their in-water training until 2021 but we are committed to getting them qualified as soon as is safely possible. The committee and the trainees are also hopeful that a snorkelling trip will soon be able to take place.

Thanks to Aaron Donaldson, Adam Dunajski, Billy Minns, Cara Nicholson, Charis Walton, Daniel Donald, Finn Crossley-Jones, Robert Gormley, and Sarah Chan for running and overseeing lectures.

An additional thanks to the trainees for your patience with the situation, tech issues and your wonderful enthusiasm. It has also been really encouraging to see some of last year's trainees returning to this year's lessons for a refresher after the summer, well done!

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Thank you to the lecturers and members of EUSAC for making the learning process so enjoyable! Everyone is really friendly and I look forward to being able to socialise properly when restrictions are eased.

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“I like that we have a different lecturer each week, and that it's a student lecturer so it's more relatable.”

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Club Hoodies

Especially with the recent influx of new members, it is worth reiterating that we still have some of our 50th anniversary hoodies available. They're super comfy and just the thing to keep you toasty warm during a surface interval.



The blue diver and octopus hoodies are currently available in large and extra large, while the red shipwreck design is available in medium and large. Both designs cost £34.99.

If you're interested, please email sub.aqua@ed.ac.uk to reserve yours.



SNORKELLING MEMBERSHIPS

A new edition for this year! Did you miss out on a place in the Ocean Diver course? Were you unsure as to whether you want to commit to buying all the gear? Or just want to see what all the fuss over Scottish waters is about?

A snorkelling membership could be for you!

Both the BSAC and EUSAC snorkelling memberships are only £20 each and will cover you (including insurance) for the rest of the academic year.

With these, you will be able to attend any and all EUSAC snorkelling trips, as well as having the option to join in on diving trips to snorkeler-friendly sites. This could also give you the option to take a bird's (or fish's) eye view of the divers below, perhaps before joining them yourself next year. Kit Officer Billy Minns certainly enjoyed dive bombing the divers on the scavenger hunt at the quarry last month!



Memberships are available at www.eusu.ed.ac.uk/organisation/subaqua/ and www.bsac.com/membership/

Scavenger Hunts

Halloween Hunt

Usual EUSAC Halloween tradition would have dictated a big Marchmont flat party, though this was sadly impossible this year. Hoping to scratch that itch, Expeditions Officer Biddy Hyde took it upon herself to organise a scavenger hunt for us at Prestonhill Quarry on the 30th of October.

She and Sophie Dawson planted carved pumpkins with colour-coded forks around the quarry and provided the teams with a treasure map to find them. This was a great opportunity to put participants' (in some cases, frankly non-existent) underwater navigational skills to the test.

The teams were given time penalties for infractions like getting separated or losing kit, and were rewarded for forks found and wearing fancy dress- every single diver was in the spirit of Halloween which was brilliant (and very funny to see).

Thanks to Biddy and Sophie for setting this up and congrats to the Red Team (Catriona Scott, Ella Penny, and Mhairi Fenton) on their win.



14th of November

After the response to the Halloween hunt, as well as to help raise morale until we're able to get back into the water, Social Secretary Alex Philip went to work organising another.

EUSAC members were encouraged to meet up with their flatmates or EUSAC family members for a scavenger hunt on land.

Three teams were set a collection of photo challenges to complete or find around the central University of Edinburgh campus. In the two chaotic hours allotted, trees were climbed, tennis was mimed, and spells were cast at Tom Riddle's grave. Bonus points were added for including SCUBA gear in the photos.

Congrats to the winning team of Aaron Donaldson, Adam Dunajski, Anne Veeder, and Hannah Dodd-Vastiau.

Of course a thank you to Alex for coming up with a great set of challenges to complete.

ROBOCEAN Seagrass Project - by Niall McGrath

Around one year ago, I was made aware of the small miracle that is seagrass. For those of you who don't know, seagrass meadows are incredible ecosystems whose global importance simply cannot be understated. Only occupying 0.1% of the seafloor, seagrass meadows are responsible for 11% of all CO₂ stored in our oceans. In addition, these habitats support 50% of the world's fisheries, a reflection of their insane biodiversity.

Sounds great, right? Unfortunately, seagrass meadows are also some of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. In the last century alone, 92% of British Seagrass has disappeared and the surrounding seas are suffering as a result.

But don't get too upset, there are plenty of seagrass restoration projects working hard to make these ecosystems thrive once again. Most of these schemes are planting seagrass by hand, but this requires a huge amount of organisation and manual labour. The importance of their work is indisputable, but if seagrass is going to be restored at scale, it's going to need more support.

As a mechanical engineering with renewable energy student with a passion for a climate action, I had a think about how current restoration efforts could be improved. Why don't we mechanise the process? I had an idea, and once Summer exams were over, I got to work.



In May 2020, I gathered a crack team of like-minded engineering students with one goal in mind: designing and manufacturing a new generation of subsea robotics. We are engineering a remotely operated underwater vehicle (ROV) capable of planting seagrass at the touch of a button, which will widen seagrass restoration efforts, thus reducing our carbon footprint and improving marine biodiversity.

To-date, our idea has received guidance from a co-investigator from Edinburgh's ORCA Hub, engineers at Spectis Robotics, and from Dr. Richard Lilley, a Founding Director at Project Seagrass (a charity that is currently leading the UK's largest seagrass restoration project). We have also received some great financial support from Scottish Institute Enterprise, and Edinburgh Innovations totalling to £400 which will go a long way towards developing our prototype. Recently, we have entered Red Bull Basement: a start-up competition with a prize fund of €4000. We would like to thank EUSAC for providing us with some amazing subsea seagrass footage, which will surely give our entry a brilliant chance of winning!



Since Niall wrote this article for us, the initial phase of the Redbull Basement contest has closed and ROBOCEAN was chosen as NTT's wildcard. This allows them to continue to the next stage and brings them one crucial step closer to securing funding. Congrats guys!

Follow them and their progress on instagram @robocean.edi

Family Matters

After a summer of quiz nights, Social Secretary Alex Phillip brought us something a little different on the 23rd of October.

Games night included events such as photoshopping family portraits, talent shows and memory challenges, not to mention Charis terrifying her flatmates by dashing through the hallway with her drysuit!

If you'd like to check out the other family portraits (including a frankly disturbing image of Expeditions Officer Biddy Hyde's birth) check out the club meme page (Low Visibility Memes for Sub-Aqua Fiends) on Facebook.

Congratulations to Alex Philip, Biddy Hyde, Daniel Donald, and Sophie Dawson on winning the night and finally unseating Cara Nicholson from the winner's post after so many months of repeated victory.

Families are still open to adopting children (it seems the Leaver-Allard household are trying to collect as many as possible) so you don't need to feel like you're missing out! Let Alex know if you're keen to join a family and he can see to it that you're placed with one ASAP.



Edinburgh Marathon Festival

It seems as though our Expeditions Officer, Biddy Hyde, never ceases to find events for EUSACers to participate in. Her latest suggestion is the The Edinburgh Marathon Festival, which is returning on the weekend of the 29th/30th of May 2021. So far around a dozen members have signed up to various events, including the half, full, and relay marathon.



Currently, most people are planning on running separately (so there's no pressure to keep up with a group) but of course you could always pick a friend or two with a similar pace to run with and help with motivation. Quite a few people are running together, so feel free to check out the Strava group to see who is out and about and perhaps find people with similar paces.

Biddy is also keen for the EUSAC members who take part to undertake a fundraising challenge together in favour of a single charity (the current front-runner is Macmillan Cancer Support). Keep your eyes peeled for announcements about this!

All ranges of ability are welcome and encouraged, but the event sells out every year, so book your place sooner rather than later if you're keen to take part. Sign up info and a full list of the events are available at www.edinburghmarathon.com/events/

Please let Biddy know if you sign up and would be interested in raising money for a collective cause.

CHECK THESE OUT!

At times, it feels as if we've watched all of what the various streaming platforms have to offer, but in this issue we're recommending some hugely compelling documentaries that you hopefully haven't seen yet:

My Octopus Teacher

Hauntingly beautiful and emotional documentary about one man's deep connection to an octopus and how she changes his life and perspective on the world around him. The doc follows Craig Foster, a prestigious South African filmmaker who has become disillusioned with his life and work, who decides to snorkel every day with an octopus he meets in the kelp forest by his house. We follow Craig on a journey of discovery, as he becomes more and more emotionally attached to this octopus, to a point where he interferes with nature in order to save her life. This is a huge contrast to the stance David Attenborough's documentary makers take and it's fascinating to see how intertwined their lives become.

We are taken through her whole lifespan and watch Craig become more appreciative of the natural world and reconnect with his family. Not only that, but the cinematography is breath-taking, intimate and raw. A definite must see!

- Robyn Lindeque



Enslaved with Samuel L. Jackson

This heart-wrenching documentary sheds light on 400 years of human trafficking, as millions of enslaved Africans were shipped to the

Americas by Western European slave traders.

Samul L. Jackson teams up with a group of underwater investigators who view the ocean floor as a graveyard and a crime scene. The first episode follows the locating and study of sunken slave ships and includes a massive focus on the intense diving involved in this investigation, so worth a watch for both the tech diving aspects and the eye opening narrative.

This program (and maritime archaeologist Mallory Haas, were also recently featured in BSAC's iSCUBA magazine.

Episodes 1 - 4 are now available on BBC iPlayer.

- Ella Penny



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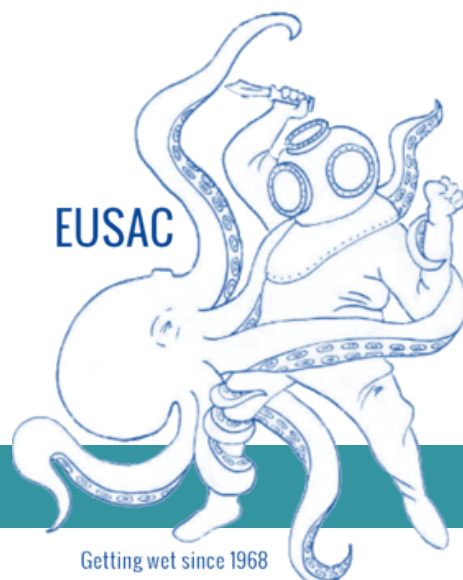
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NOVEMBER 2020