



# MAFRI Research & Education

## Marine Open Day – fun and a lot of learning!

Harry Thorman, Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute

24 February 2003

FN 0543

ISSN 1329-8062

*Holiday makers explored the wonders of the southern oceans at the Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute's award winning Marine Discovery Centre's (MDC) Open Day. Held during the summer school holidays, and sponsored by the Coast Action/Coastcare 'Summer By the Sea' activities program, the Open Day had over a thousand visitors. Adults and children of all ages eagerly explored the aquaria of marine animals and plants that are found in the waters around Queenscliff and enthusiastically participated in hands on activities.*

In the process of having fun and participating in the many crafty activities held during the open day, members of the public learned a little more about the unique marine coastal organisms, habitats and environments that are in found in Victoria's bays and coastal waters.

The Marine Discovery Centre's Program Leader, Alex Giannuzzi, combined art and science, to explain fish biology and fish/habitat links. Alex led eager participants in the Japanese art of Gyotaku (nature printing), which was followed by a dissection of the fish. The fish dissection initially drew groans of dismay from some onlookers but this quickly changed to fascination as Alex held them spellbound identifying the specialised structures and adaptations of the fish in relation to its diet, habitat and role in the ecosystem.

Alex also removed the tiny fish ear bones (otoliths) to demonstrated how scientists from the Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute (MAFRI) determine the age of fish and reconstruct the structure of fish stocks in our bays and coastal waters. This information is crucial to ensuring that there are plenty of fish in the sea now and, most importantly, plenty of fish in the sea for future generations to enjoy.

In the snorkel pool outside, Harry Thorman, Marine Education Officer, provided tips and techniques on safe

practice for budding skin divers. Children and parents donned masks to try to gain a new perspective on the wonderful world. So successful were Harry's snorkelling tips that many of the participants were motivated to experience underwater marine world first hand and booked themselves on a shore snorkelling expedition that the MDC was also offering as part of the Open Day.

To further whet the appetites of visitors, Parks Victoria Education Officer, Mark Rodrigue spoke about Victoria's new system of Marine National Parks.

The Marine Discovery Centre, Coast Action staff and volunteers were overwhelmed as the response from the public was outstanding and feedback was universally positive.

The Marine Discovery Centre is the educational facility of the prestigious Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute (MAFRI). It is the only marine education facility in Southern Australia to be linked to such an Institute and houses MAFRI's Education and Training Program, whose mission is "to promote sustainable natural resource management by increasing awareness and understanding of aquatic environments".

One of the many functions of the MDC is to encourage and enable people to learn about our magnificent marine and coastal environments first hand and to develop a connection to the habitat that they are exploring and/or the fish they are catching.

It was for this approach and the types of programs showcased at the Open Day that the Marine Discovery Centre was Highly Commended in the Environmental Experience category of the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards.



“The recognition by British Airways was a fantastic achievement.” Alex said. “We are delighted our innovative approach to marine education and tourism has been rewarded. The Marine Discovery Centre’s Schools Program is extremely popular with students from all over Victoria and is used as a benchmark for marine education overseas.”

For more information on the Marine Discovery Centre, it’s community activities and school programs, please contact the MDC on 5258 3344.

**The advice provided in this publication is intended as a source of information only. Always read the label before using any of the products mentioned. The State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.**