



BLUE MARINE
FOUNDATION

INTO THE

WORKING TO PROTECT OUR OCEANS

ISSUE 03 | FEB / MAR 2024



VIRTUAL REALITY
EXPERIENCE

SOUTH GEORGIA AND THE
SOUTH SANDWICH ISLANDS

SEAGRASS OR
SEAGROSS

BLUE

Cover Photo:

Crab perched on a blade of seagrass
Lewis Jeffries

WELCOME

‘Welcome to the latest edition of Into the Blue with a guest introduction from Jo Coumbe our director of communications following some exciting media updates.’

“This month we are thrilled to launch our award-winning immersive website ‘The Sea We Breathe’ as a new underwater virtual reality experience, narrated by Helena Bonham Carter. From giant manta rays to gentle seagrass meadows, this completely immersive experience takes viewers on an incredible underwater journey to explore what a healthy ocean looks like and understand its role in fighting climate change.

We also celebrate a substantial further step forward for the UK Overseas Territories’ Blue Belt. As the first campaign I worked on at Blue Marine, the Blue Belt has a special place in my ocean heart, and the extension of 166,000 sq kms of no-take protection in South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands is another significant milestone for the extraordinary ambition and vision of the programme.

We warmly invite you to dive Into the Blue with us.”



Jo Coumbe
Director of Communications



Virtual Reality Experience
Photo: Unseen

Take a virtual dive with Helena Bonham Carter and Blue Marine

"The voice of the next generation has never been more important. The future of the planet rests – more than ever – in their hands. Connecting children to the life-saving solutions that the ocean can provide is one of the greatest gifts we can offer, and the virtual reality experience I've had the pleasure to support can do exactly that."

HELENA BONHAM CARTER

In February, we launched our award-winning immersive website The Sea We Breathe as a new virtual reality experience, narrated by Helena Bonham Carter, to educate and inspire the next generation on the need to preserve the ocean.

From examining plankton, to shoals of glittering fish, The Sea We Breathe VR draws viewers deep into magical underwater worlds, exploring three marine habitats; the open ocean, towering kelp forests and magnificent

seagrass meadows. The experience highlights how the ocean plays a crucial role in fighting climate change, through the capture and storage of carbon – known in the ocean as "blue carbon."

Blue Marine partnered with [Unseen Studio](#) to design the experience, which made its debut at Earlsfield Primary School in south west London, it will soon become available to schools across the UK. Dive in from the comfort of your own home on desktop or at home – <https://vrbluamarine.com>.

READ FULL ARTICLE

Virtual Reality Experience

Photo: Unseen

VR in schools

Photo: Jeff Gilbert



South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands



The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands (SSGI) has announced it will put an additional 166,000 sq km of ocean under full protection – an area greater than the size of England.

The “Blue Belt” binds the UK’s Overseas Territories. Since 2010 the UK Government has been working with local communities, governments and conservationists, including Blue Marine, to create some of the world’s largest Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

After campaigning by Blue Marine and partners, in 2016 the UK Government launched the Blue Belt program. Described as the

biggest conservation commitment by any government ever, the Blue Belt continues to grow. It has supported the creation of MPAs in ten Overseas Territories, protecting over 4.3 million sq km of ocean – more than 20 times the size of Great Britain and its a protected area that spans the Pacific, Indian, Atlantic, Southern Ocean and the Caribbean.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Penguins crossing
Photo: Paul Nicklen
Millions of seals live in South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands
Photo: Cristina Mittermeier

166,000
SQ KM OF OCEAN UNDER
FULL PROTECTION

“The further protection of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands is another important addition to the UK’s world-class Blue Belt Programme. Protecting these waters under law, rather than via fisheries regulations, is a significant enhancement to the protection of these vital waters, which contain the ‘Humpback Highway’, an internationally recognised migratory route for whales traveling from South America to feed in the waters around SGSSI. Whales are increasingly recognised for regulating the ‘ocean pump’ that helps maintain the stability of our climate.”

CLARE BROOK, CEO

Studying the marine megafauna of the Beata Ridge



Humpbacks whales

Photo: Francois Baelen, Ocean Image Bank

This month, Blue Marine's projects director Dr. Judith Brown and oceans and climate director Dan Crockett joined the Dominican Republic's Beata Ridge Expedition. The expedition studied the pelagic megafauna over the oceanic ridge of Beata, south of the Dominican Republic. Pelagic megafauna are some of the ocean's largest animals who travel large distances in their migratory routes. The project was commissioned by Ambient, led by the Caribbean Cetacean Society and funded by Blue Marine Foundation and Blue Nature Alliance.

Ahead of the Beata Ridge expedition, the Caribbean Cetacean Society (CSS) conducted pelagic marine megafauna surveys, which gathered data on the diversity and distribution of whales, dolphins, sharks and seabirds on the Beata Ridge. To track and identify pelagic species of the area, several key scientific methods were used including photo identification, BRUVs (Baited remote underwater video system), eDNA samples, and acoustic listening.

SEAGRASS OR SEAGROSS?

On World Seagrass Day, Blue Marine, Project Seagrass and Surfers Against Sewage released a new report revealing how the UK water quality crisis is impacting our ability to fight climate change. Seagrass meadows in the UK are in a perilous state, the report found that continued poor water quality can turn seagrass meadows from a carbon sink into a carbon source.

Seagrass meadows are highly sensitive to water quality from

sewage discharges and excess nutrients from fertilise and agricultural runoff. Increasing nutrients suffocate the seagrass meadows, reducing their size and their ability to store carbon. We are calling on the UK government to take action on water quality by: Properly enforcing regulations to reduce nutrient pollution in the ocean, commissioning research to understand how blue carbon habitats can help in the fight against climate change and redefining targets for seagrass health across the UK.

READ FULL REPORT

Healthy seagrass supports thriving coastal ecosystems.

Photo: Lewis Jeffries

"Seagrass is one of our greatest assets in the fight against climate. Seagrasses across the British Isles are in a perilous state change, but poor water quality is turning it into a source of carbon emissions."

DAN CROCKETT, DIRECTOR, OCEAN AND CLIMATE, BLUE MARINE FOUNDATION

Protecting the UK's dolphins and seals



Blue Policy has been campaigning in parliament to help prevent the UK's whales, dolphins, porpoises and seals from dying unnecessarily in commercial fishing nets. Veterinary Dr. Neil Hudson has expressed support for the expanded use of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) in English waters as part of our work to ensure fully documented fisheries. REM technological solutions such as cameras, gear sensors, and GPS units can help prevent mammals

becoming entangled in commercial fishing gear in UK waters.

Alongside the Whale and Dolphin Conservation, World Cetacean Alliance, Sussex Dolphin Project, we are working to make fishing safer for marine mammals. More than 135,000 people have signed the petition to stop dolphins from dying in supertrawler nets. Supertrawlers are huge fishing vessels with kilometre-long nets, the size of 450 tennis courts.

[READ FULL ARTICLE](#)

[SIGN THE PETITION](#)

Dolphins swimming through the ocean blue

Photo: Jeff Hester

Dr Neil Hudson (left Con MP), Jasmine Finbow (middle), Bianca Cisternino (right Bycatch coordinator from Whale and Dolphin Conservation)

Photo: Oliver Tallis

"My time at Blue has given me an opportunity to see first-hand the incredible work we do at achieving good policy change. It has been amazing to be involved in conversations with government at the highest level and I continue to learn more everyday."

JASMINE FINBOW, BLUE MARINE POLICY INTERN

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

Blue Marine, and Exeter Marine celebrated International Day of Women and Girls in Science by highlighting some of our incredible ocean scientists on the Convex Seascape Survey project, who are working to unlock the carbon storing secrets of our sea floor.

The Convex Seascape Survey is a five-year global research programme investigating and quantifying carbon storage in coastal seas around the globe, specifically looking muddy or soft sediment habitats. Did you know that soft sediment seafloor habitats cover 38 times more space than carbon storing habitats such as seagrass meadows, kelp forests and

"Don't ever let anyone tell you what you can and cannot achieve, and stop apologising for speaking. You have a powerful mind and voice- use them."

ANNABEL KEMP, GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT

mangroves? Yet the carbon storing capacity of these vast areas is currently unknown.

The Convex Seascape scientists recently conducted 'The first ever study on Arran's seafloor carbon', join the team behind the scenes of fieldwork [here](#).

[WATCH FILM](#)

[Women in Ocean Science](#)

Photo: Callum Roberts



Amorgos

The Heart of the Aegean Sea

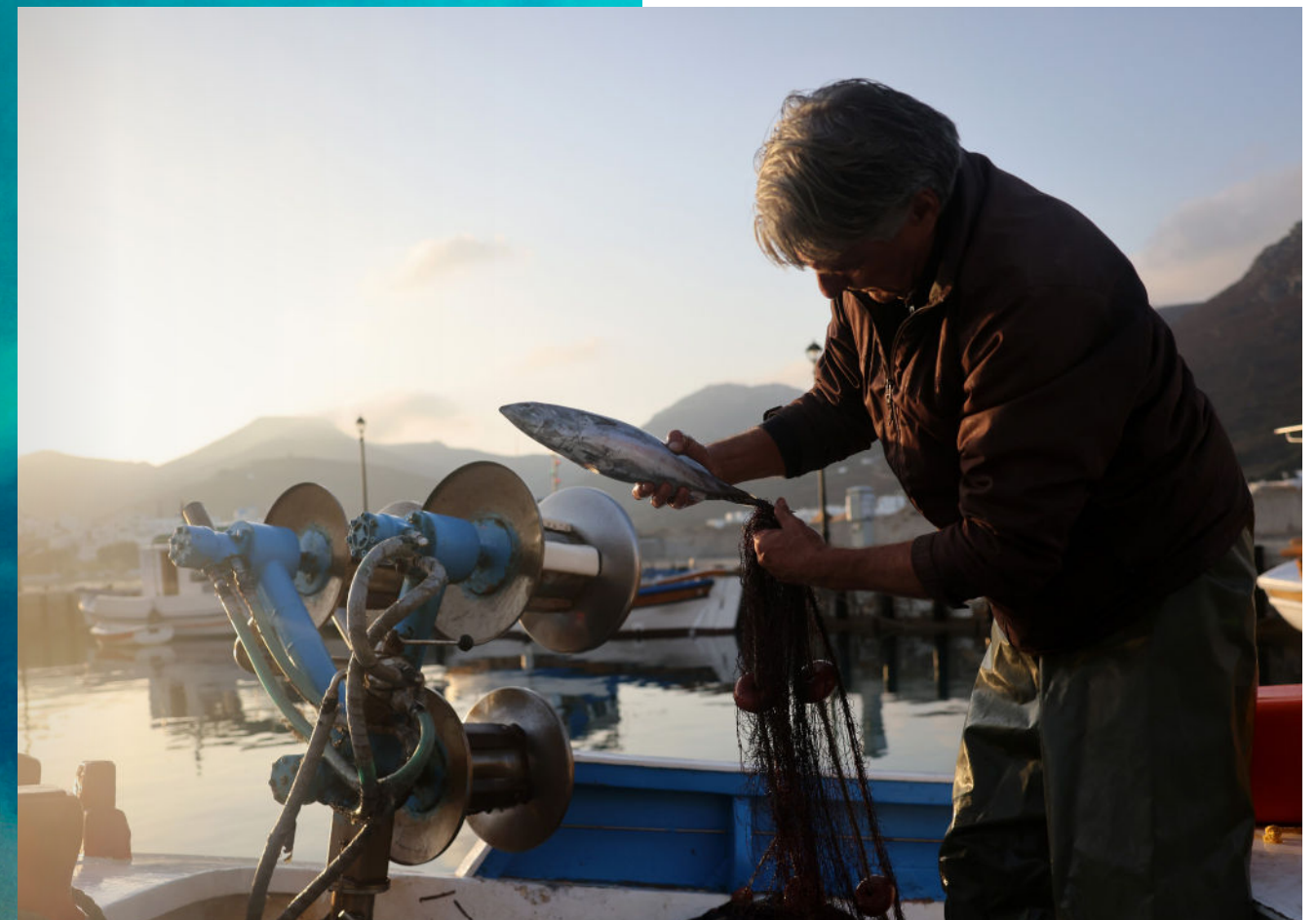
Amorgos is a breath-taking Cycladic Island in the heart of Aegean Sea. Blue Marine is proud to be supporting the small-scale fishers in the Aegean Sea who have a visionary strategy to protect these sapphire waters which support an abundance of life. AMORGORAMA is an initiative led by the Amorgos Fishers' Professional Association. Ten years ago, the fishers' nets started coming up empty. In response, the fishers united and submitted this management plan with the following pillars.

1. Abstain from fishing activities in April and May.
2. During those months, use their boats to collect plastic and other waste from the island's most remote areas.
3. Adopt additional fishing measures including changing the mesh size of their nets and increase the selectivity of their gear.
4. Create three completely no-take zones.

This revolutionary strategy not only safeguards key habitats but provides the local fishers with a stream of revenue during the off-season. The AMORGORAMA campaign is a remarkable example of collaboration between fishers, scientists, civil society, and local & national authorities.

"The sea is part of our lives, we cannot live without her."

MICHALIS VEKRIS, FISHER



WATCH FILM

Aerial perspective of the sapphire waters.

Photo: Giorgos Moutafis

Changing the mesh size of the nets.

Photo: Giorgos Moutafis

Local fisher from Amorgos.

Photo: Giorgos Moutafis

Blue Marine Challengers

Blue Marine is supported by remarkable fundraisers, some of whom go on challenges of a lifetime, all in the name of ocean protection.

This year, our incredible challenger fundraisers pushed themselves to the limit, collectively rowing thousands of miles across both the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to our challenger fundraisers, including ACAIA, Blue Tusk, Intrepid 232, Susannah and Patrick Seely and The Big Oardeal whose tireless efforts go a long way to supporting the important work Blue Marine does.

Find out how you can fundraise for Blue Marine by clicking [here](#).

London to Monaco

On 17 September 2024, 100 riders will be setting off on an epic eight day challenge of cycling across Europe, arriving in Monaco on the eve of the Monaco Yacht Show, all in support of Blue

Marine's conservation projects across the globe. A personal challenge but with a shared vision, to help save the oceans. Will you join the wave?

[JOIN HERE](#)

LONDON TO MONACO

17 - 24 SEPTEMBER 2024

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN](#)

A CYCLE RIDE TO SAVE THE OCEANS



Meet the team

Each month we like to introduce you to a member of the Blue Marine team. This month we'd like you to meet **Hamish Mackay** our passionate events and sponsorship manager.

Q If you were a marine animal, what would you be?

A This is a pretty tricky one to start with. I love so many, but I would probably say a dolphin, due to their love of surfing.

Q Where is your favourite place?

A It's not that glamorous, but the place I feel most at peace is a beautiful village on the north coast of Scotland where my family come from, called Bettyhill. On both sides of the village are the most stunning bays. Beautiful white sands, turquoise but freezing waters, fantastic for surfing, and yet rarely a soul in site.

Q Why do you care about the ocean?

A I grew up being taught to care for, understand and appreciate everything around you, so I would say I care as much about the ocean as I do for the rest of nature. However, when I was young, I learned to surf and spin off the rocks up on the north coast with my uncle, and have always had a close affinity and respect for the ocean. Over

the years, I saw the decline of certain fish stocks year-on-year, and this encouraged me to become more involved and actively engaged.

Q What's one fact you wish everyone knew about the ocean?

A There is so much to know about the ocean, and I'm only at the very start of my own journey of learning to be honest. But I think what I wish people understood is the severity of the issues happening in the ocean, and that it's likely that much of the fish people are eating have been caught unsustainably.

Q What is your favourite quote?

A "We are at a unique stage in our history. Never before have we had such an awareness of what we are doing to the planet, and never before have we had the power to do something about that. Surely, we all have a responsibility to care for our Blue Planet. The future of humanity and indeed, all life on earth, now depends on us." David Attenborough.

Q What do you consider your greatest achievement?

A Ooof that's hard... I'm hoping that's still to come, and hopefully it will be a combination of my contribution towards conservation and the bringing up of my son.

Q Why Blue Marine?

A It's the most amazing place to be! I've never been surrounded by so many incredible people, all wanting to achieve the same thing, all heading in the same direction.

Q What are you reading at the moment?

A Most of my reading time is spent reading Mr Men and Little Miss books with my son, reading football news and about marine conservation projects.

Q What is your favourite thing about your job?

A The people I work with and what they are doing. They are amazing, inspiring, supportive and positive, which just lights a fire in my belly to do everything I can.



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THANK YOU

for your
support!

To learn more about marine
conservation at Blue Marine
please contact:

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To stay up to date with the latest
news and events follow the Blue
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[@bluemarinefoundation](https://www.instagram.com/bluemarinefoundation)



Healthy seagrass supports
thriving coastal ecosystems.

Photo: Lewis Jeffries

