



## Brief Report on PO Azores trip, March 2003

**Participants:** Elinor Bartle, UiB (6-12 March), Anne Gerd Lind, teacher from Svolvær Senior High School (5-17 March)

**Purpose:** visit Department of Oceanography and Fisheries, observe unique research setting, learn about multi-faceted PO programme

### Department of Oceanography and Fisheries (DOP)

Part of the University of the Azores, the department employs around 60 people, about half of which are scientists. The department facilities include numerous labs (wet lab, cold lab, chemistry, genetics, oceanography), offices, a library, data support, diving locker, 3 zodiac research/diving vessels, a small in-shore research launch and an small off-shore vessel.

Scientific activities are related to the islands marine resources. The islands have a unique geological situation being part of the mid-Atlantic Ridge, and thus being geologically young (some vent activity), and having virtually no shelf or little shallow water areas. They are situated near a number of major ocean circulation features. These, together with some local banks, provide the basis for a local fishery. There are also several cetacean populations that are transient or more established. It is believed that the local circulation is home to marine turtles as they grow to maturity.

Researchers at the department have undertaken many projects aimed at documenting the numerous unique marine resources of the area. This work has led to the proposal of a number of marine protected areas.

The department has also engaged in a policy of interaction and collaboration with other stakeholders in the marine environment, including fishermen, tourist operators and the general public. A very active public outreach programme has been in operation for two years, involving publicity, campaigns, projects with schools, fishermen and tourist operators. In addition, scientists at the department are committed to disseminating their activities and write regularly in popular science venues including local and national newspapers, and popular science journals (including National Geographic, the Portuguese version).

### Public Outreach Programme

The Public Outreach Programme is multi-faceted. Carla Gomes, a masters student at the department is responsible for the projects in the programme. Gomes stresses three underlying principles in all aspects of the programme: responsibility (participants accept responsibility for their actions), participation (the programme is designed to be interactive and to encourage participation) and precaution (all activities stress ecological principles). The programme targets the stakeholders in the marine environment: fishermen (both artisanal and professional), tourist operators and the general public (in particular, schools). It also encourages interaction, dialogue and co-operation between the different groups.

The programme involves actions: special campaigns, nature centres / booths, and materials. Some examples:

#### Special campaigns:

- Ocean week in August
- Special days
- Sea turtle conservation
- Shearwater rescue

#### Nature centres / booths

- Gomes has a portable booth that can be set up at any island event
- Nature walks are given on special theme days / with schools
- planning is underway for the establishment of a permanent centre

#### Materials

- manuals (for fishermen, tourist operators, teachers)
- kits (for schools)
- posters
- flyers
- TV spots
- video clips
- "rewards" - T-shirts, stickers

Finally, the Public Outreach programme includes an evaluation dimension. Gomes reports that primary children were questioned two years after participating in an outreach programme. The children had retained a positive memory of the experience AND had retained the scientific and environmental information from the presentation.

## **Potential for UiB student exchanges.**

Currently there are masters and PhD students at DOP. There are also a number of senior undergraduate students, who come to DOP to complete their senior research project. The students are an international group and currently include people from the Netherlands, France, and India. For fishery, oceanography and marine biology students, a stay at DOP would be a unique experience. Over the summer season (April - September), DOP personnel are actively out recording data and may complete as many as 100 dives. DOP director, Ricardo Santos, expressed an interest in having UiB students visit his department.

## **Interaction with schools**

Santos and Gomes organised a meeting with the local high school. A number of Biology and English teachers attended. Elinor presented MAR-ECO in general, and some general information about the teachers' network. Anne Gerd presented information about Lofoten in general. Anne Gerd will travel alone to Pico Island to meet with teachers there. Santos and Gomes will follow-up with any interested teachers.

Points:

- language can be a problem - it can be an advantage in non-English speaking countries to include English teachers from the beginning
- learn about the curriculum - general areas of emphasis and subject guidelines - then it is possible to come up with some specific ideas as examples
- the target group of choice is students in high school (years 10, 11 and ages 14-16), but not in the final year (where there can be limited flexibility)

### **Comenius time line**

May 2003 - pre-proposal deadline (for meeting funds)  
 Autumn 2003 - meeting  
 Feb. 2004 - proposal submission

## **Final comments**

Anne Gerd came very well prepared with information about Lofoten and gifts from the Lofoten area. The tourist apartments located just below Horta Hotel were very comfortable and convenient lodgings. (min 3 night stay, AçorProjector - Estudos e Valorização Imobiliária, Lda, Rua Dr. Melo e Simas 10, PT 9900-127 Horta, Açores, Portugal Tel: 292 200 300 Fax 292 200 310)  
 The staff at DOP were extremely helpful and welcoming.