When I first organised my placement with the Dorset Wildlife Trust at Kimmeridge Bay on the south coast of England, I was a little sceptical about it. This was partly due to it being completely unfunded, but also because the tasks I would be involved with were largely unclear. This worry disappeared during my fantastic time in Egypt (this was on the MSc “Sharm-El-Sheikh” field trip over the Easter of 2007), as it was my first time abroad, so of course my first contact with coral-reefs, and an area with real-life issues. Personally, this trip made my MSc as it gave me a links to the subject I was studying, and was a real eye-opener. Anyway, upon my return, my worries about the placement returned, but from the very first visit to the bay in June, they evaporated. Everyone was very welcoming, and although the first few weeks started relatively slowly, I quickly settled into my new surroundings.

During the placement, I worked on a number of tasks from erecting mono-filament recycling bins to running public activity days (a particular favourite of mine as it provided the opportunity to use my knowledge and enlighten members of the public as to the degradation of the marine environment).

For the second 5 weeks I was working for the Dorset Wildlife Trust, I conducted some research to gather the opinions of sea-anglers around the Purbeck Coastline. This was in accordance with the Trust’s “bottom up” approach to the management of the area, and provided the anglers with the opportunity to comment on a number of factors such as whether they felt they made a difference to declining UK fish stocks, how they felt about closed-seasons, nursery areas, and MPA’s, and what personal conservation methods they undertook that they felt were important. These final comments are to be used to create a best practise code-of-conduct for the local area for future sea-angler users. All these data collected were then analysed by myself and the results presented to my fellow friends on the MEM course back in York.
To summarise the entire Marine Environmental Management course in a nutshell: The lectures were enjoyable and informative, the field trips were almost always wet and muddy(!), the trip to Egypt was unforgettable and an experience I will remember for many years to come, and the placement was an opportunity to apply all that had been learnt over the year. Fantastic! Callum and Julie who run this course have worked amazingly hard to bring such a varied, dynamic and exciting (if not sometimes scary – the fish stocks really are dieing out!) course, and I would recommend it to anyone who has an interest in the marine world and wants to make a real difference. If you’re unsure whether its for you, the best thing to do is probably to do it anyway as I’m sure you won’t be disappointed, however, if you’re really unsure, please feel free to contact me with any questions – I’ll do my best to answer them…

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