

# Researching The Seas

As a marine scientist, Dr. Joanne Porter is in the enviable position of living out her passion. An established writer in her field, we find out a little more about Joanne's diving portfolio ...

Image courtesy of Richard Shucksmith



● **WHO IS JOANNE PORTER?**

I am an Associate Professor in Marine Biology based at Heriot Watt University's Orkney campus in Stromness.

● **WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO DIVING?**

I was an undergraduate student in Marine Biology at Newcastle University and I went on an expedition to Indonesia in 1993, where I did a lot of snorkelling surveys. After that I had a real thirst to learn more, with my first proper dive in a reservoir in South Wales in the spring of 1995.

● **I CURRENTLY DIVE WITH ...**

The Heriot Watt University Scientific Dive Team and Seasearch divers around Scotland.

● **THE SCIENTIFIC DIVE TEAM ...**

Are a committed group of nine divers, all of whom are divemasters and above and have over 100 years of diving experience between us. We work on a range of projects, some taking us to distant locations such as the Arctic, Antarctic and Central America; but all our work always maintains a strong UK focus.

● **IN 2012 ...** I published a book, *Bryozoans and Hydroids of Britain and Ireland*. It aims to help the nonspecialist identify bryozoans and hydroids they see underwater, with the emphasis on

identifying in situ, thus making the minimum impact on the living reefs of which they are a part. It was produced as part of the Seasearch project, which offers training in the identification of marine life and habitats and encourages recording by volunteers.

● **BEST TRIP SO FAR?** Would have to be the trip I had to Sula Sgeir and the Outliers last summer. We had fantastic weather, the visibility was amazing and I got to dive in some pristine and very diverse animal turf communities.

● **TELL US MORE ABOUT THE OUTLIERS SEASEARCH EXPEDITION ...** The expedition (which appeared as a feature length article in the May/June 2014 edition of **SCOTTISH DIVER**) took us to Sule Skerry, North Rhona and Sula Sgier. We dived in crystal clear waters with masses of gelatinous zooplankton, seals and kelp forests. There was hardly a bare patch on the rocks which were cloaked in many varieties of animal turf-my favourite.

● **AT THE MOMENT I'M ...** Preparing for a really exciting expedition to Norway, diving from Bergen along the Norwegian coastline and up to Trondheim. Along the way we will survey bryozoan communities, horse mussel beds, maerl and Lophelia.

● **DREAM DIVE BUDDY?** My dream diving buddy would be a Nikon D500 camera in a Seacam housing.

● **THE BEST THING ABOUT DIVING?** The feeling of weightlessness.

● **ANY ADVICE FOR SOMEONE CONSIDERING TAKING UP DIVING?** Go for it. It really is a different world down there.

