



# ENVIRO-WATCH

ISSUE 11



## 2014 SPRING / SUMMER EDITION

### Energy in the summer – Use less save more

Most of us take energy for granted and we may not even notice that we are using much of it unnecessarily. Whereas in winter we use more energy to keep our homes and offices warm, in spring and summer we tend to use more energy to keep places cool. This is often reflected on our electricity bills, especially where air conditioning units are used.

There are many simple ways in which we can reduce the amount of energy used both at home and at work. Such measures not only reduce our energy bills, they are also ways in which we can individually benefit and help the environment.

Although increasingly we are working towards producing energy from renewable sources such as solar and wind, the majority of our energy supply is generated through the burning of fossil fuels. The following are some simple tips that can help reduce electricity consumption during the spring and summer period:

- **Switch the lights off!** – We don't often realise the amount of energy we waste when we leave lights on needlessly. So, like all other electrical appliances, switch the lights off when they're not in use.

- **Use daylight** - take advantage of the daylight rather than using artificial lighting.
- **Install energy efficient lighting** - Not only will this help reduce your energy bill but it will not emit heat like incandescent lighting. LED lighting, for instance, uses around 75% less energy and can last up to 25 times more than incandescent lights.
- **Ventilation** - make sure your home and office is well ventilated rather than just switching the air conditioning on.
- **Use electric fans instead of air conditioning** - Use electric fans rather than air conditioners if possible as they consume less electricity.
- **Switch fans off when you leave the room** – remember, electric fans cool people because of the wind chill effect it creates, not because it cools a room like an air conditioning unit does.
- **Install window shutters** - window coverings and shading can significantly reduce the amount of heat gain during the day meaning there is less of a need to provide cooling.
- **Do not leave appliances switched on needlessly** - many appliances like televisions and computers generate heat. Switch off appliances when they are not in use in order to reduce heat gain.

## Summer and the beach is here!

For many of us, spring and summer signal the start of warm sunny weather and of course the beach. Here are some issues that beachgoers should be aware of:

### Jellyfish

Jellyfish can be a problem for swimmers, especially when found in large numbers. Any beach user in Gibraltar can attest to this especially in recent years which have seen a very large number of jellyfish plaguing our beaches and stinging bathers. Jellyfish normally found around Gibraltar's coastline are of the species *Pelagia noctiluca*, more commonly known as the Mauve Stinger. The reasons for this increase in jellyfish numbers are debated, but the main theories are that it has been a result of climate change and a lack of predators such as tuna and sea turtles.



Photo: Mauve Stinger (*Pelagia noctiluca*)

Jellyfish sting bathers using microscopic barbed stingers through which they inject venom into a person's skin. In most cases this causes the skin to swell, become irritated and red, resulting in some pain. Jellyfish stings vary in severity depending on the species involved. There are also many suggestions on how to treat a jellyfish sting. Nevertheless, all jellyfish stings should be immediately reported and seen to by lifeguards on duty.

In addition, the Gibraltar Tourist Board will again be deploying jellyfish booms in all beaches to ensure bathers can safely enjoy the sea.

### Sun bathing

Sun bathing and getting a tan is one reason why people like to visit the beach. However, beachgoers need to be careful when exposed to the sunlight especially around midday when the sun is strongest. Too much exposure and/or applying no protection can cause sunburns and, in more severe cases, sunstroke.

Sunburns are caused when ultraviolet radiation from the sun burns your skin, causing it to become red and irritated. Sunstroke is caused when excess heat overwhelms your body's cooling system.

Taking simple precautions such as applying mid-high factor sunscreen, sheltering under shade and drinking plenty of water can prevent both sunburn and sunstroke.

### Marine Litter

Litter that is left on the beach is not only an eyesore, it can also result in problems for both the marine environment and beachgoers.

Litter and debris left on a beach can be blown into the sea and eaten by marine life as it can be mistaken for a food source. For instance, a plastic bag floating on the sea surface can resemble a jellyfish which are a food source for many species of fish and turtles.

Litter can also injure beachgoers. For instance, people might accidentally cut themselves by stepping on a broken piece of glass, a soft drink can or a sharp piece of plastic. We would therefore urge all beachgoers to make use of the bin facilities available at all beaches and to help keep our beaches clean.



Photo: Litter left thrown in Eastern Beach





## Upper Rock Nature Reserve

Those who have recently visited the Upper Rock Nature Reserve will have noticed the ongoing works to control dense vegetation and provide clearings and open areas.

The removal of the thick scrub and vegetation, which is usually made up of a few species, has allowed the growth of a more diverse range of flowers that previously would not have been able to flourish in these areas. This is evident with the larger number of Candytuft that can be seen growing in these clearings.

Apart from being pleasing to the eye, the wider range of wild flowers provide an ideal habitat for invertebrates which then support birds and lizards. These clearings also offer an ideal feeding area for Barbary Partridges, and also attract Barbary Macaques, which can already be seen foraging in these areas. It is thought that the loss of open foraging areas has been a contributory factor that has led the macaques to deviate to urban areas.

The Department of the Environment and the Gibraltar Tourist Board have also been working hard together to improve sites on the Upper Rock which were previously closed to the public.



Photo (Above & below left)- Areas that have been recently cleared on the Upper Rock. These pictures clearly show that there are now a range of different flowers growing, such as the Candytuft.

Princess Caroline's Battery is one such area which has been vastly improved and is now open to the public. The area has been tidied up and cleared, and a number of picnic tables, seats as well as litter bins have been provided throughout the area. The area is actually made up of Princess Anne's and Princess Amelia's Batteries, and has been re-opened as a picnic area that locals and visitors alike can enjoy. The public are of course asked to take care and keep the area tidy so that everyone can enjoy it.



Photo: Picnic tables and seats in the area commonly known as 'Princess Caroline's Battery'



## Gibraltar gets included into the Raptors MOU

Gibraltar has been included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of raptors, also known as birds of prey. The raptors MOU is regulated by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, and is dedicated to the protection and welfare of raptors in Africa and Eurasia.

The Raptors MOU is open for signature by the Governments of all the states that make up the Africa-Eurasia regions. Gibraltar is one of the latest inclusions to this list of signatories and will also contribute to efforts for protecting these species against different threats.

The Raptors MOU aims to promote internationally coordinated actions to reduce impacts and improve the conservation status of all migratory birds of prey throughout the African-Eurasian region.

Birds of prey provide many important services that benefit both ecosystems and humans alike. For example, falcons eat insects which threaten agricultural crops, and vultures and other raptors eat animal carcasses, which helps prevent the spread of disease.

However, the conservation status of many birds of prey in the Africa-Eurasia region is in decline primarily due to human activities such as the destruction of habitat for construction and agriculture. Gibraltar has long been known as a key location for observing the migration of birds and it is crucial that these magnificent species remain protected far into the future.

## Spring / Summer water saving tips

Water, we all need it and we certainly can't live without it. Although we are lucky enough to have a secure water supply, this doesn't mean that we shouldn't be concerned about wasting it.

Gibraltar gets all of its potable water from the sea through a process known as Reverse Osmosis or Desalination. Put simply, this process separates salt from seawater. Desalination is a very energy intensive process meaning that it uses electricity which locally is provided using diesel, which is a fossil fuel and a source of pollution. Saving water therefore not only means saving a valuable resource, but also means that we as a community will pollute less, and of course reduce our water bills. The following are some simple water saving tips that can be used both at home and at work:

- Never leave a tap running, for example, when brushing your teeth;
- Store drinking water in a jug in the fridge, rather than just waiting for the tap to run cold;
- Only use the dishwasher or washing machine when you have a full load. If you have just a few dishes to wash up, use a bowl;
- Have a shower instead of a bath. Nonetheless, power showers can use as much water as a bath so...



- Consider fitting a water saving tap or a flow regulator to your shower;
- Check all taps on basins, baths and bidets for leaks or drips. A tap that has a minor drip or leak can amount to a lot of water if left unrepaired or not properly closed;
- Check your water meter for leaks. Make sure no water is being used, if the meter is still going round then you have a leak.



**DEPARTMENT OF  
THE ENVIRONMENT**  
HM Government of Gibraltar