



# Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

**13 May 2010**

Seagrass-Watch's electronic news service, providing marine and coastal news of international and national interest. Abbreviated articles are presented with links to their source. Seagrass-Watch HQ recommends that readers exercise their own skill and care with respect to their use of the information in this bulletin and that readers carefully evaluate the accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance of the material in the bulletin for their purposes. You are free to distribute it amongst your own networks.

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## NEWS

### ***Dugongs die in abandoned fishing net (Australia)***

24 April 2010, The Cairns Post

A Cairns navy vessel delayed its journey to Cooktown to participate in an Anzac Day service after crew spotted four dugongs trapped in a net off Cairns yesterday. Three of the dugongs pulled from the water were dead, while a fourth was still alive and released back into the water by navy crew. A shovel nosed shark also trapped in the net was freed as well.

Conservationists have applauded the crew's actions but branded the killings a dark day for Far North Queensland's wildlife. Two of the dead dugongs were about 2m long while the largest to have died measured 3m, indicating it was a mature adult capable of breeding.

The landing vessel HMAS Labuan had just left port bound for Cooktown when the trapped animals were spotted by crew about 3.5 nautical miles offshore around 3pm. Lt Steven Noakes said rough weather had created difficult conditions for the rescue. While one of the dugongs was able to be saved, Lt Noakes said some of his crew were greatly upset by the kills. "They're a great bunch of guys and I think there will be some guys on board who will feel a bit disappointed to see what we've got here today," he said. "It's obviously very upsetting." Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service rangers met the vessel at port and hoisted the three dead dugongs on to the back of a truck to be taken away for an autopsy.

The net appeared to be a fishing net which, given the tide and wind, was presumed to have drifted out from the Cairns harbour. Department of Environment and Resource Management regional marine manager Richard Quincey said the department would work with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Royal Australian Navy and Fisheries to investigate the incident further. Cairns and Far North Environment Centre co-ordinator Steve Ryan described the incident as a disaster.

*more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>*

*Related articles: <http://www.google.com/url?sa=X&q=http://topnews.us/content/218192-dugong-found-killed-and-trapped-net-queensland-s-coast&ct=ga&cad=1:1:0&cd=6dEQXPV80DE&usg=AFQjCNGHtRWvlg3cFT-kkGRh9Qqvweu2ww> ;*

*<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2010/04/27/2883218.htm> ;*

*[http://www.cairns.com.au/article/2010/04/28/107451\\_local-news.html](http://www.cairns.com.au/article/2010/04/28/107451_local-news.html) ;*

*<http://www.google.com/url?sa=X&q=http://www.3news.co.nz/Poachers-blamed-for-death-of-endangered-dugongs/tabid/417/articleID/152915/Default.aspx&ct=ga&cad=1:1:0&cd=YhFRltcxluw&usg=AFQjCNFhLPtTjiZ4yeaNWgXvm-GVNMNxxw>*

*<http://www.theage.com.au/national/hunting-for-dugong-turtles-cruel-20100414-se6q.html>*

### **Protecting Verde Islands' biodiversity (Philippines)**

14 April 2010, by Madonna Virola, Philippine Daily Inquirer

The municipal councils of Looc and Lubang in Occidental Mindoro have approved a joint ordinance establishing marine protected areas (MPAs) in 10 sites of 14,485 hectares around their islands. The ordinance makes the area the largest marine protected system in the entire Verde Island Passage Marine Biodiversity Corridor (VIPMBC), according to Rina Bernabe, communications coordinator of the Sulawesi Seascape Project of the Conservation International (CI) Philippines.

Studies undertaken by the CI showed that the Looc-Lubang area is one of the areas with the greatest marine conservation potentials. Reefs and shallows around the islands were found to have very high concentrations of fish larvae and eggs. This meant that protecting the areas is important in maintaining biodiversity and sustaining the fishery resources of the entire corridor. The Looc-Lubang area also boasts of at least three turtle species, seven species of whales and dolphins, eight seagrass species, and a rich variety of commercially important fish species. It hosts the corridor's largest no-take zone (NTZ) at 1,150 ha, where all forms of extraction are banned. The remaining 13,335 ha are designated as fishery reserves, where only certain fishing methods and gears are allowed.

The MPAs are to be jointly managed by Looc and Lubang towns. The MPAs are expected to enhance the islands' tourism potential, since the NTZ is located in front of a stretch of excellent beaches and coral reefs.

*more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>*

### **Port Geographe groyne reconfiguration is the solution to seagrass wrack (Australia)**

05 May 2010, Busselton Dunsborough Mail

A major reconfiguration of the groynes has been recommended to help provide a solution to the seagrass wrack problem at Port Geographe. Details were released in a 200-page report yesterday. The Department of Transport and Shire of Busselton, who jointly funded the \$800,000 study, said its completion would allow concepts for structural change at Port Geographe to be thoroughly investigated, modelled and costed. The study provided four management recommendations to alleviate seagrass wrack accumulation around the Port Geographe development, minimise the loss of amenity for local residents and reduce H2S emissions from decomposing wrack.

It said that scientists from the University of WA, Edith Cowan University and independent research company DHI, who undertook the study, also called for further testing of the recommended groyne reconfigurations to determine the combined impact of the large quantities of sand and seagrass that moved along the coast in this area, together with any implications for water quality in the Port Geographe canals.

While the study had provided a much-needed insight into the behaviour of seagrass in the larger Geographe Bay area from east of the Wonerup Inlet to Dunsborough, the primary focus was to gain a better understanding of local seagrass behaviour at Port Geographe to assist in finding effective management solutions.

*Full story and source: <http://www.busseltonmail.com.au/news/local/news/general/port-geographe-groyne-reconfiguration-is-the-solution-to-seagrass-wrack/1821906.aspx?storypage=0>*

*Related articles: <http://www.busseltonmail.com.au/news/local/news/general/seagrass-removal-underway-at-port-geographe/1809435.aspx>*

*<http://www.busseltonmail.com.au/news/local/news/general/busseltonbased-contractors-to-remove-seagrass-from-port-geographe/1802950.aspx>*

## **Dugong in decline off Phuket (Thailand)**

04 May 2010, Phuket Gazette

The fishing industry continues to take its toll on Thailand's highly endangered dugong population, with at least three deaths so far this year. Dugong researcher Karnchana Adulyanukosol of the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC) said two dugong carcasses were recovered in waters off Trang in January and sent to the PMBC for autopsy. Both animals were likely killed by fishing equipment, she said.

The PMBC researchers noted that the animal's two tusks were cut off some time after its discovery and before its arrival at the PMBC at Cape Panwa. "People use dugong tusks as accessory items because they are rare and similar to ivory. Some people also believe they can be used for medicinal purposes. A pair can fetch as much as 20,000 baht on the black market," she said.

A 10-day aerial study conducted by the PMBC off the coast of Koh Libong earlier this year sighted about 125 animals. The study revealed a small decline in overall numbers, but allayed fears that the local population was doomed to extinction in the short term.

*Full story and source:* <http://www.phuketgazette.net/archives/articles/2010/article8654.html>

## **Wildlife in Peril as Slick Nears Gulf Coast (USA)**

30 April 2010, Wall Street Journal

As a giant oil slick neared landfall late Thursday, field crews raced to barricade the Gulf coast's fragile wetlands and beaches, where thousands of wildfowl are nesting at the height of their breeding season and millions of migrating birds pause in their annual spring journey north.

The oil "is already in state waters" and will reach the Pass-a-Loutre Wildlife Management Area, near the southernmost tip of the state, "later tonight," Plaquemines Parish president Billy Nungesser said Thursday, after a meeting with council members and a congressman to discuss the emergency. Mr. Nungesser added that the barriers currently in place would do a good job of protecting the environmentally sensitive islands, but they wouldn't "hold back the oil" and prevent it from reaching inland through the multitude of channels that constitute the Mississippi Delta. The resulting damage "is not going to be cleaned up in the short term," he said.

Spewing forth at about 5,000 barrels a day from an underwater well, the vast oil slick is shaping up as an environmental disaster for wildlife throughout the Gulf region, from migrating hummingbirds and nesting brown pelicans to the bottle-nosed dolphins, endangered sea turtles and shrimp that take shelter in the Gulf's seagrass shallows, private conservationists and university marine biologists said.

*Full story and source:* [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703572504575214622848808604.html?mod=WSJ\\_US\\_News\\_3](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703572504575214622848808604.html?mod=WSJ_US_News_3)

*Related article:* [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science\\_and\\_environment/10093904.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science_and_environment/10093904.stm)

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/05/01/1608990/as-oil-blob-triples-in-size-florida.html>

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126483920>

## **Palau locals still killing endangered dugongs with dynamite (Koror, Palau)**

19 April 2010, CDNN

Three dugongs this year were found dead and at least two of them are believed to have died due to illegal dynamite. Mandy Etpison, who coordinates the 2010 Palau Dugong Awareness Campaign on behalf of the French Embassy said that in January there was a report of dead dugong being cut up by Palauans at the Ngardmau Dock.

The second incident was that on March 6, kayakers camping on Ngeremdiu beach reported a dead juvenile dugong floating and that craters along the beach indicated illegal dynamite use in the area. The latest death was a floating dugong found in Mekeald area in Koror, on April 2. The Koror State veterinarian Mihnea Muresanu with the assistance of the Civic Action Team medic and the Coral Reef Foundation conducted a necropsy on the animal. According to the report the cause of death is believed to be heart failure caused by explosives thrown in the water nearby.

Etpison said that the dugongs are endangered and has a very small population in Palau which is believed to be less than 200 needs to be protected. She said that under the law there is a fine of \$5,000 to \$20,000 for killing a dugong.

*Full story and source:* <http://www.cdninfo/news/eco/e100419.htm/>

## **Another sea cow washed ashore (India)**

17 April 2010, The Hindu

Hardly a few days after a Dugong dugon (sea cow) was found dead on the Rameswaram seashore, one more was washed ashore at Seeniappa Dargah near Mandapam on Friday. The animal, a highly endangered species, is said to be just three years old. It was found in a decomposed state. It is suspected it would have died in the deep sea three or four days back.

On information from fishermen, Aruna Basu Sarcar, Chief Conservator of Forests and Director, Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust, and M. Sundarakumar, Wildlife Warden, Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park, among

others, visited the spot and inspected the animal which generally lives where sea grass is abundant. A veterinary doctor also inspected the sea cow to conduct post mortem.

The carcass weighed around 300 kg with a length of 2.7 meters. Injuries were found in many parts of the body. Mr. Sundarakumar said that it might have died due to respiratory or cardiac disorder.

*Full story and source: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/04/17/stories/2010041757930100.htm>*

## **Earth Day event focuses on awareness (USA)**

15 April 2010 Tampa Bay Newspapers

Tampa Bay Watch and Pinellas County will host a public awareness event on Earth Day to introduce new speed zone signs that are being placed at local boat ramps and marinas to heighten the awareness of protecting seagrasses and manatees. A total of 100 signs are expected to be posted in this collaborative campaign as boating season gets under way.

Karen Williams Seel, chair of the Pinellas County Board of Commissioners; Peter Clark, executive director of Tampa Bay Watch; and Pam Leasure, land manager for Pinellas County Environmental Land, are expected to attend the 10 a.m. ceremony at the Fort De Soto boat ramp. The signs remind boaters to follow regulatory speeds and to avoid the seagrass beds.

Boat propellers damage the seagrass beds and safe boating is crucial to the preservation of seagrass, scallop and manatee populations. The signs are being funded by the Pinellas County Tourist Development Council.

*Full story and source: [http://www.tbweekly.com/editorial/outdoors/content\\_articles/041510\\_out-05.txt](http://www.tbweekly.com/editorial/outdoors/content_articles/041510_out-05.txt)*

## **SEAGRASS-WATCH Magazine Issue 40**

The latest issue of Seagrass-Watch news (the official magazine of the global seagrass and assessment program) is now available online at <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html>

## **SEAGRASS-WATCH Workshops 2010**

### **Australia**

Broome, WA, September 10-12 2010

*For more information: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#workshop10>*

## **CONFERENCES**

### **World Seagrass Conference & ISBW9 (Thailand, November 2010)**

A World Seagrass Conference (WSC) and the 9th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW9) will take place in southern Thailand in November, 2010. The region features fascinating seagrass ecosystems; Phuket is a world-renowned diving area and Trang has Thailand's largest seagrass meadows. Both the WSC and ISBW9 will be hosted by Prince of Songkla University, Southern Thailand.

#### **World Seagrass Conference (WSC) (Phuket, 21–25 November, 2010)**

*Open to all and will include invited plenary lectures and oral and poster presentations*

#### **9th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW9) (Trang, 27–30 November, 2010)**

*ISBW9 will follow the WSC and consist of a smaller group of participants, including both international seagrass experts and regional scientists and practitioners, to address problems of seagrass conservation and restoration, which so far are little known across Southeast Asia and South Asia.*

*Please visit the conference & workshop web site for further details: <http://www.sc.psu.ac.th/seagrass/>*

If you are interested in WSC and/or ISBW9, please respond by filling out the short **Call for Interest** form available from <http://isbw.seagrassonline.org/isbw9/>

#### **Important Dates for the WSC and ISBW9**

15 February 2010	Call for Abstracts/Interests
15 March 2010	Registration Opens
31 March 2010	deadline for student support fellowship applications
15 May 2010	Early registration closes
31 May 2010	student support fellowships notified
15 June 2010	The last day of abstract submission
31 July 2010	Notification of Abstract Acceptance for Oral or Poster Presentations, Updated Programme
15 August 2010	Registration closes
15 September 2010	Final Programme Announcement

## PUBLICATIONS:

### **SOS Files: A Journey to Sungai Pulai**

The 156-page species handbook features the flora and fauna (mainly marine) in Sungai Pulai and is the first comprehensive publication from Save Our Seahorses (SOS). This handbook was partially funded by the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). The authors are Choo Chee Kuang, Serina Rahman and Khor Hui Min. The design was done by Ms Chin Pik Wun. One thousand copies were printed and are currently available at the SOS research centre and the Malaysian Nature Society bookstore. Priced at RM29 each.

For more information contact: [saveourseahorses@yahoo.com](mailto:saveourseahorses@yahoo.com)

## SEAGRASS-WATCH on YouTube

**Seagrass: Pastures of the sea** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66Y5vgswj20> or <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/seagrass.html>

Presentation on what seagrasses are and why they are important (1,869 views to date)

## GALLERY

**Torres Strait (Qld, Australia): 05 May 2010** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

**Hervey Bay (Qld, Australia): 28 & 29 April 2010** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

**Mission Beach (Qld, Australia): 25 & 26 April 2010** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

**Pulau Semakau (Singapore): 18 April 2010** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

## FROM HQ

**Frequently Asked Questions** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/faq.html>

**Seagrass-Watch Magazine** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html>

**Seagrass-Watch Shop** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html>

**Virtual Herbarium** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/herbarium.html>

**Giveaways** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html#GIVE1>

**Future sampling dates** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/sampling.html>

**Handy Seagrass Links** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/links.html>

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Seagrass-Watch E- Bulletin is compiled by Len McKenzie & Rudi Yoshida.