



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

14 April 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

Review finds murky waterways (Australia)

08 April 2010, ABC Local

The Tweed Shire Council in northern New South Wales says an assessment of the Cobaki and Terranora broadwaters has found the water is murkier than it should be. The leader of the council's Waterways Program, Tom

Alletson, says land clearing, soil erosion and the use of fertilisers have contributed to the situation. He says the problem can affect fish stocks.

"If seagrass does not get enough light and doesn't flourish that means there's less habitat for juvenile fish and if you have no small fish you have no big fish either, so it's how the quality of the land affects the quality of the water and if you don't have good quality water the amenity value of the region and its recreational potential reduces as well," he said.

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

Towards new depths in marine research (Australia)

14 April 2010, The Australian

Marshalling its forces to tackle the academic, organisational and research challenges of ocean research has been a goal of the University of Western Australia for a decade, according to the professor heading the project, Gary Kendrick. "What the vice-chancellor Professor Alan Robson has wanted to do is bring all the marine scientists together and this is the first real attempt to put us all in the same building, and in the same organisational structure," Kendrick says. "The Oceans Institute sits under the vice-chancellery and not within a faculty. The institute is to co-ordinate the prodigious amount of ocean research under way at UWA."

Kendrick, for example, is a marine biologist expert in seagrass and seaweeds. He and international colleagues are working on questions arising from a significant dying off in seagrass in the past decade, a depletion of between 2 and 7 per cent depending on which measure is used. This matters because the beds of seagrass are ecosystems that not only provide a habitat for aquatic species, but also protect coasts from erosion.

The aim is to foster collaboration and integration not just internally, but also with national organisations the Australian Institute of Marine Science and CSIRO. The university has just signed an agreement with AIMS that will allow for five new research scientist positions at the institute. As well as a focus within UWA, the institute will provide the university and the state with "a voice on the east coast" for its marine science, Kendrick believes.

Full story and source: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/towards-new-depths-in-marine-research/story-e6frgcjx-1225853332471>

Seagrass protection rule is up for renewal (Corpus Christi, USA)

07 April 2010, Corpus Christi Caller Times

The Redfish Bay seagrass protection rule is up for renewal at the end of June. This is kind of a five-year checkup, for the purpose of reviewing the regulation and to provide Texas Parks & Wildlife Department biologists an opportunity to justify keeping it for another five years. But state biologists stationed in Rockport who monitor seagrass scarring within the area, track awareness of the rule and measure compliance while managing outreach programs say they have overwhelming evidence that the rule has been effective and should be extended indefinitely.

Full story and source: <http://www.caller.com/news/2010/apr/07/seagrass-protection-rule-renewal/>

Coral Triangle in Big Trouble (Fiji)

06 April 2010, Island Business

It covers a huge area of roughly 6.8 million square kilometres in the waters of six countries in South East Asia and the Pacific—the eastern half of Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands—where there are over 18,500 islands and 132,800 kilometres of coastline. It sustains more than 100 million coastal people, supports multi-million dollar tuna, fishing and tourism industries and is home to 76 percent of the world's reef-building corals, over 35 percent of the world's coral reef fish species and six of the world's seven different marine turtles. It's the Coral Triangle—the richest place on our planet in terms of biodiversity. But it's in trouble—big trouble.

There is no single problem facing the triangle; more a whole raft of problems. Everything from coastal deforestation and coastal reclamation, declining water quality, pollution and sewage to destructive fishing and over-exploitation of marine life. "Changing weather patterns are causing floods, landslides and severe storms in some areas and crippling droughts in others," according to the executive summary of a sobering WWF-commissioned study entitled *The Coral Triangle And Climate Change: Ecosystems, People And Societies At Risk*. The study investigated the conclusions of more than 300 published studies and consulted over 20 experts on various aspects of the Coral Triangle's future.

Coral reefs embrace 100,000 square kilometres of the Triangle—roughly one-third of the world's total. Mangrove forests and seagrass beds are "often under-appreciated components" of the Coral Triangle's coastal ecosystems. They provide shelter for all manner of organisms, as well as resources vital to fisheries, coastal processes and people. Many commercially important fish species spend some of their life within seagrass meadows and mangrove ecosystems. Large animals like dugongs and sea turtles "are wholly dependent on the presence of healthy seagrass meadows for survival."

These systems, says the summary, are "crucial for human survival" in the region. Coastal ecosystems provide not only daily food and a means of earning a living for millions of people but also "a huge range of other services."

Preserving the Coral Triangle is not, therefore, just about maintaining biodiversity but also about "securing the resources that allow tens of millions of people to live sustainably and continue to engage in vibrant local economies."
[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Impacts of the Shen Neng 1 grounding on the Great Barrier Reef (Australia)

05 April 2010, Press Release, GBRMPA

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has been working closely with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority and Maritime Safety Queensland under the National Oil Spill Response Plan, since the Chinese registered bulk carrier, Shen Neng 1, ran aground on Douglas Shoals late Saturday. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Chairman Dr Russell Reichelt said the incident poses a significant threat to parts of the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef.

Dr Reichelt said although the Douglas Shoals are submerged reefs, the broad region in which the grounding has occurred include sensitive shallow reefs that are very high in biodiversity. Dr Reichelt said that planning is underway for all eventualities, including the risk that if more oil escapes, it could come ashore at sensitive sites along the coast such as Cape Clinton. This is a sensitive national park area near Shoalwater Bay, with internationally recognised wetlands, seagrass meadows, mangroves, a large green turtle and dugong population and migratory birds.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Survey checks habitat health (Australia)

28 March 2010, p78, The Sunday Mail

Indigenous rangers are helping Fisheries Queensland scientists find out more about seagrasses, the natural nursery grounds for fish and prawns and a vital food source for dugongs and turtles. The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) is currently mapping and assessing seagrass habitat vital to local fisheries.

The 23-day helicopter and boat survey, which began two weeks ago, will help Fisheries scientists and the community develop a detailed picture of seagrass health in the Torres Strait. Fisheries Queensland, a service of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), is conducting the survey in partnership with the TSRA Land and Sea Management Unit and is expected to complete it before Easter.

DEEDI fisheries biologist Helen Taylor said Torres Strait seagrasses supported a number of major fisheries, and a greater understanding of them would help address the threats they faced. The Torres Strait contains some of the most sensitive marine habitats in Australia, including seagrass, coral, algae and mangroves. Information collected will be incorporated into emergency planning and shipping accident oil-spill response plans.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Dredging threatens dugongs (Australia)

10 April 2010, The Australian

Up to 55 million cubic metres of dredge spoil will be dumped on seagrass beds in Gladstone harbour to allow the development of the LNG export industry, despite the risks to the region's dugong population. With Curtis Island, on the edge of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, already declared the site of planned LNG terminals and wharves, the Bligh government yesterday released maps to indicate the proposed dredging and land reclamation works.

Premier Anna Bligh yesterday said the Port of Gladstone was one of the largest mining export facilities on Australia's east coast and one of three major ports in Queensland. "Last week we witnessed a historic \$60 billion LNG agreement and this will present massive opportunities and also many challenges for Gladstone," she said. Greens Senate candidate Larissa Waters said the government was "willing to trade off the health of the residents and the wildlife of Gladstone for royalties".

[Full story and source: http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/dredging-threatens-dugongs/story-e6frg6nf-1225848240201](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/dredging-threatens-dugongs/story-e6frg6nf-1225848240201)

Marine life study progress at Studland is 'positive' (UK)

31 March 2010, BBC News

Work to monitor and raise awareness of Dorset's sea life is having a "positive response", say Dorset Wildlife Trust. Research by DWT at Studland found that 68% of the people they asked would be supportive of measures to help protect marine life, if they were introduced. A two year study into the effects of boating activity on a rare colony of seahorses is taking place in the area. The underwater seagrass meadow habitat at Studland is considered to be important for seahorses.

A further aspect of the two year project investigating the effects of boating on sea life is an optional 'no anchor' zone at Studland Bay. It is thought that anchors may damage the seagrass as they are pulled from the seabed and so restricts the habitat for the seahorses. The opposing view is that seagrass and seahorses have increased anyway, irrespective of the amount of boating in the area. The project will continue until autumn 2011.

[Full story and source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/dorset/hi/people_and_places/nature/newsid_8595000/8595216.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/dorset/hi/people_and_places/nature/newsid_8595000/8595216.stm)

Seagrass Beds Declining (USA)

24 March 2010, The Environment Report

The Gulf of Mexico is losing sea grass beds at an alarming rate. According to a new aerial survey, Mobile Bay has lost nearly 14-hundred acres of sea grass beds in the last few years. And as Tanya Ott reports, that could affect your dinner plate.

Each American eats on average four pounds of shrimp a year. But a new aerial survey of the Gulf of Mexico finds the place where shrimp, crab and a lot of different fish find their food is disappearing. Scientists say agricultural runoff and sediment from development are killing off sea grass beds. Dauphin Island Sea Lab scientist Ken Heck says part of the problem is P-R. Sea grass beds just aren't as sexy as some other ecosystems.

Sea grass decline isn't just a problem in the Gulf of Mexico. Heck is part of team doing a global sea grass census. He says worldwide a third of sea grass beds have disappeared.

Full story and source: http://www.environmentreport.org/story.php?story_id=4934

New project set to monitor our estuaries (Australia)

17 March 2010, Narooma News

The Bermagui Fisherman's Cooperative will administer a new project that will study and monitor the health of estuaries from Batemans Bay to the Victorian border. The South Coast Estuary Health and Climate Change Project will kick off with a presentation and planning meeting at the Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens at midday on Wednesday, March 24.

The project is a grassroots initiative involving Coastcare, Landcare and Water Watch community groups plus schools, oyster growers and commercial fishermen. The recent flooding has had a huge impact on local estuaries and so the project has taken on even greater importance. Bermagui co-op director Allan Broadhurst encouraged everyone with an interest in local estuaries and waterways to get involved and to get in contact with coordinator Suzanne Gray from Sulisit Consulting to find out more.

Participants will look at estuary and seagrass health assessment, via on-ground vegetation density and diversity transects, plus fish, shellfish and fingerling ID; and conduct a cultural heritage survey. The project's funds will also deliver education and training workshops in a range of topics including estuary and seagrass meadow health assessment, for selected coastal lakes and estuaries from Batemans Bay to Wonboyn; fish species and migration patterns; and the hot topic of climate change and adaptation.

Full story and source: <http://www.naroomanewsonline.com.au/news/local/news/general/new-project-set-to-monitor-our-estuaries/1778880.aspx>

Impacts of climate change on marine lives (Solomon Islands)

16 March 2010, Solomon Star

Around the world climate change is negatively affecting marine environments and in Solomon Islands, where many people rely on the sea for their livelihood, this is of particular concern. To withstand the impacts of climate change, coral reefs and other marine ecosystems need to be resilient. Rence Sore, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology says that climate change is a big threat to the marine resources that are so important to Solomon Islanders.

Many communities rely on subsistence fishing for food and the tuna industry is a vital part of the national economy so healthy marine life is important to the development of Solomon Islands. Reef fish provides food for many coastal dwellers, which is 80% of Solomon Islanders but the reefs are already under pressure from human-made impacts like pollution and overfishing so climate change puts an added strain on marine resources.

Solomon Islands has a very rich marine environment, providing the country with many important resources. Solomon Islands has one of the highest diversities of corals and fish in the world. Sea grass meadows provide a habitat for species like dugongs, fish, sea cucumbers and algae. Sea grass also provides a nursery area for baby fish. Mangroves are a breeding and feeding ground for many fish and other animals like crabs. Mr Sore says that these ecosystems are now at risk from the global problem of climate change.

The Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology is taking part in many initiatives to try and protect and nurture the vital marine environment of Solomon Islands. The Coral Triangle Initiative is aimed at safeguarding the region's marine and coastal resources for the millions of people who rely on them. The Protected Areas Legislation by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology will be tabled in the last sitting of the current Parliament and will assist communities in developing and enforcing marine protected areas to better conserve the marine environment. Mr Sore says that we all have to work together to conserve our marine environment. "The best way to adapt and to be prepared for climate change is to make sure your marine ecosystems like coral reefs, sea grass meadows and mangrove forests are healthy"

Full story and source: <http://www.solomonstarnews.com/news/national/3895-impacts-of-climate-change-on-marine-lives>

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

SEAGRASS-WATCH on YouTube

Seagrass: Pastures of the sea <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66Y5vgsuj20> or <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/seagrass.html>

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

GALLERY

Broome (WA, Australia): 01 - 03 April 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Cyrene Reef (Singapore): 02 April 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Whitsunday & Mackay (Qld, Australia): 27- 31 March 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

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Torres Strait (Qld, Australia): 06- 24 March 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 HQ is supported by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts) represented in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Fisheries Queensland (a service of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation) and by private donations.

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