

## Shelley's seagrass surveyed!

Southeast winter breezes carefully cooled what could have been a hot Sunday afternoon, for our team of eleven Townsville-Thuringowa Community Seagrass-watchers. All clad up in sun-smart warm clothing, we were greeted along the way by half-clothed UV thrill-seekers, lying idly on the baked sand or frolicking in mud-pools. Whilst trekking over the hill to Shelley Beach was the preferred route by most of the fit and keen seagrass-watchers, Marilyn (our first-timer) and I (the least fit of the lot), chose a leisure stroll along the firm and unchallenging sand. Okay, the fitter group got there first and had everything set out for us! But as the saying goes, 'saving the best for the last', my companion Marilyn had the best observing eye of the lot, spotting a pipefish and another fish that we are still trying to work out. Team 1, comprised of Ken, Linda and Andy, overly assisted by Naomi Smith (our safety officer, photographer-cum-jane-of-all trades), were well in advance at transect 1. Team 2, Linda and Barry, were not far behind if they weren't too hampered by inquisitive me on transect 2! Seaweeds got a plug here and there from me whenever it appears in or near our quadrat. A baby-crayfish in one of transect 2's quadrats caused much eye dilations before being enthusiastically and skilfully shot with our digital camera. The team on transect 3 was headed by husband and wife Jason and Michelle, and included our sharp-eyed Marilyn, and strongly anchored by our site-coordinator Sue Mulvany. Team 2 were first to reach the 50-m mark, and then traced their footprints back to begin the seed count at zero-metres. After a brief demo to Linda on how to operate the technical poly-tube inserter, team 2 lined up on either side of the transect to begin the most laborious part of seagrass-watch. Not to be outdone, team 1 began promisingly by setting a world-record count of 82 seeds on the first mark! "[Expletive!]", echoed from transect 3, upon hearing this incredible over the mud-flat shattering news. Even the seed recorder muttered something less expletive that thankfully, discretely blew towards the lush undulating Pallarenda hills by the ever-present breeze. Despite the dogged

determination and all the gallant efforts by the rest of the team, there was no way of toppling team 1's high productive site. Alas, the counting was done, the tapes were reeled back to place and equipment neatly stowed in their buckets. A quick check of the datasheet by Sue, and then we had to face Naomi for a quick seagrass smile picture. Congratulations all round, and questions and discussions began as we trekked back to carpark. Sue, in her other new role as Entertainment & Refreshment Coordinator, had one of the Park tables laid out with Mountain Dew and crispy chips. It was a fantastic ending to what was a beautiful and pleasant afternoon.

Our big thanks go out to all the Townsville-Thuringowa Seagrass-Watch Volunteers, for your continued support. The next seagrasswatch survey for Shelley Beach 1 and 2 is planned for the October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006. So please pen this in to your calendars and planners.



*Townsville-Thuringowa SeagrassWatch Volunteers  
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