



SEAGRASS-WATCH E-BULLETIN

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Seagrass-Watch's electronic news service, providing marine and coastal news of international and national interest. Seagrass-Watch welcomes feedback on the bulletins, and you are free to distribute it amongst your own networks. www.seagrasswatch.org

IN THIS BULLETIN

NEWS	1
5 December - International Volunteer Day	1
International Seagrass Biology Workshop 8 (ISBW8)	1
Bangladesh Cyclone-Sidr Appeal (Bangladesh)	2
Fontes awarded for coast care (Queensland, Australia)	2
Seagrass map wins group local hero gong (Queensland, Australia)	2
Locals urged to avoid bacteria blooms (Queensland, Australia)	2
Anglers support Moreton Bay bans (Queensland, Australia)	3
Dugong on verge of extinction in Qatar (State of Qatar)	3
Helicopters to monitor movements of dugong (State of Qatar)	3
Seagrass draws attention in experts' meet (Philippines)	3
Philippine Briefs - Coral triangle council (Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, Micronesia)	4
Indian River ecosystem vital to our area (Daytona Beach, FL, USA)	4
Nakheel hosts educational visit to The Palm Jumeirah (United Arab Emirates)	4
Pelican Bay, Naples and Collier mulling options to reduce pollution in Outer Clam Bay (Naples, FL, USA)	4
Edgartown Great Pond Perilously Near Nitrogen Limits, Estuaries Study Finds (Edgartown, MA, USA)	5
GALLERY	5
Moreton Bay and Gold Coast (SE Qld): 22 - 25 November 2007	5
Pulau Semakau (Singapore) : 25 November 2007	5
Shelly Beach (Townsville) : 23 November 2007	5
PUBLICATIONS	6
Proceedings of a training workshop, South East Queensland	6
Proceedings of a training workshop, Mornington Island	6
Coastal seagrass habitats at risk in the Great Barrier Reef.	6
Relationships between seagrass and sediments along the Queensland coast	6
FROM HQ	6
Seagrass-Watch News Issue 30	6
Seagrass-Watch Shop	6
Virtual Herbarium	6
Giveaways	6
Future sampling dates	6
Handy Seagrass Links	6

Please note: links to sources were active on date of publication. Some sources remove links periodically.

NEWS

5 December - International Volunteer Day

In 1985, the United Nations General Assembly designated 5 December as an annual celebration of voluntary action by people, communities and governments of the world. International Volunteer Day (IVD) is for volunteers of all walks of life working in communities around the globe. The United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) is the designated international focal point for IVD.

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

International Seagrass Biology Workshop 8 (ISBW8)

1 December 2007, by Michelle Waycott, President World Seagrass Association

The International Seagrass Biology Workshop series have taken place around the world since 1993 in Japan having evolved out of recognition of the global focus of seagrass issues. The Workshops have been held in a diverse range of locations around the world highlighting the diversity of seagrasses and their ecosystems. In 2008, the next meeting

will be held at the spectacular Bamfield Marine Sciences Center on Vancouver Island, Canada from August 30 through September 6, 2008, including 5 full conference days. The meeting is being timed to make the best opportunity for conducting a field trip during low tides to see the *Phyllospadix* meadows.

Due to the size of the venue, there will be limits as to the number of people who can attend ISBW8 and a working group has been formed to assist with the decision making process. A call for abstracts will be made in the next few weeks. As places will be strictly limited, anyone who is interested in attending is encouraged to put in an application for attendance when applications to submit abstract are called on Tuesday 18 December 2007. The ISBW8 convenor is Cynthia Durance.

more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html> or visit <http://isbw.seagrassonline.org>

Bangladesh Cyclone-Sidr Appeal (Bangladesh)

29 November 2007, by Mowdudur Rahman, CCEC

The Centre for Coastal Environmental Conservation (CCEC), a Seagrass-Watch partner since 2006, are making a special request for assistance to help cyclone victims to survive, recover, rebuild, and rehabilitate the coastal environment. The CCEC office located in Khulna is not far from the most severely Cyclone-Sidr impacted coastal communities and they have the capacity and desire to provide much needed assistance but support is needed.

Cyclone-Sidr, likened to a mini Tsunami, due its powerful 5-6 metre tidal surge hit the Bangladesh Sundarban coast, Nov.15, officially taking 3,243 human lives to-date but it is estimated this figure could rise to 10,000.

Sundarban the UNESCO declared World Heritage Site, is the world largest mangroves forest and took a direct hit which helped to save coastal lives and resources by sacrificing herself as a buffer. The magnitude of devastation would be manifold if not for the Sundarban mangroves which suffered extensive damage according to early reports. A great deal of assistance will be required in the medium term to rehabilitate this critical protective barrier against future cyclones and tidal surges.

If you would like to contribute..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>

Fontes awarded for coast care (Queensland, Australia)

Whitsunday Times, Friday 30 November, 2007

Tony and Beverly Fontes of the Order of Underwater Coral Heroes (OUCH) have been awarded a prestigious Coastcare Local Hero medal for their outstanding contribution to repairing and protecting the Whitsunday's magnificent coast. Mr Fontes said it was fantastic to receive the award. "It is a privilege and honour to receive it and we really appreciate it," Mr Fontes said. "We have been working very hard and this award is for all of the OUCH volunteers not just myself and Beverly."

The Order of Underwater Coral Heroes (OUCH) is a group of internationally recognised volunteers dedicated to the protection of coral reefs in the Whitsunday Islands. The group is involved in Seagrass-Watch (monitoring seagrass meadows) and Mangrove Watch (monitoring mangrove forests) as well as the Reef Protection Program. The group consists of volunteer divers, skippers, marine biologists, surveyors and keen snorklers and is dedicated to research, education and advocacy.

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

Seagrass map wins group local hero gong (Queensland, Australia)

The Cairns Post, Thursday 29 November, 2007

Mapping seagrass and measuring water quality have won a Cape York environment group a Coastcare Local Hero medal.

CYMAG, formerly the Cape York Marine Advisory Group, has been monitoring the waters of the Annan, Endeavour and Laura/Normanby rivers and have released seagrass maps for 100km of Eastern Cape York coastline. "You cannot manage what you've got without good knowledge of it," Cymag CEO Ian McCollum said. "That's what drives our group."

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

Locals urged to avoid bacteria blooms (Queensland, Australia)

ABC News, Wednesday 28 November 2007

The Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland says people should avoid interaction with large blooms of the bacteria *Lyngbya*, which are affecting areas of Moreton Bay. Spokesman Simon Baltais says the bacteria, which looks like black cotton, has carcinogenic properties and can cause skin lesions and asthma attacks. He says the blooms have been found at Wellington Point, Victoria Point and in the Pumicestone Passage.

Mr Baltais says the blooms occur naturally but land clearing and pollution are causing dangerous outbreaks. "It becomes quite extensive and covers things like seagrass and destroys it, and obviously that's a problem for animals, like dugong and turtles that rely on it," he said.

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

Anglers support Moreton Bay bans (Queensland, Australia)

Couriermail.com.au, Monday 26 November, 2007

Commercial and recreational fishers have proposed that 29 per cent of some Moreton Bay fishing habitats be locked up. They have also suggested 18 per cent of seagrass areas be set aside to protect dugong and trawlers be banned from about a quarter of the bay.

The no-go areas, outlined in a document prepared for the Moreton Bay Access Alliance, are more extensive than the Environmental Protection Agency has foreshadowed. The agency has not been specific but has set a minimum of 10 percent green area in the bay marine park, which stretches 125km from Caloundra to the Gold Coast Seaway.

Some conservationists want half the bay, which covers 390,000ha and is Queensland's busiest seaway, closed off. Fishing groups think the 10 per cent no-go target is too high. The alliance, which is made up of amateur and professional fishers, representatives of the indigenous community, conservation movement and boating and seafood traders, said the plan would protect the bay while minimising impact on livelihoods and leisure.

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

Dugong on verge of extinction in Qatar (State of Qatar)

International Animal Rescue, Friday 23 November 2007

The dugong faces extinction in Arabian Gulf waters unless urgent action is taken to protect its habitat and main source of food, seagrass, the government of Qatar has warned.

Announcing plans to launch a major study into the situation facing the endangered sea mammal, the country's Supreme Council for Environment and Natural Reserves (SCENR), told the Peninsula that it hopes the survey will allow it to better protect the species.

Qatar is home to the world's second largest population of dugongs, with estimates putting their population in the Arabian Gulf at 7,500, but they are under threat due to habitat loss from construction work as well as pollution and fishing. Ghanem Mohammed Abdullah, Director of Wildlife Conservation at SCENR, said: "Qatar is therefore a central part of the dugong's range and this unique mammal is facing serious threat." "An immediate intervention is necessary for combating threats from fishing, pollution and its habitat loss," he added.

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

Helicopters to monitor movements of dugong (State of Qatar)

Gulf Times, Wednesday, 21 November, 2007

Sophisticated military camera systems will be used to study dugongs – highly vulnerable sea mammals which are facing extinction. The effort is part of a Qatar Dugong Conservation Initiative, being undertaken by the Supreme Council for Environment and Natural Reserves (SCENR), in association with Dolphin Energy and the Qatar Air Force (Helicopter Wing).

Dolphin Energy is managing the project with a team of international scientists from Five Oceans and aerial support from the Helicopter Wing. The study, which is meant to conserve the mammals in the Arabian Gulf, will also include seagrass habitats on which dugongs depend. A previous study of dugongs, which are also known as sea cows, was conducted in the mid-1980s, officials said yesterday.

The project team officials said they were grateful to the Qatari Air Force which will be providing the necessary support for aerial surveys used to obtain critical data about numbers and whereabouts of dugongs in Qatari waters, the officials said.

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

Seagrass draws attention in experts' meet (Philippines)

22 November 2007, By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes , Inquirer.net

BOLINAO, Pangasinan – Seagrass, the "last frontier" of the marine ecosystems, got the attention it deserved during a two-week, seven-country regional training course on management models and strategies for coral reef and seagrass ecosystems conducted here by the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UPMSI).

Dr. Miguel Fortes, a marine scientist and professor of marine science at the UPMSI, said that of the marine habitats, corals are the most popular, mangroves the most disturbed and seagrass beds the least studied.

The training course, attended by participants who are involved in coral and seagrass management in their countries, was anchored on the principle that "coral reefs and seagrass ecosystems are contiguous, interconnected structurally and functionally." The course was in line with objectives of the United Nations Environment Program/Global Environment Facility (UNEP/GEF) South China Sea Project. Participants came from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

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

Philippine Briefs - Coral triangle council (Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, Micronesia)

Friday November 23, 2007, By Nelson Badilla, Marianas Variety

MANILA — The Philippine government is strongly urging other Southeast Asian countries to create a "coral triangle" council that will help preserve the region's marine resources zone from environmental destruction caused by global warming and other forms of ecological degradation. Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap made the proposal during the recently held Coral Triangle Initiative meeting in Washington, D.C.

The coral triangle refers to the vast area within the Indo-Pacific that contains the highest levels of coral diversity and the richest marine life in the world. It is bounded by Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the Philippines. It contains 75 percent of all coral species known to science; 75 percent of the world's mangrove species; 45 percent of the world's seagrass species; 58 percent of tropical marine mollusks; six of eight species of marine turtles; 22 species of marine mammals and migrating populations of whale sharks and manta rays; and more than 3,000 species of fish.

Full story and source: http://www.mvariety.com/?module=displaystory&story_id=2928&format=html

Indian River ecosystem vital to our area (Daytona Beach,FL,USA)

November 28, 2007, Daytona Beach News-Journal

Saving east Central Florida's unique coastal heritage requires preserving the Indian River Lagoon. For more than 100 years, governments acknowledged the vital role the lagoon plays in this area's ecosystem. And as late as the 1990s, it seemed as if they were winning the fight to reclaim and safeguard the estuary. But the lagoon shows signs of increasing ill health. Tumors disfigure sea turtles' faces, while infection threatens dolphins' lives. (Nearly half of the Atlantic bottlenose dolphin population now carries a form of herpes virus once rarely found in the wild.) Seagrass beds show scarring from boat propellers. Water quality suffers from tainted stormwater, boat discharge and algae blooms. Noise and speeding boats disrupt rookeries where migratory birds hatch and raise their young.

There's still hope. To stop the damage, local leaders must acknowledge the impact of human behavior on the lagoon, and mitigate it. The decisions won't be easy.

Full story and source: <http://www.news-journalonline.com/NewsJournalOnline/Opinion/Editorials/opnOPN88112807.htm>

Nakheel hosts educational visit to The Palm Jumeirah (United Arab Emirates)

26 November 2007, AME Info

Nakheel, one of the world's largest and most innovative real estate developers, has this month completed a programme of educational visits for more than 100 local students to The Palm Jumeirah. The visits gave the students an opportunity to learn more about Nakheel's innovative waterfront projects, and the relationship between development and marine preservation.

During the day the students learnt about the diverse marine life which exists in the waters surrounding The Palm Jumeirah. Members of the Nakheel Environment Team, Shaun Lenehan, Head of Environment and Riang Carver, Project Environmental Manager, explained how the breakwaters of The Palm Jumeirah create protected areas that attract corals, seagrass, and an abundance of other marine species. The students were excited to learn that dolphins have even paid visits to the island.

Shaun Lenehan, Head of Environment, Nakheel Environmental Department, said 'As well as being a fun day out, the site visit offered a very practical learning experience for the students. I was impressed with the level of knowledge of the students and their insightful questions. The next generation will eventually be responsible for preserving a healthy environment for residents in the UAE as well as the life that surrounds our shores. My hope is that we have stirred an interest and that some of them will one day pursue an academic career focusing on protecting our environment.'

Full story and source: <http://www.ameinfo.com/139791.html>

Pelican Bay, Naples and Collier mulling options to reduce pollution in Outer Clam Bay (Naples,FL,USA)

23 November 2007, By ERIC STAATS , Naples Daily News

A study of seagrasses and declining water quality in a North Naples estuary is prompting talk of what to do about it. The health of Outer Clam Bay, south of Clam Pass, has been at the center of a dispute sparked by claims from

Seagate residents that the Pelican Bay neighborhood was ignoring a seagrass die-off while focused on a project to restore a mangrove die-off blamed on development of Pelican Bay.

Collier County intervened, hiring a consultant to study the estuary. The consultant found that previous reports that seemed to indicate a seagrass die-off probably were inaccurate but found that pollution in Outer Clam Bay has increased.

Officials from the Pelican Bay Services Division, an arm of county government, the city of Naples and Collier County are meeting to talk about options for stemming the pollution in the estuary that is bisected by the city-county line.

Full story and source: http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2007/nov/23/pelican_bay_naples_and_collier_mulling_options_red/?breaking_news

Edgartown Great Pond Perilously Near Nitrogen Limits, Estuaries Study Finds (Edgartown, MA, USA)

23 November 2007, By MIKE SECCOMBE , Martha's Vineyard Gazette -

If the Edgartown Great Pond is to be restored to environmental health, town authorities must find a way to cut nitrogen pollution coming from household septic systems by at least 30 per cent, according to a comprehensive scientific study of the pond's water quality.

A draft report of the Massachusetts Estuaries Project finds that water quality in the Great Pond is significantly affected by heavy nitrogen loading, and that the biggest single contributor — responsible for more than 5,500 kilograms or one-third of total nitrogen entering the 890-acre pond each year — is household septic systems.

The high nutrient load in the pond has led to a dramatic loss of eel grass beds and serious impact on fish and shellfish habitat, the report finds. Apart from calling for a cut in the amount of nitrogen going into the pond, the draft report also recommends more frequent opening of the pond to the sea, especially in summer, so excess nutrients might be flushed out.

While the report says it may be possible to restore the eel grass beds, which have declined more than 90 per cent since 1951, it warns: "As part of future restoration efforts, it is important to understand it may not be possible to turn each embayment into a pristine system."

Full story and source: <http://www.mvgazette.com/article.php?14619>

GALLERY

Moreton Bay and Gold Coast (SE Qld): 22 - 25 November 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Victoria Point, 22 November 2007

Currumbin Creek, (Currumbin, Gold Coast), 23 November 2007

Capalaba/Wellington Pt (Moreton Bay), 24 November 2007

Currumbin (Gold Coast), 25 November 2007

Seagrass-Watch HQ visited South East Queensland to catch up with local Seagrass-Watch groups and conduct workshops in Moreton Bay and the Gold Coast. Participants from the three regions in SEQ (including Noosa, Moreton Bay and Gold Coast) learnt seagrass biology, ecology, identification, and Seagrass-Watch monitoring.

Seagrass-Watch HQ would like to thank Simon Baltais, Paul Finn, Keira Price (Moreton Bay Seagrass-Watch) and Sheila Davis, Linda Ray and George Lewis (Gold Coast Seagrass-Watch) for their support and effort in making the Seagrass-Watch Moreton Bay and Gold Coast workshops a success. And to all participants, thank you for attending.

You can view the workshop feedback at http://www.seagrasswatch.org/Training/feedback/moreton_wrkshpNov07.pdf and http://www.seagrasswatch.org/Training/feedback/GoldCoast_wrkshpNov07.pdf

Pulau Semakau (Singapore) : 25 November 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

It was a bright sunny day and the seagrassers gathered at Marina South Pier, all excited to embark on the last monitoring trip for this year. We set out on what seemed to be an extremely long boat ride to Semakau. The Enhalus on Semakau were blooming? There were lots of the styrofoam looking male flowers everywhere. What a good sight to behold on our last trip!

It was a good last trip for TeamSeagrass and we sure had accomplished a lot this year. So on behalf of TeamSeagrass, a big THANKS to all volunteers, coordinators, boat captains who had helped us make this a huge success. Hope to see everyone again next year! Text: Team Seagrass-Singapore.

Shelly Beach (Townsville) : 23 November 2007 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

PUBLICATIONS

Proceedings of a training workshop, South East Queensland. <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/publications.html#Training>

McKenzie, LJ and Yoshida, RL (2007). Seagrass-Watch: Proceedings of Workshops for Monitoring Seagrass Habitats in South East Queensland. Capalaba Baseball Club, Sheldon, Brisbane, 24th November 2007 and Gecko House, Currumbin, Gold Coast 25th November 2007. (Seagrass-Watch HQ, Cairns). 32pp. (1.03Mb)

This publication provides a summary of the state of knowledge of seagrasses in South East Queensland (SEQ) from Noosa to Tweed Heads. Some hard copies are available from Seagrass-Watch HQ. To request a copy, contact hq@seagrasswatch.org. You can view the workshop feedback at http://www.seagrasswatch.org/Training/feedback/moreton_wrkshpNov07.pdf and http://www.seagrasswatch.org/Training/feedback/GoldCoast_wrkshpNov07.pdf

Proceedings of a training workshop, Mornington Island. <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/publications.html#Training>

Mellors, JE and McKenzie (2007). Seagrass-Watch: Guidelines for Wellesley Island Rangers. Proceedings of a training workshop, Mornington Island October 30-31, 2007 (DPI&F, Cairns). 28pp (1.37Mb)

This publication provides a summary of the state of knowledge of seagrasses in the Wellesley Islands group, Gulf of Carpentaria.

Coastal seagrass habitats at risk in the Great Barrier Reef. <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/publications.html>

Rasheed, M.A., Taylor, H.A., Coles, R.G. and McKenzie, L.J. (2007). Coastal seagrass habitats at risk from human activity in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area: Review of areas to be targeted for monitoring. DPI&F Publication PR07-2971 (DPI, Cairns), 43 pp.

This publication provides a summary of the state of knowledge of risks to coastal seagrass habitats within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. This publication was funded by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (Department of the Environment and Water Resources) represented in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries.

Relationships between seagrass and sediments along the Queensland coast.

<http://www.seagrasswatch.org/publications.html>

McKenzie, LJ. (2007) Relationships between seagrass communities and sediment properties along the Queensland coast. Progress report to the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility. Reef and Rainforest Research Centre Ltd, Cairns (25pp.).

This publication is a preliminary assessment of the sediment data collected by the Seagrass-Watch program along the Queensland coastline and how this relates to seagrass parameters. This publication was funded by the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (Department of the Environment and Water Resources) represented in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries.

FROM HQ

Seagrass-Watch News Issue 30 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>

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- Seagrasses of Australia
- Phytoplankton Guide
- Seagrass Biology (Volume 2 only)
- Bookmarks
- Stickers
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 30 (hardcopy)
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 29 (hardcopy)
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 28 (hardcopy)

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

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