



# Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

17 November 2008

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. Seagrass-Watch welcomes feedback on the bulletins, and you are free to distribute it amongst your own networks.

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## NEWS

### **Talks Begin on Safeguarding Wonders of the 'Coral Triangle' (Townsville, Australia)**

12 November 2008, VOA News.com

The six nations that make up the so-called Coral Triangle in the Asia-Pacific region are working to preserve some of the world's most valuable marine life. The triangle spans the area between East Timor, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. From Sydney, Phil Mercer reports.

Scientists and environmentalists say the Coral Triangle is home to one of the most important collections of marine life on the planet. It covers nearly six million square kilometers and its warm water is home to rich concentrations of iridescent corals, fish, crustaceans and marine plants. It contains more than 3,000 species of fish, including the giant whale shark, as well as a rich diversity of seagrass meadows and mangrove forests, which attract sea turtles and humpback whales.

Delegates from the six Coral Triangle nations are meeting in Townsville in northern Australia. They hope to find ways to improve conservation efforts and to protect the food supplies and livelihoods of millions of people who rely on fishing and tourism.

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

## **Seahorses under threat (Malaysia)**

08 November 2008, *nst online*

The latest survey carried out at the Sungai Pulai estuary near Gelang Patah indicates a bleak future for the seahorse colony already on the brink of destruction. The Johor Malaysia Nature Society said researchers spotted less than five seahorses in a seagrass area near an island at the mouth of the estuary, during their survey.

Society vice-chairman Dr Lum Wei Wah said the data provided by the Save Our Seahorses (SOS), a non-governmental organisation showed that the number of seahorses were on the decline. "While there were between eight and 10 seahorses spotted off Pulau Merambong, near the estuary, in March and April, only five were spotted last month."

Pulau Merambong is a 0.3ha island situated 3km from Tanjung Kupang in Gelang Patah. The Johor branch of the Malaysia Nature Society will present an environmental research report on the Sungai Pulai estuary and its colony of seahorses. The report is an accumulation of a year-long study on the estuary and its environment. Dr Lum said it would be presented to the state government and the Port of Tanjung Pelepas authority.

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

## **Water rules (Melbourne, FL, USA)**

13 November 2008, *Florida Today*

Obey the signs and save a manatee. It's that simple starting Saturday as seasonal "no-entry" and "motorboats prohibited" postings go up in the county's northern reaches of the Indian River Lagoon to protect the endangered mammals in their winter gathering spots. The sea cows congregate in the warm discharge waters of the Reliant Energy and Florida Power & Light plants in Port St. John, making them particularly vulnerable to propeller strikes from boats that may motor into the areas.

Brevard County's long stretch of the lagoon is home to one of Florida's largest manatee populations that remains threatened by boat strikes, habitat lost to development and pollution that's killing the sea grass beds that manatees depend on for food.

The 30-year effort to protect them has worked in Florida for reasons that include off-limit areas and slow-speed zones for boats. That's why anyone who ventures into the lagoon around Port St. John should take the seasonal signs seriously and obey them without question.

*Full story and source: <http://www.floridatoday.com/article/20081113/OPINION/81112035/1006/NEWS01>*

## **Park emphasizes boat ramps, preservation (FL, United States)**

11 November 2008, *Palm Beach Post*

Additional boat ramp access to the Intracoastal Waterway is now available at the new Mangrove Park in Delray Beach. The \$2.7 million, 4.5-acre park at 1211 S. Federal Highway includes two boat ramps, staging docks, benches, a bicycle rack, restrooms and parking for trailers and cars.

A large area has been set aside to protect native wildlife habitat, including seagrass beds and a mangrove forest. The park was paid for by \$1 million from the city, \$1 million in county grant money and \$688,420 from the Florida Inland Navigation District.

*Full story and source: [http://www.palmbeachpost.com/blogs/content/shared-blogs/palmbeach/citypulse/entries/2008/11/11/park\\_emphasizes\\_boat\\_ramps\\_pre.html](http://www.palmbeachpost.com/blogs/content/shared-blogs/palmbeach/citypulse/entries/2008/11/11/park_emphasizes_boat_ramps_pre.html)*

## **Marine invasive species advance 50km per decade, World Conference (Washington, DC, USA)**

10 November 2008, *EurekAlert (press release)*

A rapid, climate change-induced northern migration of invasive marine is one of many research results announced Tues. Nov. 11 during opening day presentations at the First World Conference on Marine Biodiversity, Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias, in Valencia.

Investigators report that invasive species of marine macroalgae spread at 50 km per decade, a distance far greater than that covered by invasive terrestrial plants. The difference may be due to the rapid dispersion of macroalgae propagules in the ocean, according to Nova Mieszkovska, from the Marine Biological Association of the U.K.

Says CSIC scientist Carlos Duarte, co-chair of the Conference: "Overwhelming evidence of an accelerating deterioration of the oceans has provided the ímpetus to call the marine biodiversity scientific community together in this first World Conference."

CSIC scientist Nuria Marbà will present results that demonstrate that the recent invasión of the Spanish Mediterranean by the invasive algae *Lophocladia lallemandii* is leading to a steeper seagrass decline in the Mediterranean coast. According to Marbà, "the invasion of *Lophocladia* increases seagrass mortality by five fold".

*Full story and source: [http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2008-11/com1-mis111008.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2008-11/com1-mis111008.php)*

## **What's the best way to save Cockroach Bay? (St. Petersburg, FL, USA)**

09 November 2008, *Tampabay.com*

RUSKIN —This is Little Cockroach Bay, a hidden treasure of south Hillsborough. It is still and quiet here, but trouble lurks beneath the surface. Serious seagrass scarring has turned this peaceful piece of Old Florida into a battleground. Thousands of scars from motorboat propellers have damaged the seagrass, which serves as a habitat and food source for marine life.

To cut down on the damage, a task force formed by the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission has proposed boundaries for a "pole and troll" area in Little Cockroach Bay, reaching about a mile from shore at the widest point. Only electric trolling motors, push poles or paddles would be permitted between the Cockroach Bay boat ramp and the mouth of the Little Manatee River.

Before the proposal goes to the County Commission, the Environmental Protection Commission plans to work out the details with the several regulatory agencies that control the bay, including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Tampa Port Authority.

*Full story and source: <http://www.tampabay.com/news/environment/article896374.ece>*

## **Boats face limits at Blind Pass (Fort Myers, FL, USA)**

08 November 2008, *The News-Press*

In a bit of bureaucratic/ecological cause-and-effect, plans to reopen Blind Pass might result in the creation of a 500-acre no-motor zone near Wulfert Keys in Pine Island Sound. Although the no-motor zone, which would be in a year-round slow-speed area, is an attempt to protect seagrass beds from prop scarring, some boaters don't like the idea.

Lee County will begin a \$2.3 million dredging project to open the pass within the next few weeks - the tab will be picked up by the Captiva Erosion Prevention District, the Lee County Tourist Development Council and the state's Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems.

Because dredging will destroy seagrass within the state's Pine Island Aquatic Preserve, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection wants the damage mitigated. One way to help seagrass is to establish a no-motor zone where seagrass has been damaged by boat propellers; with no powerboats running through the area, the prop scars would heal - Lee County staff believed a 500-acre section of prop-scarred seagrass near Wulfert Keys would be a good place for a no-motor zone.

*Full story and source: <http://www.news-press.com/article/20081108/NEWS0116/811080450/1075>*

## **Conservationists Push to Protect Marine Areas (USA)**

03 November 2008, *WorldChanging*

Conservationists are increasing their efforts to establish a global network of marine protected areas in response to the deteriorating health of the world's oceans. Marine parks, areas that ban fishing, development, and other commercial activity to allow the recovery of fish populations and wild ecosystems, have become popular strategies in recent years to address the oceans' woes. More than one-third of marine ecosystems are seriously threatened by human activities, according to the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

To accelerate marine efforts, environmentalists announced priority regions to create marine protected areas (MPAs), several new policy strategies, and cutting-edge technologies that allow the public to virtually "see" the underwater conservation areas for the first time. The developments came at last week's IUCN World Congress, a quadrennial meeting of some 8,000 participants.

To suggest further MPA efforts, a coalition of environmental groups identified ten marine sites that they consider ideal for protected status. The sites, three of which are in the west Atlantic, range from the world's largest seagrass community in the western Indian Ocean to the partially frozen Ross Sea between West and East Antarctica. "These are magnificent places that are very much worth saving," said Elliott Norse, president of the Marine Conservation Biology Institute.

Google Earth announced the addition of an "MPA layer" to its online mapping software. The program allows viewers to visit more than 4,000 MPAs and access photographs, videos, and stories about the underwater sites. "We will never be able to get rapid progress unless...we crack the visibility issues," Laffoley told Congress attendees. "It's not just about putting dots on a map. It's about being able to engage the world community to make history."

*Full story and source: <http://www.worldchanging.com/archives/008958.html>*

## **Dead dugong found in Jebel Dhanna (Dubai, United Arab Emirates)**

29 October 2008, *GulfNews*

Abu Dhabi: Yet another dugong, an endangered marine mammal, has been found dead by the Marine environment experts from the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) at the Jebel Dhanna area in Al Gharbia.

Over 100 volunteers who participated in clean-up ended taking home a much stronger message after seeing for real the results of irresponsible human actions. "The sight of the dead 200-kg female dugong on the shore stunned

volunteers and acted as a reminder of the fragility of biodiversity in Abu Dhabi waters," read a statement issued by EAD on Wednesday. The clean-up was the sixth in a series of campaigns held this year along Abu Dhabi's coastline under the theme 'Marine Debris is a Silent Killer'.

Following an investigation by EAD experts, it was revealed that the endangered marine mammal most likely died due to suffocation from a discarded fishing net, among the many items carelessly thrown into the sea.

*Full story and source:* <http://www.gulfnews.com/nation/Environment/10255426.html>

## GALLERY

**Bowen, North Qld (Australia): 25 October 2008** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

The Tide was not really low enough to get the job done without getting wet feet. The seagrass seemed much denser than last session. Very little evidence of *Ho*, there was also no evidence of propeller trails as there were last time - we have had a south easter blowing for many weeks now - this area gets used by watercraft when there is either no wind or a northerly so it would have had very little traffic over it recently.

**Shelly Beach, Townsville (Qld, Australia): 23 October 2008** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

**Rodds Bay (Qld, Australia): 15 October 2008** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

## FROM HQ

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

**Seagrass-Watch News Issue 34** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.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.