19 September 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.

Happy Birthday Seagrass-Watch!

March 2008 marked Seagrass-Watch's 10th year. On behalf of Seagrass-Watch HQ we would like to say thank you for your support.

IN THIS BULLETIN

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

NEWS

Abu Dhabi tries to save the dumpy 'lady of the sea' (Abu Dhabi,United Arab Emirates)

18 September 2008, The National

It's a little puzzling exactly how the shy, dumpy dugongs that graze in Abu Dhabi's warm coastal waters were once mistaken for mermaids. As a species listed by the World Conservation Union as "vulnerable to extinction," the dugongs of Abu Dhabi are a national treasure, according to the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD). In fact, the emirate's shallow coastal waters are home to a dugong population second in number only to that in Australia.

The species, whose name comes from the Malay term "duyung", meaning "lady of the sea," has been spotted in the channels around Abu Dhabi Island as well as within two kilometres of the Corniche. Of the approximately 7,000 dugongs believed to live in the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea, Abu Dhabi is home to about 40 per cent of them, according to EAD estimates. But pressures from urbanisation and human activities such as fishing and trawling, not to mention oil spills, are further putting the creatures in peril. So, the EAD's Marine Research Centre has embarked on conservation efforts to restore the population.

Next month will mark the first anniversary of the UAE becoming the first Arab country to sign a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the conservation and management of dugongs. The city's expansion along the coastal belt has encroached on the dugongs' habitat, and dredging has disturbed the seagrass beds, the mammal's only source of food, explained Thabit Zahran al Abdessalaam, the director of the marine biodiversity management sector at the EAD. "Abu Dubai is attractive for dugongs as almost all the sea grass beds in the entire UAE are here," he said, adding that dugongs are protected under UAE law and anyone found to be harming them can be prosecuted.

Although dugongs are distributed in the coastal waters of more than 35 countries, the EAD's effort to save its dugong population is tied to the heritage of local people. With so much at stake, preserving the life of creatures that have lived in the Arabian Gulf for millions of years is seen as important for both present and future generations.
Full story and source: http://www.thenational.ae/article/20080918/FRONTIERS/50094519/1036

Cangrejo Caye becomes part of Hol Chan (San Pedro,Belize)

11 September 2008, San Pedro Sun

Cangrejo Caye has been the center of controversy. In a press release issued on Friday, September 5th, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Honorable Rene Montero, accompanied by Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation Honorable Manuel Heredia Jr., announced that Hol Chan Marine Reserve has now been expanded to include Cangrejo Caye as part of Zone C.

Despite many rumours of alleged sales, surveying and leasing of Cayo Cangrejo, residents can now sigh a breath of relief to know that the precious caye now belongs to the people of Belize. The expansion of Zone C, however, will also include the surrounding seagrass beds. The Cangrejo area contains vital habitats which serve as nurseries for the various commercial fish species and Spiny Lobster, *Panulirus argus*. The Cangrejo Marine habitats maintain the lobster fishery in Northern Belize viable. Apart from supporting the fishing industry, this area is heavily used by sports fishermen who visit Belize to target species such as the Bony Fish, Tarpon and Permit. Sportsfishing is catch and release. The area will be protected after many consultations with the various user groups such as the tour guides, fishermen and the public in general
Full story and source: http://www.sanpedrosun.net/08-363.html

Dumped seaweed fans beach stink (Perth, Western Australia, Australia)

11 September 2008, The West Australian

Prime beaches in the South-West are again being fouled by mountains of rotting seaweed, with Wonnerup residents warning they will no longer tolerate tonnes of weed from Busselton's Port Geographe marina being dumped on their beach.

Tensions rise each spring as trucks remove sand and seaweed trapped on one side of the marina, which was built over a decade ago. But the developers say little can be done until the outcome of a two year study into seagrass in the area is made known, to determine if the groynes need to be reconfigured to alleviate the problem.

Residents at Wonnerup, just north of Busselton, face the prospect of having 100,000cum of rotting seaweed dumped metres from their houses in the next six weeks and they want it stopped. Port Geographe part-owner and principal project manager Luke Saraceni said seaweed had always been trucked to Wonnerup and was within the terms of conditions set by the State Government, the shire and a local working group. "Studies are under way to see if we need to reconfigure the groynes — and eventually we will solve this problem," he said.

Residents have also forced Busselton Shire Council to start monitoring hydrogen sulfide gas from the seaweed, which has been linked to nausea and headaches.
Full story and source: http://www.thewest.com.au/default.aspx?MenuID=2&ContentID=97218

Fragile seahorse habitats at risk (UK)

09 September 2008, BBC News

The Seahorse Trust is warning that Britain's native breeds are under threat unless action is urgently taken to preserve their habitats.

Steve Trewhella, from The Seahorse Trust, has been diving here [Studland Bay] for as long as he can remember. In all that time, he's been searching for the creatures in their natural habitat - among either eel or seagrass. He remembers when Britain's native species were captured on film for the first time - in Studland Bay. That was just four years ago, showing just how rare seahorses are in the wild. But now a remarkable discovery - a few years on and Steve has seen 40 of them locally this summer alone.

He believes it makes this site the only one anywhere in Britain where both types of indigenous British seahorses - the Spiny and the Short Snouted - are known to be breeding. Encouraging news indeed but laced with a warning about how long eelgrass beds will be around. Mr Trewhella is not optimistic and said: "We could lose this habitat in a single generation. "We only have a small fraction of this sort of grass we had a hundred years ago. "The eelgrass is just as important to the seahorse, as the jungle is to the Orangutan. "And if we lose it, we lose the seahorses that go with it."

The eelgrass beds tend to be in sheltered, shallow waters. But that is exactly where many yachts and fishing boats want to moor and are often desirable spots for harbour and marine builders. The moorings and boat anchors are particularly problematic and damaging. It is feared the chains scrape the seabed, tearing up the eelgrass with it. And anchors too can dig up clumps of seagrass every time they are raised. That is why the Seahorse Trust is calling for a complete ban on anchoring where eelgrass and seahorses are thought to live.
Full story and source: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7604886.stm
Related link: http://www.winknews.com/news/local/27842849.html

Killer algae spread to the shores of Kuşadası (Ankara, Turkey)

02 September 2008, Turkish Daily News

Deadly algae that threaten underwater life are spreading to the shores of the Aegean town of Kuşadası. The strain of "killer alga" formally known as *Caulerpa racemosa* has been commonly seen in the waters of the Mediterranean and Aegean seas in recent years and is known to be one of the primary enemies of sea creatures. Ecosystem Protection and Environmentalists Association, or EKODOSD, explained that urgent measures must be undertaken.

In the past killer algae were found in different areas and at deeper depths in the bay near Kuşadası and Nero Bay, and are now found in shallower waters. EKODOSD, which said killer algae exhaust the underwater oxygen supply, said in its statement: "Killer algae are spreading to the regions where fish and other sea creatures live and burrow. They threaten their own life as well as those of other plants and living creatures by causing over-consumption of oxygen in the water. They can't be eaten by the other sea creatures because they contain toxic substances."

The statement emphasized that fishermen and boat owners must work to prevent the spread of the deadly organism. Boat owners and fishermen especially must show great care, cleaning their anchors in order to remove organisms stuck to them while at sea. Wastewater should not be dumped into the sea because killer algae thrive in dirty water. Divers, fishermen, boat owners and ship captains should also check all their sea equipment to avoid spreading algae. They are also urged to do their best to protect seagrass, which are a vital source of oxygen.
Full story and source: http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=114176

Crystal River hitting roadblocks in dredging effort (Tampa, FL, USA)

31 August 2008, Bay News

CITRUS COUNTY (Bay News 9) -- Crystal River is looking to dredge a sand bar that has encroached on a boat channel, but the city is running into government red tape. When federal regulators found seagrasses in the area, the city of Crystal River couldn't get a dredging permit. City leaders say only about 5 percent of the spot in question has native seagrass.

The sand bar formed slowly over time because of erosion. It is one of the few areas in the park that isn't protected by a sea wall. The plan to dredge was started a year ago. The city plans remove a third of an acre of sand.

Crystal River leaders say they'll replant vegetation in the dredging spot in hopes it'll help them get a permit. The city also wants to stabilize the shoreline and add a kayak launch when the project gets underway
Full story and source: http://www.baynews9.com/content/36/2008/8/31/378134.html?title=Crystal+River+hitting+roadblocks+in+dredging+effort

Dredger removes sand from lagoon, destroys marine life (Philipsburg,Saint Maarten,Netherlands Antilles)

Netherlands Antilles Daily Herald

SIMPSON BAY--Pockets of regenerating seagrass beds were damaged by a dredger digging up sand from Simpson Bay Lagoon Tuesday to create a deep channel to a marina behind the airport, according to two local environmental foundations [Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC) and St. Maarten Pride Foundation].

Recent surveys conducted by foundation staff indicated that there were small pockets of regenerating seagrass beds where the dredger was operating. Seagrasses experience rapid growth in lagoons due to the relatively shallow waters which allow for ample sunlight to reach the beds and minimal currents which prevent shearing of seagrass blades. This rapid growth makes seagrass beds highly productive and suitable as feeding and nursery grounds. These ecosystems therefore attract a great diversity of wildlife, such as the great barracuda, stingrays, marine turtles, sea stars, sea cucumbers, sea urchins and the queen conch.

The groups added that indications are that much of the pockets of regenerating sea grass beds around Little Key were destroyed. The dredging "also caused serious damage to and loss of fragile mangrove seedlings when it dumped sand on top of these ecologically valuable plants along the Little Key shoreline."
Full story and source: http://www.thedailyherald.com/news/daily/l090/dred090.html

The Danish revival of seaweed thatching (London, UK)

30 August 2008, The Financial Times Limited 2008

In Denmark, on the island of Læsø, off the east coast of North Jutland, are houses with seaweed roofs, some of which have survived for as long as 300 years. The seaweed, or eelgrass (*Zostera marina*), grows up to two metres or more long. It was collected from the seashore by horse and cart and, once dried, bundled and twisted into thick ropes that were then woven through a home's rafters to form a roof a metre thick.

In its heyday, creating an eelgrass roof involved the labour of at least 40 women, while the men were out at sea. Henning Johansen, who is reviving the art of seaweed thatching, has estimated that it takes 300kg to thatch just 1 sq m of roof. Once complete, the roof's ridge is covered with squares of turf to weigh it down. As rain permeates the layers of dried seaweed, it causes them to "glue together", becoming watertight.

Johansen says that not only is a seaweed roof fire-resistant, it is also possible to walk on one without damaging it, which was important to the residents of the island centuries ago. They would regularly stand atop their homes with a telescope, looking out across the flat, then-treeless island for ships caught in storms. The main source of wood for the interiors of the houses came from shipwrecks.

Over time, Johansen hopes to replace some of the existing roofs with new seaweed ones, rather than straw. He imports bales of dried eelgrass from 300km away in the southern Baltic and will soon start to make the first seaweed roof for over a century at a cost of £100,000 to its owner.
Full story and source: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/88e55922-749f-11dd-bc91-0000779fd18c.html?nclick_check=1

*Annual search turns up record 624 scallops (*Seminole,FL,USA)

28 August 2008, Tampa Bay Newspapers

TIERRA VERDE – More than 150 volunteer snorkelers in 40 boats participated in the Great Bay Scallop Search on Saturday, Aug. 16, searching selected sites in lower Tampa Bay for the bay scallop.

Sponsored by Tampa Bay Watch and Tampa Bay Estuary Program, the search has been conducted annually since 1993. According to the organizations, this year's final count of 624 scallops is a promising sign attributed to 25 years of water quality improvements and habitat restoration efforts in the region.

The purpose of Scallop Search is to monitor and document the health and status of the bay scallop population. Bay scallops, or the *Argopecten irradians* disappeared from Tampa Bay in the 1960s when the bay water was highly polluted from dredging operations and industrial and municipal wastes. Tampa Bay's water quality and seagrass beds have since improved to levels that will once again increase the bay scallop population.

Full story and source: http://www.tbnweekly.com/editorial/outdoors/content_articles/082808_out-04.txt

CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS

Queensland Coastal Conference 2009: Waves of Change

Tuesday 12 – Friday 15 May 2009, Gold Coast, QLD

Abstract Submission Deadline: Wednesday 17 September 2008

The Queensland Coastal Conference 2009 'Waves of Change' will assist the coastal management sector to work towards coastal sustainability in Queensland. If you are passionate about Queensland's coastline and want to make a difference by sharing your experiences and knowledge with a broad range of delegates then we encourage you to submit an abstract for an oral, poster or workshop presentation.

The Review Panel will consider papers that address the following coastal themes:

- Planning, Policy and Politics
- Relationships – People and Communities
- Coast and Marine Assets
- In Action not Inaction

Don't miss out, the deadline is fast approaching!! Allocations will be reviewed when abstracts have been received. If you are interested in presenting at the conference please go to http://www.iceaustralia.com/qldcoast09/call.html
For more information visit: www.iceaustralia.com/qldcoast09, or email qldcoast09@iceaustralia.com

GALLERY

Bamfield, Canada: 31 August - 06 September 2008 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Sarina Inlet, Mackay (Qld, Australia): 01 August 2008 http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

North Stradbroke Is, Moreton Bay (Qld, Australia): 07 July 2008

http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html

Goold Island, Cardwell (Qld, Australia): 04 June 2008 *http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html*

FROM HQ

Frequently Asked Questions http://www.seagrasswatch.org/faq.html
Seagrass-Watch News Issue 33 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

- Seagrasses of Australia
- Phytoplankton Guide
- Bookmarks
- Stickers
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 28, 30, 31, 32, 33 (hardcopy)

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.