



# Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

28 April 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

### ***Hunting towards oblivion (Sydney, Australia)***

26 April 2008, The Australian

Debate over indigenous hunting has been ignited by Japan's move to attack as hypocritical Canberra's support for the indigenous harvesting of dugongs in Australian waters. While Australia leads the charge against Japanese whaling, the number of minke whales killed annually by the Japanese - ostensibly for scientific research - is similar to the number of dugongs killed each year for food in the Torres Strait, about 1000. The Japanese point out that the world population of the minke whale is several times that of the dugong.

Australia is home to 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the estimated world population of 100,000 dugongs. While the large sea mammals - listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature as "vulnerable to extinction in the medium-term future" - range widely in the Indian and southwest Pacific oceans, their numbers have crashed due to hunting pressure and the loss of the seagrass meadows on which they feed.

A new study from James Cook University researchers, commissioned by the federal Environment Department's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility, reports that surveys in 2006 estimated a population of 23,500 dugongs in the Torres Strait and northern Great Barrier Reef, about 25 per cent of the world total. This is close to the number estimated in surveys in 2000 and 2001, but substantially lower than numbers noted in 1996.

Modelling for the study suggests that killing more than 100 to 200 dugongs annually in the Torres Strait and 56 in northern reef waters - a fraction of the present harvest - is not sustainable. The study also says climate change may be affecting dugong numbers by increasing the incidence of seagrass dieback.

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

### ***South China Sea headed for troubled waters (AFP)***

13 April 2008, Independent Online

Hanoi - Polluted, crossed by busy shipping lanes, and disputed by many countries, the South China Sea has taken an environmental battering that threatens future food supplies, marine scientists have warned. In a decade the sea - at the heart of a densely populated and rapidly industrialising region - has lost 16 percent of its coral reefs and coastal mangroves and 30 percent of its seagrass, says the United Nations.

The South China Sea is ringed by China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, with about 350 million people living along its coastal areas. "There are large populations heavily dependent, directly and indirectly, on fishing, in one of the world's most biodiverse marine areas," said Keith Symington, a marine specialist with the World Wide Fund for Nature.

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

*Related links: [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=143&art\\_id=nw20080413113413802C282460](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=143&art_id=nw20080413113413802C282460)*

*<http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5g14PmlEpFYelPw0TRk3O2avGzncQ>*

### ***Port Richey Dredging Plan Clears Initial Environmental Review (Tampa, FL, USA)***

26 April 2008, Tampa Tribune

PORT RICHEY - It's not a done deal, but the city's plan to dredge miles of silt-clogged canals leapt forward Friday with word that state regulators have accepted a permit application. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection said it has completed the review process required to move forward on the city's request to dredge 25 canals, a key component of the multimillion-dollar project.

Of the three permit applications submitted by the city to the DEP and the Army Corps of Engineers in January 2006, this is the only one that has made such progress. The Army engineers in February signed off on dredging the 20 canals without seagrass, which is a vital marine habitat. The other five have seagrass that would be threatened by the dredging.

The city initially sought blanket approval for all 25 canals. But city consultant LPA Group divided Port Richey's request into two parts: one for canals where the seagrass beds will be disturbed, the other covering canals devoid of seagrass.

*Full story and source: <http://www2.tbo.com/content/2008/apr/26/pa-port-richey-dredging-plan-clears-initial-enviro/>*

### ***Look out for 'whale' that's watching the bay (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia)***

23 April 2008, The Age

AN ORCA was sighted in the clear waters off Sorrento yesterday. But don't worry if you missed it — sightings of this orca are about to become much more common in Port Phillip Bay. Measuring 15.5 metres, the vessel — named after what is also known as the killer whale — will sail the bay as an independent environmental watchdog during the controversial channel-deepening project.

"It's not a protest ship," said Simon Roberts, the Monash University biologist in charge of the Orca's scientific monitoring. "If anything, what we are trying to do is increase the integrity of the sampling that is being done so that people have more confidence."

Divers from the Orca will perform regular manual checks on the health and density of seagrass beds, while the full depth of the water column will be inspected for nutrient levels, turbidity and oxygen levels at 20 sites around the bay.

*Full story and source: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/look-out-for-whale-thats-watching-the-bay/2008/04/22/1208742941538.html>*

### ***Turtles to be climate change canaries (Gland, Switzerland)***

17 April 2008, WWF International

Just as canaries help miners monitor underground gases, marine turtles are emerging as excellent indicators of the effects of climate change. "Turtles are a really good way to study climate change because they depend on healthy beaches as well as mangroves, seagrass beds, coral reefs and deep ocean ecosystems to live", said Dr. Lucy Hawkes, coordinator of an initiative to develop adaptation strategies for climate change impacts to turtles.

As part of the initiative, WWF launched a new website today, Adaptation to Climate Change in Marine Turtles (ACT) through a grant from the MacArthur Foundation and support from Hewlett Packard.

*Full story and source:* [http://www.panda.org/news\\_facts/newsroom/index.cfm?uNewsID=131301](http://www.panda.org/news_facts/newsroom/index.cfm?uNewsID=131301)

*Related links:* <http://www.reporter.bz/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=2710&Itemid=2>

### ***Bellarine in a stink over load of rot (Geelong, Victoria, Australia)***

15 April 2008, Geelong Advertiser

ROTTING seagrass has caused an "unbearable stench" across the Bellarine Peninsula and authorities say they are powerless to stop it. The pungent smell is caused by decomposing seagrass which has washed up along the northern coast of the peninsula.

Leopold resident Greg Glascott said the smell was similar to gas and had spread all the way to Ocean Grove. Mr Glascott said the Environmental Protection Agency had received hundreds of complaints. "It's not a very nice thing to be living with," he said.

Department of Sustainability and Environment spokesman Geoff Brooks said there wasn't much they could do to stop the smell. "It's a natural occurrence. Seagrass fragments have accumulated along the northern part of the Bellarine Peninsula," he said.

*Full story and source:* [http://www.geelongadvertiser.com.au/article/2008/04/15/13071\\_news.html](http://www.geelongadvertiser.com.au/article/2008/04/15/13071_news.html)

### ***India to join global effort to save Sea Cows (Bangkok, Thailand)***

11 April 2008, Thaindian.com

New Delhi, April 11 (IANS) India Friday decided to join the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) to conserve Dugongs commonly known as Sea Cows, the only herbivorous mammal marine species. The cabinet decided that India would join the "memorandum of understanding (of the CMS) on the conservation and management of dugongs and their habitats".

*Full story and source:* [http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/enviornment/india-to-join-global-effort-to-save-sea-cows\\_10036933.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/enviornment/india-to-join-global-effort-to-save-sea-cows_10036933.html)

### ***5 protected areas identified in northern Iloilo towns (Iloilo City, Iloilo, Philippines)***

11 April 2008, News Today Online

A total of 225 hectares of coastal areas found in the four northern municipalities of Iloilo have been declared as protected areas by virtue of ordinances and resolutions passed by their respective municipal councils. The protected areas, found in the municipalities of Anilao, Banate, Barotac Nuevo and Barotac Viejo, are all members of the Banate Baywide Resource Management Council Inc. (BBRMCI).

Based on data provided by the BBRMCI 210 hectares are sanctuaries to include the 25-hectare Hibotkan Rock Fish Sanctuary in Banate; 25-hectare Pasil Seagrass Sanctuary in Sitio Lamintao, Brgy. Talisay and a 160-hectare Mangrove Reserve and Aquatic Wildlife Sanctuary in Brgy. Palaciuauan, all in Barotac Nuevo.

Seven hectares on the other hand are for research and development of angel wings and eight hectares are reserved for seagrass and brown mussel. Meanwhile, an additional 30-hectares in Barotac Viejo, playing host to seagrasses are also being proposed to be declared as reserved areas.

The declaration of protected areas allows the protection of the resources as well as regulation of fishing operations and other activities and consequently ensure the sustenance of food supply.

*Full story and source:* [http://www.thenewstoday.info/2008/04/11/5.protected\\_areas\\_identified.in.northern.ilolo.towns.html](http://www.thenewstoday.info/2008/04/11/5.protected_areas_identified.in.northern.ilolo.towns.html)

## **GALLERY**

**Queensland, Australia: 16-18 April 2008** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

**Yule Point: 18 April 2008**

Dugong feeding trails galore at Yule Point. Despite the rainfall and associated runoff, the intertidal seagrass meadows in the far north appear to be fairing extremely well.

## Green Island: 19 April 2008

At Green Island, seagrass abundance also remains high. Also evident, was scarring – the result of boat propellers cutting into the meadow.

## Bowen: 16 April 2008

## Singapore: 09 - 12 April 2008 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

## Chek Jawa: 12 April 2008

Monitoring revealed the good ol' *Halophila ovalis*, as well as *Halophila beccarii*.

## Cyrene Reef: 10 April 2008

Our transect lines unveiled some surprises. We had a seagrass flower and came across a knobbly sea star. The surprises were not yet over as the day yielded some seahorses. The one on the left is a tigertail seahorse while the picture on the right shows a pregnant papa.

## Tuas with Schering Plough: 09 April 2008

Another bright and early morning, this time at Tuas with TeamSeagrass volunteers from Schering Plough.

## FROM HQ

### Upcoming Seagrass-Watch Workshops

- Bowen, May 17th
- Hervey Bay, May 17-18th

To register: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop08>

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

### Seagrass-Watch News Issue 32 <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 31 (hardcopy)
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 30 (hardcopy)
- Seagrass-Watch Newsletter 28 (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 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), the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries and by private donations.

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