



# Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

30 July 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.

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## NEWS

### **Valuable seagrasses face global warming threat**

25 July 2008, GENEVA, (Reuters)

Seagrass meadows, which are vital for the survival of much marine life and a source of household materials in Europe and Africa, face a mounting threat from global warming, a report said on Friday.

The report, from the Swiss-based International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), said the submerged meadows -- many around the Mediterranean -- could be saved through concerted action by governments and scientists.

"Seagrass habitats are already declining due to increasing water temperatures, algae (seaweed) growth and light reduction, which are all effects of global change," said IUCN specialist Mats Bjork, one of the authors of the report.

The report said some of the healthiest seagrass areas known to exist today were off the North African coast of Libya and Tunisia in areas where there had been little industrial or tourism development. Carl Gustaf Lundin, head of IUCN's Global Marine Programme, said the meadows could be saved by making seagrass more resilient to climbing temperatures through mixing genetically more diverse populations.

The report, issued at a conference in Barcelona, said the introduction of protected areas and linking the underwater meadows to nearby mangrove plantations or coral reefs would also give a huge boost to their chances of survival. Lundin said it was also vital to extend research into how seagrass can be protected -- a effort already promoted by IUCN that would require governments and scientific institutions to devote resources and time.

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

### ***Outrage over Victoria's black swan cull (Australia)***

26 July 2008, based on a report by Samantha Donavon for AM, ABC Online

In Gippsland in Victoria, the black swan is a prominent emblem for tourism and is also an important symbol to the local Indigenous community. But in the eastern parts of the region, famous for its lakes and protected wetlands, the swans are becoming pests. Five permits have been issued to farmers to shoot a total of 90 swans.

The Victorian Environment Department's manager of biodiversity services, Kimberley Dripps, says the Department was left with no alternative. "In this case the swans have moved into a young lucerne crop and they've caused so far over \$60,000 worth of damage to that crop," she said. "The farmer involved has undertaken several methods to try and move the swans on and those have unfortunately been unsuccessful."

But environmentalists are outraged that the Government has approved the shootings and argue that the drought and environmental mismanagement are forcing the birds to search for other sources of food. Jill Redwood from Environment East Gippsland is horrified that the swans are being culled. "The reason the swans are moving out of the wetland into the farmers' pasture is because the lakes are dying. "These have been dying for the last two or three decades but the Government has done nothing about it and now all the seagrass has died off, the swans are starving, and they're having to move over into farmland."

Based on a report by Samantha Donavon for AM

*Full story and source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/07/26/2315339.htm>*

*Related links: <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,24075991-661,00.html>*

### ***Mixed response to the fourth alignment (Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India)***

26 July 2008, by S Raja, Newindpress

RAMANATHAPURAM: The fourth alignment suggestion for the Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project (SSCP) evoked mixed response from leaders of fishermen as well as environmentalists here. They fear that it would affect the topography of Rameswaram, if implemented between 'Muhundarayarchattiram and Kothandaramar temple coast.'

Chief Justice Balakrishnan of the Supreme Court had suggested to senior counsel for the Centre Fali S Nariman to consider the fourth alignment of the project to avert the controversy over Adam's Bridge. However, scientists and environmentalists say that this alignment would damage the eco-system and coral reef beds in the Gulf of Mannar.

Environmentalists feel that migratory birds, including flamingoes, will not come to the lagoon located near Kothandaramar temple if fourth alignment is implemented. Marine scientists say that coral reef, sea grass beds and national marine park will be damaged in the region between Mandapam and Thoothukudi.

*Full story and source: <http://www.newindpress.com/NewsItems.asp?ID=IET20080725153357&Page=T&Title=Southern+News++Tamil+Nadu&Topic=0>*

### ***Whither the mangrove? (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates)***

25 July 2008, by Matt Kwong, The National

Thin strips of mangrove clusters – the nursery habitat for fish and migratory seabirds in the Gulf – are the country's most vital ecological resource and the UAE has undertaken a restoration project to protect some 40 square kilometres of the trees, which grow in brackish coastal waters on leggy roots. But while Abu Dhabi's Urban Planning Council has identified and reacted to the need to preserve the mangroves, commendably large-scale efforts elsewhere in the world appear to be backfiring.

The most notable example is a seeding strategy in the Philippines, where 70 per cent of the archipelago's mangroves have been lost to deforestation since the 1950s. Their method of seeding has not only been ineffective, according to Maricar Samson and Rene Rollon, biologists at the University of the Philippines, it has been potentially harmful to the environment. In an effort to reverse a trend that has been under way for the past two decades, conservation groups began replanting some 44,000 hectares. But after conducting surveys of more than 70 sites, it became clear to Ms Samson and Mr Rollon that the ecological gains of converting mudflats, sand flats and seagrass meadows into mangrove forests was uncertain.

Abu Dhabi has already recognised that the seagrass beds and mangroves surrounding the city “are the most important ecological resources in the entire country”, according to the Urban Planning Council’s 2030 plan; it is believed that the capital’s mangroves – situated in the shallow, sandy tidal flats where the desert meets the Gulf – can help to curb the degradation of land in the arid environment.

*Full story and source: <http://www.thenational.ae/article/20080724/Frontiers/969965229/1036>*

### **Local boaters balk at mitigation dredging proposal (Sanibel, FL, USA)**

22 July 2008, Captiva Current

A proposal made by Lee County officials to dredge 48 channels and set aside approximately 1,400 acres of waterways as pole-and-troll zones has been met with opposition from local marinas, boat owners and the Coastal Conservation Association of Florida.

Last week, a group of challengers to the proposal met at Fish-Tale Marina in Fort Myers Beach to discuss alternatives to the county’s plan. All agreed that something needs to be done to help improve the quality of the water and seagrasses within the region, but debated which method would be best in order to accomplish that goal.

Each of the 48 channels identified by the county, which also includes Matlacha Pass and the northern portion of Pine Island Sound, have seagrass beds that have been severely damaged by propeller scarring. In order to try and save those seagrasses, officials are hoping that their mitigation dredging plan will help restore those resources naturally.

However, opponents to the proposal are skeptical that the county’s plan will be as successful as they hope. “There are three options for mitigation dredging — preservation, enhancement and restoration,” said Adam R. Gelber, a biologist and seagrass specialist representing the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) of Florida. “I don’t see where any of these three criteria are being met with this proposal.”

*Full story and source: [http://www.captivacurrent.com/breaking\\_news/articles.asp?articleID=3903](http://www.captivacurrent.com/breaking_news/articles.asp?articleID=3903)*

### **Algae are in bloom, and they're choking life out of Barnegat Bay (Atlantic City, NJ, USA)**

21 July 2008, Press of Atlantic City

On a clear morning in the Barnegat Bay, Pete McLain takes a small boat out to survey what's left of the beds of eelgrass underwater. Having worked with the state's Department of Environmental Protection for nearly 50 years, he has studied the bay for a large part of his life. In the early 1930s, New Jersey's eelgrass - a form of seagrass that serves as a habitat and food source for many marine species - was almost wiped out by disease. After decades of recovery, the eelgrass could be lost once again.

The macroalgae in the bay have increased exponentially in recent years. McLain believes it's due to excess nitrogen coming from human waste that finds its way into the bay. Nitrogen is an essential element - it outnumbers oxygen in the atmosphere almost four to one - and algae thrive on it.

Brick Township resident Christi Campbell, 19, is one of the students who is helping McLain with his research this summer. McLain takes students and other volunteers out to different parts of the bay, where they rake up whatever algae they can find. As she pulls algae from the bay, Campbell peels the algae from the eelgrass. In many instances, the algae completely surround every blade.

Algae accumulation can be extremely problematic. As China prepares to host the summer Olympics next month, crews have been working around the clock to clean up excess algae where the world's top sailors are expected to compete. The algae bloom covers one-third of Qingdao Bay.

*Full story and source: <http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/185/story/210388.html>*

### **Dredge watch threat (Mordialloc, Victoria, Australia)**

21 July 2008, Mordialloc Chelsea Leader

SCIENTISTS monitoring Port Phillip Bay dredging need \$150,000 if they are to keep monitoring water quality until the end of 2008. The Australian Conservation Foundation believes satellite pictures and data collected by independent scientists show the dredging plume in Port Phillip Bay is larger than anticipated by the government's environmental management plan.

Australian Conservation Foundation marine campaign co-ordinator Chris Smyth said the group were testing water at 61 sites across the bay, while the Port of Melbourne tested 31 sites, some of which were in the "wrong" places. He said water quality tests confirmed the plume of cloudy water observed by a satellite, which passes through the bay daily, was the result of the dredging. "Light and nutrients are the foundation of Port Phillip Bay's unique ecosystems. If they are starved of these things, the bay's fish, crustaceans, sea grass meadows, seaweed, sponges, starfish, crabs, worms, penguins and dolphins will all be affected."

Dredging Environmental Monitor Mick Bourke said the port had not breached environmental limits, and the ACF's results were consistent with those released last month. The Port of Melbourne Corporation said it took monitoring

very seriously and believed its measures are adequate. The foundation is preparing to release reports into the health of seagrass meadows and water quality.

*Full story and source: [http://www.mordiallocchelsealeader.com.au/article/2008/07/21/39334\\_mcv\\_news.html](http://www.mordiallocchelsealeader.com.au/article/2008/07/21/39334_mcv_news.html)*

### **Rejuvenated Bolsa Chica wetlands flourishing (CA,USA)**

20 July 2008, Los Angeles Times

Two years ago, the saltwater oasis off Pacific Coast Highway was a desiccated oil field littered with drilling rigs. Now, waters lap sandy shoals next to Bolsa Chica State Beach as thousands of terns squawk and flutter, jammed together in a wall of white feathers and gray chick fuzz.

By blasting through part of a parking lot and a century-old barrier created by duck hunters, engineers reconnected the 367-acre tidal basin with the ocean. Since then, a steady parade of sea creatures have found their way to a revived saltwater home, bringing multitudes of hungry shorebirds with them. The \$147-million rebirth has triggered population explosions, with scallops multiplying, followed by topsmelt, halibut, rays and small sharks.

The transformation of the swatch of undeveloped beachfront property follows nearly 40 years of acrimony and lawsuits between developers, nearby residents and the state and federal governments. Pitting environmental hopes against real estate ambitions, the protracted legal scrum ultimately scuttled plans for a marina and large waterfront neighborhood. Experts estimate that about 95% of California's coastal wetlands have been destroyed by development.

As the ecosystem changes over the next five years, biologists are anticipating that as many as 60 fish species will settle in Bolsa Chica. (Of 135 species recently observed in the restored area, 27 are fish.) Divers transplanted eel grass from Cabrillo Beach in hopes of providing shelter to the shyer species of fish, such as pipefish and surf perch. Eight state and federal agencies are overseeing the health of the fledgling wetlands. Monitors regularly observe tidal patterns, fish populations, bird communities and vegetation growth, as occasional adjustments are made to water levels.

*Full story and source: <http://www.latimes.com/news/print/edition/california/la-me-bolsa20-2008jul20,0,3398837.story>*

### **Massive Mangrove Restoration Backfires (USA)**

15 July 2008, Science Magazine

One of the world's most intensive efforts to restore coastal mangrove forests is failing--in large part because people are planting the trees in the wrong places. Ironically, the restoration effort may also be harming other coastal habitats in the Philippines, according to a new study.

Over the past century, the islands that make up the Philippines have lost nearly three-quarters of their mangrove forests. To reverse the trend, conservation groups began fanning out across the archipelago 2 decades ago, planting 44,000 hectares with hundreds of millions of mangrove seedlings.

Many of those trees were doomed to die quick deaths, according to biologists Maricar Samson and Rene Rollon of the University of the Philippines in Quezon City. In the current issue of *Ambio*, the researchers report that surveys of more than 70 restoration sites often found mostly dead, dying, or "dismally stunted" trees. The major problem, they say, is that planters didn't understand the mangrove's biological needs and placed seedlings in mudflats, sandflats, or seagrass meadows that can't support the trees. Some of these areas have inadequate nutrients; in other places, strong winds and currents batter the seedlings. What's worse, the failed plantings sometimes pack a double ecological whammy, as restoration activities disturbed or damaged otherwise healthy habitats.

*Full story and source: <http://sciencenow.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/2008/715/1>*

## **GALLERY**

**Yule Point , Cairns (Qld, Australia): 20 July 2008** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

**Sentosa (Singapore): 19 July 2008** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

6am and in the glitter of Jurong lights on the horizon and a full moon in the sky, an intrepid team was out on Sentosa to check out the seagrasses there. It's a bit of a challenge to monitor in the dark. But in torchlight it works out fine. This shore is narrow but has lots of *Enhalus acoroides* and *Halophila ovalis*. *Text: Team Seagrass-Singapore.*

**Green Is , Cairns (Qld, Australia): 13 July 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.