



# Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

15 February 2009

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. You are free to distribute it amongst your own networks.

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## NEWS

### **Hope for sea food (Suva, Fiji)**

14 February 2009, Fiji Times

The Fiji Sandfish locally called dairo is a delicacy for Fijians that can be prepared in many ways. Indeed the sea cucumber (*Holothuria scabra*) used to be strung up and sold at the market and consumers looked forward to buying them on Saturdays for Sunday's lunch. Unfortunately, it's not so easy to find them at the market these days. Overharvesting has been the cause of its decline in numbers and sizes as it could take about two years for the villagers to harvest them for food.

In the district of Wailevu in Cakaudrove, villagers have now seen the consequences of overharvesting. Cakaudrove Yaubula Management Support Team community site representative Apolosi Silaca said its depletion was felt by the villagers. But there is a ray of hope now for the villagers as a research team is working on a mini-project for sandfish culture and sea ranching. This is the first time it has been trialed in Fiji but they are optimistic it will be successful.

For the trial itself the broodstock was collected from Natuvu Village, Wailevu in Cakaudrove. The Hunter Pearls Ltd Hatchery in Savusavu which is used for blacklip pearl oyster was chosen because it had the basic facilities for rearing sandfish and only minor modifications were done to facilitate the activity. When they (sandfish) get to the stage where they are more than 3 grams in weight, the juveniles are then ready for the next phase in which they will be released and monitored in seagrass beds in the wild.

*Read more on Sea cucumbers in Seagrass-Watch News: Issues 34. <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>  
more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>*

### ***A bad week for dwindling dugong population (Phuket, Thailand)***

*07 February 2009, Phuket Gazette*

CAPE PANWA, PHUKET: A top marine mammal researcher is drawing up a national action plan for conserving the country's dwindling population of dugong, three of which were found dead this week.

"We have a national action plan for dugong and seagrass in Thailand to conserve the seagrass habitat, reduce mortality, continue monitoring numbers and study behavior," said Kanjana Adulyanukosol of the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC).

Miss Kanjana was quoted by the state-run Thai News Agency earlier this week saying the dugong faced extinction locally within 20 or 30 years if the government does not take urgent action to protect seagrass beds, their natural habitat. About 200 dugong remain in waters along the Andaman Coast, she said.

*Read more on Dugong research in Thailand in Seagrass-Watch News: Issues 35. <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>  
more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>*

### ***A World within a World: Dubai's Ambitious Project Carries On (Bellevue, WA, USA)***

*02 February 2009, NuWire Investor*

To most developers, the idea of building an artificial archipelago of 300 islands would be considered absurd—let alone planning to build them to resemble a world map. The World is among several other large-scale projects that are in the works and are partially or fully completed by Nakheel Properties, a development company owned by the emirate's government. The islands are built on an area of 5.6 miles in length and 3.7 miles in width and the average distance between each island is only 100 meters. The construction of the islands themselves was completed in January 2008.

An area of concern is the level of impact such large scale projects will have on the environment. Dubai's man made islands, such as The World and The Palm, may look pretty but have had a huge impact under the sea's surface. The reclamation process which involves dredging up and moving of large amounts of sand, has made the normally clear gulf waters cloudy with silt according to Mongabay, an environmental science and conservation news site.

Nakheel argues that the environmental impact isn't quiet so bad. In a response to Mongabay's report, one of its Environmental Scientist wrote that "the channels between the fronds of the Palm projects seem to be ideal habitat for seagrass meadows. We've discovered large tracts of two species of seagrasses establishing in these areas. The protection offered by the crescent offers a sheltered environment favorable to seagrasses.

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

### ***Govt's Barrier Reef protection plan welcomed***

*29 January 2009, ABC News Online*

Researchers have welcomed the Queensland Government's plan to further protect the Great Barrier Reef.

Premier Anna Bligh says certain pesticides and farming practices, including over-grazing and tree clearing, will be restricted. Public consultation on reef protection laws will end next month, before the legislation is finalised in June.

Sheridan Morris from the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre says it is a step in the right direction. "You add climate change to poor water quality, to continual threats on the reef and it puts it under significant threat," she said. "And this is such an important area and so important for jobs nobody wants to see that happen so we do need to take action."

*Read more on Marine Monitoring Program in Seagrass-Watch News: Issues 35. <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>  
more..... <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html>*

### ***Barrier Reef lands in Google net (Australia)***

*11 February 2009 The Australian*

Scientific papers, photography and video of the natural history of Great Barrier Reef have been embedded in Google Earth as part of efforts to save the reef from pollution and climate change. Research on subjects as diverse as the fish with a 59-day lifespan, coral bleaching, nutrient pollution and climate change will be published on one of the world's most popular media platforms, Google. The new Google Oceans site is designed to enable internet users worldwide to explore more fully the two-thirds of the planet covered by water.

The global search engine was responding to criticism that for users of Google Earth, most of the Earth's surface appeared as "an empty blue blank", said James Cook University Professor David Bellwood, who assembled the Great Barrier Reef content for the site.

The Great Barrier Reef is one of a number of focal locations chosen by Google. Others include the Galapagos, the Antarctic, the Gulf of Mexico, Hawaii, Bermuda, the West Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Ocean in Google Earth is a feature of the most recent version of Google Earth and is available as a free download.

*Full story and source: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25036440-30417,00.html>*

### ***Ruppia planted in Caloosahatchee to restore aquatic habitat (Fort Myers, FL, USA)***

The News-Press

With an icy northeast wind chilling the 50-degree air Friday morning, two scientists stepped into the 58-degree Caloosahatchee River just downstream from the Caloosahatchee Bridge. Suitably dressed in bibwaders, research scientist Rick Bartleson and research associate Mark Thompson of the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation Marine Laboratory were setting out to monitor widgeongrass planted in November as part of a \$10,000 seagrass restoration project.

"It's still there and it's spreading," Bartleson said after checking the first plot of grass. "But there's some bad news: It's covered with algae. It's the result of too many nutrients, either from the sediments or from upstream in the watershed." "There used to be a lot of seagrass in the river, according to my dad," Bartleson said. "You could catch as many trout and other fish in the river as you could in the sound. Over the years, bad water quality reduced the grasses about to nothing."

In an attempt to jump-start regrowth of grasses in the Caloosahatchee, SCCF planted hundreds of widgeongrass shoots at six sites along the river - widgeongrass is also known as *Ruppia* for its scientific name, *Ruppia maritima*. SCCF chose to plant widgeongrass instead of other grass species because it grows and colonizes fast and can tolerate a wide range of salinity.

*Full story and source: <http://www.news-press.com/article/20090209/GREEN/902090359/1085/NEWS01>*

### ***Get Closer Look At Tampa Bay Through Marine Tour Class (Tampa, FL, USA)***

04 February 2009, Tampa Tribune

TIERRA VERDE - A new tour class offered on the fringes of Tampa Bay plunges participants into the marine environment, revealing its fragile beauty. Tampa Bay Watch, a nonprofit stewardship program dedicated to protecting and restoring the Bay, is offering the four-hour course from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. each Wednesday from its headquarters near the entrance to Fort DeSoto Park.

A Day on the Bay is a community course designed for residents, visitors and groups interested in learning more about the marine environment through kayaking and touch tanks, Tampa Bay Watch spokeswoman Rachel Arndt said.

The course starts with a classroom orientation of the estuary, touch tanks and a day exploring the Bay in a tandem kayak. Participants will paddle around the Tampa Bay Watch Marine and Education Center, past oyster beds, a local bird rookery, seagrass beds and a mangrove forest. To reserve a spot, go to [www.tampabaywatch.org](http://www.tampabaywatch.org).

*Full story and source: <http://suncoastpinellas.tbo.com/content/2009/feb/04/get-closer-look-tampa-bay-through-marine-tour-clas/>*

### ***South Florida power plants push to upgrade, but not leave manatees out in the cold (Fort Lauderdale, FL, USA)***

31 January 2009, Sun-Sentinel.com

A tubby, slow-moving airship ascended over South Florida to track tubby, slow-moving marine mammals as state biologists rode the Goodyear blimp to count manatees. The 192-foot Goodyear-Zeppelin Spirit of Innovation lifted off from Pompano Beach on a mission to assess the manatee population of Palm Beach County, taking advantage of the cold weather that drives manatees to a few well-known warm spots.

Of particular concern were the hundreds of manatees that cluster around the warm-water discharges of the Riviera Beach power plant, where red and white stacks have towered over the area since the Kennedy administration. Having lost coastal habitat, particularly around warm natural springs, manatees have learned to escape cold weather by clustering around this plant and six or seven others around the state. But several of these plants are aging, calling into question whether manatees will be able to depend on them as a perpetual replacement for lost habitat.

Provided free by Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., the blimp turned out to be an excellent platform. Traveling at 25 mph, it arrived at the plant and hovered about 1,000 feet above the water as the scientists peered down and took pictures. The survey found a record 3,807 manatees in Florida, up by about 500 from the previous record set in 2001. State officials said they were "encouraged" by the high count but cautioned against reading too much into it, saying the results depend heavily on weather.

*Full story and source: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/services/newspaper/printedition/sunday/nationworld/sfl-flblimp0201sbfeb01,0,3589203.story>*

## **Prop scarring stretches hundreds of miles (Tavernier, Florida, USA)**

31 January 2009, KeysNet

No one really knows how badly boaters have scarred the bottom of Florida Bay, say Everglades National Park researchers. But a park study can account for at least 11,751 individual scars, says park researcher Dave Hallc. Put end to end, the scar would run more than 326 miles. "It's possible we underestimated the scarring by a factor of 10," Hallac said. "There could easily be more than 3,000 miles of scars out there."

Seagrasses serve as nurseries to spiny lobster, stone crab and many recreationally important fish, says Dick Kimball, Everglade superintendent. If they're damaged, so are the populations of those marine animals.

The park will use the scarring study as it prepares draft management alternatives to be discussed at public workshops expected later this spring.

Full story and source: <http://www.keysnet.com/news/story/67237.html>

## **SAMPLING DATES**

Have you sent Seagrass-Watch HQ your proposed sampling dates for 2009?

Marine Plants are protected in Queensland, Australia. Collection of marine plants for educational, research or monitoring purposes is permitted in accordance with code MP05 of the Fisheries Act and Integrated Planning Act. Seagrass-Watch participants in Queensland are instructed to adhere to Self-assessable code MP05, by notifying Seagrass-Watch HQ before monitoring commences (see section 5.6 and Schedule 2) and to display appropriate signage (see section 5.7). . <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/monitoring.html>

NB: In Queensland, registered Seagrass-Watch participants are covered under the DPI&F Seagrass-Watch HQ's Marine Plant and Marine Park permits (i.e. no fee required). A requirement of the permit is to notify Seagrass-Watch HQ of sampling dates so that the appropriate authorities are informed. Sampling dates are also posted on the Seagrass-Watch website. If you are unsure if you are covered, check with Seagrass-Watch HQ <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/sampling.html>

## **SEAGRASS-WATCH WORKSHOPS 2009**

### **Australia**

Torres Strait, March 4 (*Registration closes 25th February 2009*)

For more information and registration: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop09>

Cooktown, March 9-10 (*Registration closes 27th February 2009*)

For more information and registration: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop09>

Whitsundays, April 4 or 5 (*Registration closes 20th March 2009*)

For more information and registration : <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop09>

### **Asia**

Singapore, May 02 -03 (*Registration closes 20th April 2009*)

For more information and registration: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop09>

Bali, May 09-10 (*Registration closes 20th April 2009*)

For more information and registration: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#wrkshop09>

## **CALL FOR ARTICLES: ISSUE 36 SEAGRASS-WATCH NEWS**

**Call for articles Issue 36 of Seagrass-Watch News:** *The official newsletter of the Seagrass-Watch global assessment and monitoring program* : <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/newsletters.html>

We are now calling for articles on seagrass research for Issue 36 of Seagrass-Watch News. If you would like to submit an article, please contact Seagrass-Watch HQ : [hq@seagrasswatch.org](mailto:hq@seagrasswatch.org) ASAP so we can allocate space in the document layout. Closing date for articles for the issue is 09 March 2009.

## **GALLERY**

**Shelley Beach, Townsville (Aust): 09 February 2009** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

The second site (SB2) at Shelley Beach was monitored in February by Mike, Iony, Naomi and first timer Cameron. We were lucky enough to have the rain stay away for the afternoon but, unfortunately, with all the rain that we had previously, it meant that our site was not completely exposed on the low tide. It was a very enjoyable afternoon, thank you to those that participated. *Text: Naomi Smith, Seagrass-Watch HQ*

**Pulau Semakau (Singapore): 07 February 2009** <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

A small happy team headed out yesterday to check out the vast seagrass meadows on Pulau Semakau. Although these meadows lie next to our landfill and near major petrochemical plants on Pulau Bukom, the shore is still very much alive! The meadows are vast and the team is spread out over more than a kilometre. At Site 3, Shufen points out the sediments have disappeared as we can't even peg down the tape. So we wind it around the stake instead. We also notice lots of sponges have started growing in the monitoring site. Is the seagrass moving? Has the sediment base changed? This is why we need to monitor our meadows! The *Enhalus acoroides* are blooming! The little white specks are the male flowers, while the female flowers are huge (relative to the male flowers) and have three ribbed petals that fall off after a day. *Text: Team Seagrass-Singapore*

**Roebuck Bay, Broome, WA (Australia): 15 - 17 December 2008** [http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery\\_page11\\_08.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_page11_08.html)

Monitoring in Roebuck has recommenced with the appointment of a new coordinator, Fiona Bishop. The teams were out on the seagrass meadows in front of Broome township over a 3 day period to monitor their 3 sites.

**Kuda Hurra, North Male Atoll (Maldives): 04 October 2008**

[http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery\\_page9\\_08.html#KH1\\_Oct08](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery_page9_08.html#KH1_Oct08)

The first Seagrass-Watch monitoring event in the Republic of Maldives was conducted on 04 Oct 2008. Under the guidance of Lucy Gwen Gillis (Local coordinator Maldives), and with help from Nyhad Aslam and Emily Fisher, the team set up and monitored their site on Kuda Hurra, KH1. Monitoring of the subtidal meadow will be conducted every six months.

## FROM HQ

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

**Seagrass-Watch News Issue 35** <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 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.