



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

31 May 2010

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

Oil slick spreads to Singapore's n.eastern coast (Australia)

29 May 2010, The Western Australian

An oil slick from a damaged tanker has spread from beaches on Singapore's southeastern coastline to a marine nature reserve and other beaches, environment officials said Saturday. Oil was found on the northeastern shore of Changi Beach and at Chek Jawa, a marine reserve on the southeast corner of Pulau Ubin, an island off the beach, a spokeswoman for the National Environment Agency (NEA) told AFP Saturday. "The affected portion at Changi Beach is 700 metres (2,296 feet) long. Clean-up operations have begun. At Chek Jawa, some oil patches were sighted along a 150-metre stretch," a press release by NEA dated May 28 stated.

The slick came from the Malaysian-registered tanker MT Bunga Kelana 3, which was carrying nearly 62,000 tonnes of crude when it collided on Tuesday with the MV Waily, a bulk carrier registered in St Vincent and the Grenadines. About 2,500 tonnes of crude leaked from a gash on the double-hulled tanker's port side, officials said. Such tankers are designed to limit spillage in case of a rupture. Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority said most of the leaked crude had been contained at sea.

Environmentalists were concerned that the slick could spread to Singapore's northeastern coastline. "Definitely, where we're talking about Changi Beach and Chek Jawa, these areas have a high level of biodiversity," said Louis Ng, executive director of the Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES). Ng added that a 20-man team from ACRES had been at Changi Beach since 3:00 am Saturday morning (1700 GMT Friday) to rescue wildlife hit by the oil, which included "hermit crabs, the starfish, sea snails and clams." The group said they had rescued 81 oil-covered animals at a beach along the east coast of Singapore on Friday.

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

More information on Chek Jawa: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/Singapore.html#Chek1>

Boat moorings make haloes in the seagrass (Australia)

18 May 2010, UQ News

An aerial view of a typical boat-mooring area in Moreton Bay reveals dozens of bare haloes, patches of sand surrounded by seagrass.

Associate Professor Greg Skilleter from UQ's Marine & Estuarine Ecology Unit in the School of Biological Sciences is leading the team that is doing the ecological assessments of the suitability of three mooring types — the Seagrass-Friendly Mooring System, the Ezy-Rider Mooring and the SeaFlex Mooring - for the conditions in Moreton Bay.

Boat anchors and chains are responsible for a significant proportion of lost seagrass habitat within the Moreton Bay Marine Park causing haloes which might be up to 1000 m² in area where the vegetation has been stripped away.

"Moorings within Moreton Bay Marine Park range from purpose-built concrete blocks to old and rusting engine blocks and rail sleepers," Associate Professor Skilleter said. "The blocks do not cause the loss of the seagrass, it is the heavy anchor chain linking the block to the boat on the surface. As the boat swings in the breezes, the chain drags across the seafloor and pull the seagrass out. "There are alternatives to these typical boat moorings that are more environmentally friendly and available on the market."

The Marine & Estuarine Ecology Unit is trialling these new mooring types in the Marine Park and success will be based on how well they reduce damage to the seagrass and the communities of animals that live in this habitat. The moorings are being trialled over two years in four different areas of the Moreton Bay Marine Park, Tangalooma Island Resort on Moreton Island, One Mile on North Stradbroke Island, Point Halloran near Victoria Point and Dalpura Bay on Macleay Island.

"The waters in these boat mooring areas are murky and the divers are often working in near zero visibility, so a team of two works in close coordination with each other and with their boat-based lookout," Dr Skilleter said. The work is tiring, moving dozens of heavy samples through the water while trying hard to not disturb the fine mud in which the seagrass is growing.

The focus of the Marine & Estuarine Ecology Unit is to understand how human activities modify coastal habitats and how this impacts on marine biodiversity. Their approach is to take concepts and theory from fundamental ecology and use them to address significant environmental problems in collaboration with industry and government agency partners.

The study is a partnership with Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, the Department of Environment and Resource Management, SEQ Catchments, Maritime Safety Queensland, Seagrass-Watch and the Federal Government's Caring for our Country Community Coastcare grants scheme.

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

TPWD extends Redfish Bay seagrass protection (USA)

28 May 2010, Rockport Pilot

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) extended indefinitely the protection of seagrass within the Redfish Bay State Scientific Area (RBSSA) by a vote taken during the TPW Commission's meeting Thursday, May 27. This ruling removes the termination date of the state scientific area designation and thus extends the "no uprooting seagrass with a boat propeller" law in the area.

Extensive field studies were conducted by Coastal Fisheries staff which demonstrated the current rule has been effective. Research biologists counted propeller scars along transects located in the north and south ends of Redfish Bay during the summers of 2005-2009. The number of scars counted in the transect study decreased 45 percent during that period. Coastal Fisheries also used aerial photography to monitor propeller scarring at the north end of Redfish Bay. High resolution imagery was acquired in 2007, 2008, and 2009 and the analysis confirmed a reduction in scarring of seagrass habitat in the area.

Coastal Fisheries Division Director Robin Riechers assured the commissioners the regulation will be reviewed periodically like all regulations to determine how well it is working or to determine if any changes are needed. For more information about seagrass and boating in the Redfish Bay State Scientific Area, see the seagrasses pages on the TPWD website.

Full story and source: <http://www.rockportpilot.com/articles/2010/05/28/sports/doc4bffc956404b169255403.txt>

Expansion threatens sea habitat (Australia)

28 May 2010, Gladstone Observer

Today's decision to approve the \$82.5 million port expansion at Fisherman's Landing in Gladstone is disastrous for the area's threatened dugongs and rare inshore dolphins. The Fisherman's Landing Northern Expansion Project will bury critical seagrass habitat within a designated dugong sanctuary under tonnes of mud and rock, and will have a major impact on the region's coastal ecosystems. "The local dugong population at Gladstone depends entirely on sea grass meadows, a fact that was recognised in the declaration of the Rodd's Bay Dugong Protected Area in 2002," said Lydia Gibson, WWF's Tropical Marine Species Manager.

"This development will smother a large area of these seagrass meadows under a thick layer of mud and rock, and remove this critical habitat forever." The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species classifies dugongs as 'vulnerable to extinction' at a global scale, and Australian tropical waters are considered one of the species' last strongholds.

WWF has been urging governments to conduct an overarching Strategic Environmental Assessment under section 146 of the EPBC Act to adequately address cumulative impacts in the Curtis Island Gladstone Port Region. This has not happened.

Full story and source: <http://www.gladstoneobserver.com.au/story/2010/05/28/expansion-threatens-sea-habitat/>

Related article: <http://www.sandandgravel.com/news/article.asp?v1=13082>

Sensitive Wetlands Pose Special Cleanup Challenges (USA)

22 May 2010, Wall Street Journal

As oil from the Deepwater Horizon spill washes up on the Louisiana coast, scientists are gearing up for a potentially massive cleanup job of the shoreline. One factor that would make this task especially challenging: Wetlands, which make up a large part of Louisiana's coast, are one of the trickiest terrains to clean. On top of that, the region's ecology is already weakened by the pummeling it took from Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and subsequent storms.

The oil has traveled across some 110 miles of water to make landfall in Louisiana; it is now threatening Florida and Cuba as well. Nearly 50 miles of Louisiana's shoreline has been affected and Gov. Bobby Jindal said he expects the area to increase. While cleanup operations have started in some locations, they are still in the early stages.

The area threatened by oil includes seagrass beds, an important nursery habitat for various wildlife, and salt marshes, which occur in back bays and act as a buffer for the mainland against storms and hurricanes. Some 600 species of land and sea creatures are at risk from the spill, according to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Full story and source:

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704167704575258621502394564.html?mod=WSJ_business_LeftSecondHighlights

Related story: <http://www.ocala.com/article/20100528/ARTICLES/100529666?p=1&tc=pg>

Port Geographe bypassing necessary (Australia)

20 May 2010, Busselton Dunsborough Mail

The current seagrass bypassing work at Port Geographe is on schedule to finish the week beginning June 14. The shire said that bypassing work at the marina was essential, while a solution to the problem was found.

The creation of a convex shore line on the eastern side of the marina entrance channel, which will minimise eddy formation and the associated accumulation of seagrass wrack within the channel is the preferred option to solve the seagrass problem. It is one of seven possible groyne reconfigurations that were presented at an information day on the subject.

The shire's director community infrastructure Oliver Darby said that while that option was proving favourable, there was still considerable work to be done before a decision could be made and in the meantime seagrass bypassing would be a necessity.

Full story and source: <http://www.busseltonmail.com.au/news/local/news/general/port-geographe-bypassing-necessary/1835753.aspx>

Related story: <http://www.busseltonmail.com.au/news/local/news/general/addressing-port-geographe-seagrass-problem/1842017.aspx>

Greens want Shen Neng 1 inquiry (Australia)

17 May 2010, Rockhampton Morning Bulletin

The Greens are leading calls for a full Senate inquiry into the grounding of the Shen Neng 1 at Douglas Shoal, west of Rockhampton last month, sparking fears of a large scale environmental disaster.

The Chinese bulk carrier, laden with \$100 million worth of coal, left Gladstone and departed from a recognised shipping lane before ploughing into pristine reef, spilling a quantity of oil into the ocean. Senator Bob Brown says the incident highlighted a litany of problems with ships travelling through the Great Barrier Reef. Senator Brown said Federal and State Government responses to the incident had been inadequate and he criticised the monitoring and regulation systems that allowed it to happen.

He will move for an enquiry to investigate the effects of oil and coal contamination on the reef and marine life, the impact on large green turtle and dugong populations and migratory birds, the overlap between jurisdictions, the feasibility of compulsory pilots for all ships in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the feasibility of compulsory insurance to cover the full extent of investigations, responses and clean-ups after incidents. Rockhampton Regional Council has called on Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to introduce legislation making it mandatory for large vessels to have experienced pilots on board as they negotiate waters close to reefs.

Full story and source: <http://www.themorningbulletin.com.au/story/2010/05/17/senate-must-probe-grounding-greens/>

OUTDOORS: A volunteer vacation to help Virginia's coast (USA)

16 May 2010, Richmond Times Dispatch

If "voluntourism" is your thing, I've got the perfect opportunity for you. Not familiar with the term? Voluntourism, when done right, combines the thrill of traveling to an exotic locale with the warm, fuzzy feeling of making the world a better place.

From May 23 to June 16, the Virginia chapter of The Nature Conservancy is looking for volunteers to help harvest native eel grass seeds in the coastal bays and lagoons off Virginia's Eastern Shore. All you need is a wetsuit, a snorkel and a mask and you can be part of the most successful seagrass restoration effort in the world. In the fall, after the seeds have cured, scientists from The Nature Conservancy, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and an alphabet soup of other organizations will go back out to places such as Cobb Bay, Hog Island Bay and South Bay and spread the seeds into the water, thus creating habitat for a wealth of marine life.

Contact Andy Thompson at (804) 649-6579 or outdoors@timesdispatch.com.

Full story and source: http://www2.timesdispatch.com/rtd/sports/local_other/article/ANDY16_20100515-215002/344759/

Environmental groups oppose US base plan for Japan island (Japan)

14 May 2010, AFP

Environmentalists voiced their opposition Friday to a Japanese government plan to relocate a US military airbase to a coastal area of Okinawa island, saying it would destroy a fragile marine ecosystem. A coalition of groups including the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Greenpeace said the waters off Henoko boast coral reefs and seagrass and are home to the sea mammal the dugong and other rare species.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama last week backtracked on an election pledge to move the base off Okinawa and instead agreed to honour an earlier pact with Washington to move the base from a city area of Okinawa to Henoko. His government has reportedly suggested that the new offshore runways be built on pylons rather than landfill, but the groups said this would still damage the environment by blocking sunlight and changing sea currents.

Okinawa University president Kunitoshi Sakurai, an environmental studies professor, represented the grouping and relayed its views in a meeting Friday with Kinya Takino, the deputy chief cabinet secretary.

Full story and source: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5grKOkYt3aZPpbeD0zMsQpfiD0jBw>

Related articles: http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/news/press_releases/2010/okinawa-dugong-05-14-2010.html,

<http://www.mysin Chew.com/node/39024>

<http://news.asiaone.com/News/Latest%2BNews/Asia/Story/A1Story20100519-217139.html>

Phuket bids to save the dog conch (Thailand)

14 May 2010, Phuket Gazette

In a bid to increase depleted stocks, fisheries workers released 12,000 cultured dog conch shells into the sea off Pa Khlok in Phuket earlier this month. The operation was conducted jointly by the Marine and Coastal Resources Conservation Center 5 in Phuket and the Phang Nga Coastal Fishery Research and Development Center, where the dog conches (hawy chak teen in Thai) were cultured.

The dog conch (*L. Strombus canarium*) has become increasingly popular in seafood restaurants in Phuket in recent years. Unfortunately, the mollusk has fallen victim to its own success. Fishermen are finding it hard to find the shellfish in the 8cm to 10cm range that can fetch up to 100 baht per kilo in the market.

The shellfish were released along the seagrass line off the coast on May 3, in the same area where 10,000 'effective microorganism' balls were dropped into the sea in December last year. The two-month-old snails were two to three centimeters across and are expected to reach a size of about 30 shells per kilo in four months' time.

Full story and source: <http://www.phuketgazette.net/archives/articles/2010/article8700.html>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Magazine Issue 41: Call for articles

We are now calling for articles on seagrass issues/research for Issue 41 of Seagrass-Watch News. If you would like to submit an article, please contact Seagrass-Watch HQ: hq@seagrasswatch.org ASAP.

Closing date for articles for the issue is **11 June 2010**.

Previous issues of the magazine, Seagrass-Watch News: *The official magazine of the Seagrass-Watch global assessment and monitoring program* are available online at : <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html>

SEAGRASS-WATCH Workshops 2010

Australia

Broome, WA, September 10-12 2010

For more information: <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/training.html#workshop10>

CONFERENCES

World Seagrass Conference & ISBW9 (Thailand, November 2010)

A World Seagrass Conference (WSC) and the 9th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW9) will take place in southern Thailand in November, 2010. The region features fascinating seagrass ecosystems; Phuket is a world-renowned diving area and Trang has Thailand's largest seagrass meadows. Both the WSC and ISBW9 will be hosted by Prince of Songkla University, Southern Thailand.

World Seagrass Conference (WSC) (Phuket, 21–25 November, 2010)

Open to all and will include invited plenary lectures and oral and poster presentations

9th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW9) (Trang, 27–30 November, 2010)

ISBW9 will follow the WSC and consist of a smaller group of participants, including both international seagrass experts and regional scientists and practitioners, to address problems of seagrass conservation and restoration, which so far are little known across Southeast Asia and South Asia.

Please visit the conference & workshop web site for further details: <http://www.sc.psu.ac.th/seagrass/>

If you are interested in WSC and/or ISBW9, please respond by filling out the short **Call for Interest** form available from <http://isbw.seagrassonline.org/isbw9/>

Important Dates for the WSC and ISBW9

15 May 2010	Registration Opens
15 June 2010	The last day of abstract submission
31 July 2010	Notification of Abstract Acceptance for Oral or Poster Presentations, Updated Programme
15 August 2010	Registration closes
15 September 2010	Final Programme Announcement

PUBLICATIONS:

SOS Files: A Journey to Sungai Pulai

The 156-page species handbook features the flora and fauna (mainly marine) in Sungai Pulai and is the first comprehensive publication from Save Our Seahorses (SOS). This handbook was partially funded by the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). The authors are Choo Chee Kuang, Serina Rahman and Khor Hui Min. The design was done by Ms Chin Pik Wun. One thousand copies were printed and are currently available at the SOS research centre and the Malaysian Nature Society bookstore. Priced at RM29 each.

For more information contact: saveourseahorses@yahoo.com

SEAGRASS-WATCH on YouTube

Seagrass: Pastures of the sea <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66Y5vgsuj20> or <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/seagrass.html>

Presentation on what seagrasses are and why they are important (1,869 views to date)

GALLERY

Verde Island Passage (Philippines): 27 May - 2 June 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Torres Strait (Qld, Australia): 05 May 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Hervey Bay (Qld, Australia): 28 & 29 April 2010 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

FROM HQ

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

Seagrass-Watch Magazine <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/magazine.html>

Seagrass-Watch Shop <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/shop.html>

www.seagrasswatch.org

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.