



Seagrass-Watch E-Bulletin

31 May 2016

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Moorings a boost for health of Lake (NSW, Australia)

27 May 2016, *Newcastle Herald*

In a first for New South Wales, environmentally friendly boat moorings have been rolled out at Lake Macquarie. Hunter Local Land Services is providing a 50 per cent rebate to boat owners who agree to upgrade their traditional chain moorings, which wreak havoc with the seabed. The "Seagrass Friendly Mooring" developed by On Water Marine Services and the "Eco Mooring" designed by Waters Marine were the first of the moorings to be installed on Thursday.

The project is attempting to re-establish the endangered *Posidonia* seagrass meadows between Marks Point and Belmont Bay. The seagrass is a valuable fish habitat and plays an important role in the general health of the lake. It has been decimated by the use of conventional block weight and chain moorings.

Project Coordinator Brian Hughes said there has been an encouraging response to the program from the owners of the 2000 existing moorings. Boat owners can apply on the Hunter Local Land Services website

more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news_May2016archives.htm

President Obama Asked to Stop US Military Project That Threatens Endangered Dugong (Japan)

26 May 2016, *Center for Biological Diversity (press release)*

During President Obama's visit to Japan for the G-7 summit, the Center for Biological Diversity called on him to abandon his controversial plan to build a large new military base in biologically rich and sensitive Henoko and Oura Bay. The bay is home to the dugong and other endangered species. That project is strongly opposed by residents of the island, which has had a huge U.S. military presence since the end of World War II, and that opposition was galvanized by the recent murder of a young Okinawan woman, allegedly by a U.S. military contractor, for which Obama was publicly rebuked Wednesday by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

The military base project was approved with inadequate environmental review after being pushed through by the U.S. and Japanese national governments. Okinawan Gov. Takeshi Onaga last year withdrew local consent for the project, which is currently on hold pending a political resolution. The Center for Biological Diversity and other groups are challenging the project and that case is now before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

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Australia scrubbed from UN climate change report after government intervention (Australia)

27 May 2016, *The Guardian*

Every reference to Australia was scrubbed from the final version of a major UN report on climate change after the Australian government intervened, objecting that the information could harm tourism. The report "World Heritage and Tourism in a Changing Climate", which Unesco jointly published with the United Nations environment program and the Union of Concerned Scientists on Friday, initially had a key chapter on the Great Barrier Reef, as well as small sections on Kakadu and the Tasmanian forests. But when the Australian Department of Environment saw a draft of the report, it objected, and every mention of Australia was removed by Unesco.

No sections about any other country were removed from the report. The removals left Australia as the only inhabited continent on the planet with no mentions. Explaining the decision to object to the report, a spokesperson for the environment department told Guardian Australia: "Recent experience in Australia had shown that negative commentary about the status of world heritage properties impacted on tourism." As a result of climate change combined with weather phenomena, the Great Barrier Reef is in the midst of the worst crisis in recorded history. Unusually warm water has caused 93% of the reefs along the 2,300km site to experience bleaching. In the northern most pristine part, scientists think half the coral might have died.

The news comes less than a year after the Australian government successfully lobbied Unesco to not list the Great Barrier Reef in its list of "World Heritage Sites in Danger". A recent study found the conditions that cause the current bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef was made at least 175 times more likely by climate change and, on the current trajectory, would become the average conditions within 20 years. Without mentioning the Great Barrier Reef, the report notes: "Research suggests that preserving more than 10% of the world's corals would require limiting warming to 1.5C or less, and protecting 50% would mean halting warming at 1.2C (Frieler et al. 2012)."

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Related articles:

rier Reef omitted in UN climate report (9news.com.au)

<http://www.9news.com.au/national/2016/05/27/07/34/barrier-reef-omitted-in-un-climate-report>

Censorship of UN climate report to edit out Great Barrier Reef leaves questions for Hunt (My Sunshine Coast)

'Tagging dugong is costly and may not be feasible' (Malaysia)

22 May 2016, *The Star Online*

A tagging system to monitor the dugong may not be feasible due to high costs and low number of the mammal, said Rantau Abang Endangered Marine Species and Turtle Research Division director Syed Abdullah Syed Abdul Kadir. The objective of tagging is to obtain their migration pattern as well as to determine their roaming areas. But research showed that this approach may be costly as we have to tag at least 50% of its population. In order to get solid information, a lot of tags and a large number of dugong will be needed. And capturing the creatures to tag them may also scare them away," he said.

Last Sunday, *The Star* reported on the dwindling number of dugong, also known as sea cow, in southern Johor that was previously a haven for them due to the abundance of seagrass there. But the depleting seagrass had forced the dugong to move to the eastern part of the state. Concerned groups have suggested tagging the dugong to keep track of them, thus creating a database to monitor their population and movements.

Syed Abdullah said the Fisheries Research Institute had recorded three dugong deaths since the beginning of this year. There were five such deaths in 2015 and four cases in 2014, mostly due to them being hit by boats, tangled in nets or incidental catches. He acknowledged that there had been a drastic decline in the number of dugong, citing factors such as fish bombings, hunting, unsupervised tourism, seagrass degradation and habitat loss due to land reclamation and dredging activities. He urged Malaysians to play their part by avoiding fishing activities and reducing the speed of their boat at areas known to be populated by dugong, as well as to keep the cleanliness of sea water by not discarding waste into it.

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Ningaloo turtles struggle with bright lights (WA, Australia)

22 May 2016, *Science Network Western Australia*

Baby turtles born on a WA beach are having trouble navigating into deep water because of artificial lights such as those from ships and offshore resource projects. A study of green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) near Ningaloo Reef has discovered 90 per cent of turtle hatchlings swam towards an artificial light and became disoriented during their journey out to sea. UWA oceanographer Charitha Pattiaratchi says turtles lay their eggs on the beach and the hatchlings emerge at night.

The researchers glued the smallest acoustic transmitters available onto 40 baby sea turtles so they could follow the 5cm hatchlings without affecting their swimming ability. Half the turtles were subjected to artificial light and the scientists tracked where they swam using an array of acoustic receivers. They also measured ocean currents at the time of the turtles' release.

A 2005 study of turtles nesting on Barrow Island, the Lowendal Islands and the Montebello Islands found sea turtle hatchlings are able to see both ultraviolet and visible light. It suggested the threat to hatchlings from artificial light depends on its brightness and wavelength, with turtles responding most strongly to blue and green light. Turtle hatchlings were also more attracted to artificial lights when there was less moonlight.

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Protect Myanmar's marine resources from being pillaged to point of no return (Myanmar)

20 May 2016, *The Guardian*

As Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) engaged in a historic transfer of power in the Myanmar capital of Naypyidaw in March, on a deserted beach 170 miles to the southwest, near Gwa on the Rakhine coast local fishermen spoke about their livelihoods and hearing about the unfortunate death of a young dugong.

The young dugong that accidentally drowned in a fishing net was just one symptom of another tragedy and challenge unfolding in this country – one that, while nearly unnoticed, could have major implications for the future of millions of rural people. Literally out of sight, the country's marine resources have been pillaged almost to the point of no return. Research data released in February of this year by the Norwegian government demonstrated a decline in Myanmar's oceanic and coastal fish stocks of between 70-90% since the late 1980's.

Poorly governed marine waters had led to the arrival of larger industrial vessels both from other areas of Myanmar and neighboring countries. Use of illegal fishing gear had grown, as had even cruder methods like cyanide poisoning to access anything of remaining value. Myanmar's new government faces a myriad of challenges, but if it wishes to

develop the economy while increasing livelihood options for millions of rural people, it must create solutions for the thus far hidden problems of the country's oceans.

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Johor seeks best way to protect dugong (Malaysia)

19 May 2016, The Star Online

The state government will leave it to the experts to come up with suitable suggestions on the best way to protect and conserve marine life, especially the endangered dugong. Johor Health and Environment Committee chairman Datuk Ayub Rahmat said they were in talks with consultants on the setting up of a marine park near Mersing, which will include a dugong sanctuary. Ayub said currently, their focus was on sourcing for the best spot among the islands off Mersing to build the marine park. He added that Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar was expected to pre-launch the Sultan Iskandar Marine Park in July.

It will just be a soft launch while the operational aspects and mechanisms of creating the park will be discussed in the next six months, he said, adding that RM1mil set aside was just a start-up allocation. Ayub said the state government would seek more allocations, including from the Federal Government, following discussions with the experts. For now, the RM1mil would be utilised to identify and measure the exact location, instal buoys to mark the areas as well as to construct a monument for the park, he added.

He also pointed out that it was unfair to solely blame developments as the cause for the dwindling number of dugong along the most southern part of the state. The Sunday Star reported on the dwindling number of dugong, also known as sea cow, around southern Johor, which used to be a haven for the shy creatures due to the abundance of seagrass there. Experts claimed that they have been migrating to the eastern part of the state near Mersing where seagrass is ample.

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Coal dust kills coral, reduces growth of fish and seagrass, study shows (Australia)

17 May 2016, ABC Online

Questions about the risks of shipping coal through the Great Barrier Reef have been raised after a study showed coal dust released into seawater kills corals and slows seagrass and fish growth. Research led by scientists at James Cook University in Townsville in north Queensland has found corals exposed to the highest concentrations of coal dust died within two weeks.

The scientists mimicked the exposure of marine species to coal dust by adding carefully controlled amounts of fine coal particles and measured their responses over time. "Corals exposed to lower concentrations of coal lasted longer, but most of them also died after four weeks of exposure," researcher Kathryn Berry said. "The coal didn't kill seagrass or fish, but it stunted their growth by half compared to clean water."

In Australia, more than 60,000 tonnes of coal remained on board the Shen Neng 1 when it ran aground on the Great Barrier Reef off Gladstone in 2010. This research will allow decision makers to understand the risks to marine life to identify the species that are most vulnerable. It is hoped the results will lead to safer methods of shipping coal around the world.

Queensland Resources Council CEO Michael Roche said the industry was concerned about the long-term health of the Great Barrier Reef and he welcomed additional studies into its protection. But he argued the World Heritage Area was one of the most highly regulated and protected shipping zones in the world.

The findings by scientists from the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) at JCU and the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies have been published in Nature Scientific Reports.

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Related articles:

Dugong on the verge of extinction (Inquirer.net)

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/785671/dugong-on-the-verge-of-extinction>

Coal shipping threat to Great Barrier Reef (EurekAlert)

http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2016-05/acoee-cst051616.php

Coal shipping threat to Great Barrier Reef (Science Daily)

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/05/160516103242.htm>

Great Barrier Reef could be killed off within two weeks by just one large coal spill (Daily Mail)

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3593787/Great-Barrier-Reef-killed-two-weeks-just-one-large-coal-spill.html>

Deadly impact of coal dust on our reef (NEWS.com.au)

<http://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/conservation/research-shows-the-devastation-of-a-potential-coal-spill-on-great-barrier-reef/news-story/3ca92001ca9cb074f680a55ad6893b6f>

Coal spill risk to Australia's Great Barrier Reef: study (The Business Times)

<http://www.businesstimes.com.sg/life-culture/coal-spill-risk-to-australias-great-barrier-reef-study>

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http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-05/17/c_135365378.htm
 Coal spill risk to Australia's Great Barrier Reef: study (Yahoo7 News)
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 Coal spill may harm Australia's Great Barrier Reef: study (Deccan Chronicle)
<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/lifestyle/pets-and-environment/170516/coal-spill-may-harm-australia-s-great-barrier-reef-study.html>
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 Great Barrier Reef: Study Examines Devastating Impact Of Potential Coal Spill On The Iconic (International Business Times)
<http://www.ibtimes.com/great-barrier-reef-study-examines-devastating-impact-potential-coal-spill-iconic-2370003>
 Study Shows that Coal Dust Kills Corals and Reduces Fish Growth (Latin American Herald Tribune)
<http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=2412348&CategoryId=13936>
 Corals risk smothering death from coal spills (Hong Kong Standard)
<http://www.thestandard.com.hk/section-news.php?id=169420>
 Coal dust kills coral: study (Echonetdaily)
<http://www.echo.net.au/2016/05/coal-dust-kills-coral-study/>
 Coal dust released into seawater kills corals: study (Mackay Daily Mercury)
<http://www.dailymercury.com.au/news/coal-dust-released-seawater-kills-corals-study/3028215/>
 Coal dust kills coral, slows seagrass and fish growth (Gladstone Observer)
<http://www.gladstoneobserver.com.au/news/coal-dust-kills-coral-slows-seagrass-and-fish-grow/3028504/>
 Coal Dust Can Kill Corals, Slow Down Growth Rate Of Fish And Seagrasses: Study (Tech Times)
<http://www.techtimes.com/articles/158908/20160518/coal-dust-can-kill-corals-slow-down-growth-rate-of-fish-and-seagrasses-study.htm>

Dugong on the verge of extinction (Malaysia)

15 May 2016, *The Star Online*

Known also as the sea cow, the dugong which inspires many tales like mermaid legends is on the verge of extinction. The vast development taking place in south Johor, once a popular feeding ground for the mammal, has led to its dwindling numbers.

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, local fishermen would often catch a glimpse of the shy creatures as the area was abundant with spoon seagrass, their main diet. Kampung Sungai Simpang Arang fishermen chief Tang King Tong, 68, recalled an incident in 2004 where a 30kg baby dugong got caught in a fishing net. Tang claimed it was a common practice in the old days for the orang asli community to consume dugong meat, which tastes like beef. Orang asli would also carve the bones into a pipe, attributing this to a belief that smoking it would help reduce body temperature when a person was suffering from high fever. There was also talk then that the tear drop of a dugong was believed to have magical powers, so bomoh would use it to make love potions. Tang, who has been living in the village since marrying his orang asli wife in the 1960s, claimed there were about 200 to 300 dugong five decades ago but their number had decreased by more than half. He believes that the number of sea creatures had dipped due to land reclamation works.

Kampung Pendas Laut fishermen head Azman Adan, 45, said the 3km sandbar from Tanjung Kupang to Tanjung Adang was the dugong's favourite playground before the development of a seaport within the area. It was once common for fishermen to spot dugong grazing on the seabed during low tide but now it has become a rare sighting. The most recent spotting of a dugong was on May 5 when the carcass of one was found floating in the sea near the village after it had apparently sustained injuries from fishing nets.

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Dugong on the verge of extinction (Inquirer.net)

<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/785671/dugong-on-the-verge-of-extinction>

Sea Grant Program in Hernando County (FL, USA)

14 May 2016, *Hernando Sun*

Aquatic Services Manager Keith Kolasa presented the overview of the new marine program and the sea grant to the BOCC in a recent meeting. According to the Florida Sea Grant website (www.flseagrant.org), the program exists as a partnership between Florida's local governments, Board of Education, and NOAA. The program utilizes the UF/IFAS Extension offices.

The slideshow presentation showed pictures of marine animals and their environment, taken off the coast of Hernando County. Hernando County has approximately 150,000 acres of pristine seagrass bed fed by the spring fed estuaries and natural marshes. The seagrass cover in the waters off Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco Counties is the second largest seagrass area in the United States. Hernando County alone has over 180,000 acres of seagrass beds, compared to Tampa Bay, with only 40,000 acres of seagrass. Kolasa stated the map showed seagrass beds

12 miles into the Gulf of Mexico, but Hernando County's seagrass extends to 25 miles, further than any other county. This is due to the shallow shelf, which has a fairly consistent water depth, and sediment type, but especially due to the water clarity.

Kolasa stated that documenting the seagrass and other assets is important in order to know where the restoration projects should occur. Though some data is available, collaborative partnerships with stakeholders and research partners will help them continue learning about the environment off the coast of Hernando County and how to enhance and protect it.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

Fishermen caught using nets in Dugong Protection Area (QLD, Australia)

10 May 2016, Gladstone Observer

Two recreational fishermen were fined \$1178 each for using illegal nets in a Dugong Protection Area in Gladstone. Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers recovered the two nets set on the foreshore of Facing Island.

CQUniversity marine ecology lecturer Emma Jackson said it was important we protected the small population of dugongs we do have in the Gladstone region. She said more publicity was needed around where the protection areas were. The use of commercial fishing nets is one of the pressures facing the population, additionally to seagrass and being struck by boats.

Ms Jackson said being able to protect them from one harm, illegal fishing, would help protect the species. In 2009 there was 20 recorded dugongs in the Gladstone region. The Gladstone Ports Corporation and CQUniversity is currently working to record the population numbers again.

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Second dugong found dead in Johor (Malaysia)

09 May 2016, The Star Online

The carcass of a young dugong was found floating in the sea near Kampung Pendas Laut after getting caught in a fishing net. Fishermen spotted two dugong, believed to be a mother and its kid, on Thursday. A few hours later, the carcass of a young dugong emerged and was spotted floating in the sea.

A fisherman from the village, Azman Adan, said the dugong was found floating near a mega development project. State Fisheries Department director Zamani Omar said that a team of officers went to the location after being informed of the sighting. This is the second dead dugong sighting this year after the first carcass was found washed ashore at Pantai Tanjung Logok, near Kota Tinggi in February.

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news.html)

School assemblies to give pupils a glimpse of underwater world (UK)

08 May 2016, Dorset Echo

Schools in the South West are being given the opportunity to explore the oceans with new interactive assemblies. The Community Seagrass Initiative is visiting schools across the region to deliver fun sessions about marine ecosystems and the conservation of underwater wildlife, with the help of a £475,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Over the course of the project, representatives will visit a total of 19,000 pupils in the area to raise awareness of the importance of seagrass as a habitat for the likes of seahorses and cuttlefish. Project manager Mark Parry said: "The CSI schools outreach programme is providing opportunities for all age groups to discover the importance of seagrass around the South West. As well as the free assemblies, schools have the opportunity to link up with the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth via Google Hangouts, embracing technology to bring the interactivity into the classroom.

The initiative is being spearheaded by the National Marine Aquarium, in partnership with other conservation organisations including Weymouth Sea Life Adventure Park. Alongside their outreach work in schools, campaigners are urging people to help collect data that will assist in the study and conservation of seagrass meadows across the UK coast.

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\$500 fine for illegal turtle killers (Fiji)

08 May 2016, Fiji Times

Responding to reports of unlawful turtle killings in the North, Minister for Fisheries and Forests Osea Naiqamu said this was against the turtle moratorium. "Anyone caught selling turtles can be fined \$20,000 or face a prison sentence of five years," he said.

Considering the time taken for sea turtles to breed, people needed to respect them and allow them to reproduce so their populations are replenished. "Sea turtles play vital roles in maintaining the health of the oceans," Mr Naiqamu said. "They contribute to the marine ecosystem by grazing on sea grass, controlling sponge distribution, feasting on jellyfish, transporting nutrients or supporting other marine life. "Therefore if we continue to harvest them without giving them time to reproduce then we will have no sea turtles to carry out these important functions and more importantly we will not have any sea turtles to eat in the future."

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Why is all this seagrass covering our beaches? (SA, Australia)

05 May 2016, The Advertiser

Mounds and masses of "seagrass wrack" has taken up residence on our metropolitan beaches, including Glenelg, Brighton and Seacliff. In the past 48 hours, strong north-westerly winds and large waves have pushed the wrack ashore. Environment Department team leader coastal programs James Guy said the amount of seagrass was not unusual and typically occurs in Adelaide after this type of weather pattern. Depending on the wind and waves it could be gone in a matter of days.

Just like grass that grows on land, seagrass dies back every year during the winter months and sheds its leaves in a natural process. The dead laves are called seagrass wrack. Mr Guy said the process was an important part of a healthy marine ecosystem.

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Related articles:

Glenelg, Brighton and Seacliff beaches covered in massive piles of seaweed (ABC Online)

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-05/seaweed-piles-up-on-adelaide-s-beaches/7387838>

Why is all this seagrass covering our beaches? (The Advertiser)

<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/seagrass-litters-popular-adelaide-beaches-after-storm/news-story/c1ac91d38fbde405664d6bb6c9ec313c6>

Legal challenge over Great Barrier Reef (QLD, Australia)

03 May 2016, NEWS.com.au

Another legal challenge to stop Australia's largest coal mine from being built will begin in the Federal Court in Brisbane on Tuesday. The Australian Conservation Foundation will allege Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt acted unlawfully when he approved Adani's Carmichael coal mine in the Queensland Galilee basin.

Chief executive Kelly O'Shanassy said outside court the foundation did not want any more coal mines built, but this case was about the future of the Great Barrier Reef. Ms O'Shanassy said the foundation's legal team - the Queensland Environmental Defenders Office - would aim to prove Mr Hunt "failed to adequately consider the impact of burning coal from the mine on the Great Barrier Reef". A section of Australia's environmental law not tested in court before will be the subject matter of the two-day hearing.

Lawyers for Adani, the Indian coal mining giant, will contest the allegations alongside Mr Hunt. When asked about the latest legal challenge, Queensland Treasurer Curtis Pitt said the state had done everything it could to get the Adani mine, which still needed to be financed, ready. Mr Pitt said the project was important for regional Queensland but noted the Great Barrier Reef and environment needed to be protected.

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Labor pledges \$500 million for Great Barrier Reef (Australia)

30 May 2016, NEWS.com.au

The Great Barrier Reef becomes an election campaign battle front today with Labor pledging \$500 million to rescue the world-famed natural phenomenon. Opposition Leader Bill Shorten will tell north Queensland voters the money will help protect the 70,000 jobs linked to the reef, mainly handling the two million tourists who spend \$5.7 billion a year visiting it.

Heightened concerns about the fate of the reef have been underlined by research showing that since 1985 some 50 per cent of hard coral had been lost. Labor argues the largest coral ecosystem on the planet is in danger from the effects of climate change, poor quality water washing it with harmful nutrients, sediments and pesticides; coastal

development; extreme weather events including freshwater inundation; ocean acidification; and outbreaks of Crown of Thorns Starfish. Mr Shorten said the promised \$500 million over four years would include \$377 million in new investment. The Labor proposal involves consultations with the Queensland Government and reef-related groups and businesses on these issues:

[more..... http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news_May2016archives.htm](http://www.seagrasswatch.org/news_May2016archives.htm)

Malaysia's largest marine park comes to life (Malaysia)

29 May 2016, WWF

The establishment of the Tun Mustapha Park in Malaysia, formally gazetted last week, marks a milestone in global marine conservation. Following more than a decade of dedicated efforts by government authorities and civil society, the creation of Malaysia's largest marine park is an important step forward in protecting valuable coastal marine resources and promoting sustainable development.

Situated in the Coral Triangle, the new park will help protect almost 1 million hectares of coral reef, mangrove, seagrass and productive fishing grounds including more than 50 islands. Tun Mustapha Park boasts more than 250 species of hard corals, around 360 species of fish, endangered green turtles and dugongs as well as significant primary rainforest, mangroves, and seagrass beds, supporting the food security and livelihoods of thousands of people. However, overfishing, destructive fishing and pollution have threatened its unique ecosystem in recent years, highlighting the need for sustainable management.

The park's gazettelement, which comes after more than 13 years of work led by Malaysia's Sabah Parks with government agencies, local communities, international partners, and support from non-governmental organisations including WWF-Malaysia, will pave the way for intensified efforts to address the pressures on the area's fragile resources. The park heralds a new approach to nature management in places like Sabah. It will allow for sustainable uses, especially ensuring local communities living in the protected area can continue their activities within designated zones. This is critical as the area's productive fishing grounds support more than 80,000 people in coastal and island communities, generating around 100 tonnes of fish catch each day.

Full Story: http://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/?269011/Malaysias-largest-marine-park-comes-to-life

Keeping the sea at bay (India)

27 May 2016, India Climate Dialogue

Sea walls and embankments, or mangroves and sand and coral reefs – planners around the globe are debating the best way to protect their coasts as sea levels rise due to climate change. It was a matter of much debate at the May 10-13 Adaptation Futures conference in Rotterdam. By and large, planners from the rich nations of the temperate region have opted for sea walls and concrete embankments. New York is strengthening its walls after Superstorm Sandy, Louisiana has built the wall that became a major demand after the 2005 flooding, London has a floating wall that is the pride of the city, Rotterdam has the boom. As some experts pointed out at the conference, there is another way; control the erosion and temper the fury of the waves by planting mangroves or seagrass along the coast, protecting coral reefs or dumping sand to direct the currents away as the Dutch have been doing for hundreds of years.

The debate was not resolved, as it became clear there is no single solution for all coasts. For one, neither mangroves nor corals grow outside tropical waters. If you build a high sea wall, beach tourism suffers and so does the value of real estate. There is a wide range of forecasts on how the seas will rise due to climate change and by when. It is difficult to make decisions amid such uncertainty, though most planners agree that doing nothing is no longer an option.

The consensus that seemed to emerge at the conference was that a combination was best. First use the softer options like planting mangroves and protecting coral reefs. If that does not seem to be working, build walls and embankments, especially for cities and other valuable property.

Full Story: <http://indiaclimatedialogue.net/2016/05/27/keeping-sea-bay/>

Chinese official rings alarm bells about ecological threats to South China Sea

23 May 2016, by Li Jing, South China Morning Post

Coral reefs and mangroves in the South China Sea have been rapidly shrinking over the past several years, as a Chinese official made a rare acknowledgement of the ecological problem, without specifying causes. "The situation is severe as compared to 1970s as over 80 per cent of coral reefs and 73 per cent of mangroves have disappeared," Wang Xiaoqiang, an official at the Ministry of Environmental Protection, told a conference to mark the World Diversity Day. The ecosystems of coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass in the South China Sea have been degrading "for many years", according to Wang.

He attributed "intensified human activities" and "worsening effects of global warming" as the broad factors, but didn't cite direct causes. Chinese intensive reclamation projects on reefs and atolls it claims in the disputed Spratly

archipelago in the South China Sea have drawn flak for destructing some of the most biodiverse coral reefs in the world.

The British newspaper, The Guardian, reported last year that the construction works have led to “loss of thousands of acres of reefs in recent years”, which “constitutes the quickest rate of permanent loss of coral reef area in human history”, citing leading marine biologist John McManus. In response to the criticisms, Hong Lei, a spokesperson with Chinese foreign ministry, had said last year that China was “more concerned than anyone else over the ecology of South China Sea”, according to a report by the state broadcaster, CCTV.

Five countries – China, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei – and Taiwan have competing claims over more than 250 islands, reefs and sandbars in the South China Sea. The islands are mostly uninhabited, but rapid reclamation is endangering the ecosystem.

Full story: <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/1951491/chinese-official-rings-alarm-bells-about-ecological-threats-south>

EWS-WWF launches ground-breaking research project (Dubai, UAE)

21 May 2016, Trade Arabia

Emirates Wildlife Society in association with the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (EWS-WWF) is marking the World Biodiversity Day (May 22) by launching a ground breaking scientific research project – The Gulf Green Turtle Conservation Project. The ultimate aim of the project is to conserve endangered marine species and critical habitats in the UAE and wider region.

Over the course of the next four years the team of marine experts will gather scientific data on green turtle migration and mating patterns in order to identify critical marine habitats in need of protecting. The research includes tagging green turtles with satellite transmitters in various nesting and foraging sites across the region, obtaining small tissue samples (DNA) from the turtles which will then be analysed to detect linkages between feeding and nesting populations; and finally, performing a laparoscopy on adult-sized turtles to provide ground breaking data on population connectivity important for the conservation of green turtle populations in the long-term.

The Arabian Gulf is home to rich biodiversity including the second largest population of dugongs on Earth, critically endangered hawksbill and endangered green and loggerhead turtles, as well as over 25 species of sharks. However, with species numbers in decline, vital habitats like coral reefs and seagrass beds disappearing, and fish stocks being pushed to the limit, there is an urgent need for better marine planning and management to ensure marine ecosystems can continue to function and remain resilient in the long term. The Gulf Green Turtle Conservation Project is designed to provide robust scientific data from which strategies can be designed to address threats to marine species, rather than solely focusing on fragmented national and local actions that do not benefit highly migratory species such as turtles and marine wildlife.

Full story: http://www.tradearabia.com/news/MEDIA_307253.html

Related articles:

Gulf Green Turtle Project launched (Gulf Today)

<http://gulftoday.ae/portal/a9379c8f-92fa-4a06-b0a6-b0a6-2608d7c6c4a0.aspx>

UAE to track sea turtles for four years (gulfnnews.com)

<http://gulfnnews.com/news/uae/environment/uae-to-track-sea-turtles-for-four-years-1.1832379>

Seagrass check-up vital for a healthy harbor (NT, Australia)

17 May 2016, NT News

The poor wet season was pretty hard to bear for Territorians with little rain to give relief from the long, sweaty days. But the lack of rain also had a detrimental effect on marine life such as mudcrabs and even seagrass. A mapping survey taking place during the dry season will help to support conservation measures to ensure the seagrasses' survival, said Department of Land Resource Management (DLRM) marine ecosystems director Dr Tony Griffiths.

DLRM staff, working with Larrakia rangers, will map the seagrass cover using a remote camera, at many sites throughout the Darwin Harbour. Seagrasses are at risk from a reduction in water quality and extreme climatic events. For example, the recent poor wet season in the Top End may cause some die-off of seagrass due to the increased amount of hot weather. “It is important for everyone to work together and look after this valuable habitat by limiting the amount of rubbish/sediment in stormwater and avoid disturbing these areas during the large low tides, Dr Griffiths said. “Seagrass surveys raises awareness on the condition and trends of near shore seagrass ecosystems and provides an early warning of any major environmental changes in Darwin Harbour.”

The surveys originated from community concerns about seagrass loss and community interest in science, as well as government objectives in long-term monitoring of habitats for Darwin Harbour. The survey is expected to be completed by November and the results will be available to the public.

Full Story : <http://www.ntnews.com.au/news/opinion/seagrass-checkup-vital-for-a-healthy-harbour/news-story/d9982f953b60cd1744dff49680e03a58>

Budget 2016: Great Barrier Reef receives \$170m boost (Australia)

May 4, 2016, by Rosie Lewis, *The Australian*

Programs to help the stressed Great Barrier Reef received a \$171 million boost as the Turnbull government claimed it was doing “more than ever before” to protect the natural wonder. With coral bleaching of the reef at historic levels, the government will inject \$101m over six years to focus on key threats to the reef through the Reef 2050 Plan, which was established in 2014 by the Abbott government. A further \$70m over three years will go into the Reef Trust from 2019-20, supporting projects that improve water quality and coastal habitat such as culling crown-of-thorns starfish and helping turtles and dugongs.

Environment Minister Greg Hunt said the funding would “make the reef more resilient” as the government addresses the “challenges of climate change and the current coral bleaching event which has affected reefs around the world”. According to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority’s latest update, the mean sea surface temperatures for February and March were the highest on record and the mass bleaching is worse than the previous worst bleaching event in 2002.

Conservationists have accused the Turnbull government of being “confused about the cause of coral bleaching”, saying it should focus more on climate change as a result of burning coal rather than programs to tackle the crown-of-thorns starfish.

Full Story: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/budget-2016/budget-2016-great-barrier-reef-receives-170m-boost/news-story/6c25f8f969a2a6634e6cd834a10579d0>

Related articles:

The government is spending \$171 million to save The Great Barrier Reef (Business Insider Australia)

<http://www.businessinsider.com.au/the-government-is-spending-171-million-to-save-the-great-barrier-reef-2016-5>

Federal Budget 2016: Queensland to pocket extra \$2.6 billion Federal grant money (Herald Sun)

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/federal-election/budget2016/federal-budget-2016-queensland-to-pocket-extra-26-billion-federal-grant-money/news-story/cdf1e386fc27f239c198c81fb225a5f1>

171 Million To Save The Great Barrier Reef In Today's Budget (MSN.com)

<http://www.msn.com/en-au/news/other/dollar171-million-to-save-the-great-barrier-reef-in-todays-budget/ar-BBsz9r>

Budget 2016: Government pledges \$171m for the Great Barrier Reef (Sydney Morning Herald)

<http://www.smh.com.au/business/federal-budget/budget-2016-government-pledges-171m-for-the-great-barrier-reef-20160502-gok7dm.html>

Tucker time for tiger sharks (Australia)

03 May 2016, *Courier Mail*

A fishing trip in search of flathead and whiting delivered something much bigger — two tiger sharks feeding on a dugong about 500m out from the entrance of Scarborough Boat Harbour. Fisherman Bruce Flint said he was heading out from the harbour on Friday morning when he spotted two tiger sharks enjoying a meal. He filmed the encounter and then continued out into Moreton Bay.

Full Story: <http://www.couriermail.com.au/questnews/moreton/tiger-sharks-make-a-meal-of-dugong-off-scarborough/news-story/5ccfd6e9d6456fa4e708ac188035ee56>

CONFERENCES

The 13th International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS) (Hawai'i, 19–24 June 2016)

Theme: Bridging Science to Policy.

The world's major coral reef science meeting, the International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS), is held every four years. It is the primary international meeting focused on coral reef science and management. The Symposium will bring together an anticipated 2,500 coral reef scientists, policy makers and managers from 70 different nations in a forum to present the latest research findings, case histories and management activities, and to discuss the application of scientific knowledge to achieving coral reef sustainability. ICRS2016 will include a Taxon-specific session on seagrass: Session H, 26 - Integrating seagrass science and management in a coral reef framework

Key Dates

19-24 June 2016 - Meeting

for more information, visit <http://sgmeet.com/icrs2016/default.asp>

The 12th International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW12) (Wales, 17-23 October 2016)

Theme: Declining seagrasses in a changing world.

The International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW) is the only international meeting specifically tailored to seagrass scientists, professionals and students. The International Seagrass Biology Workshop (ISBW) provides a good opportunity for the scientists working on various aspects of seagrass ecosystems to come together and discuss their latest findings. The ISBW12 will be held from 17-23 October 2016 at Nant

Gwytheyrn, Gwynedd, Wales, organized by Project Seagrass and the Seagrass Ecosystems Research Group. The conference email address is ISBW2016@projectseagrass.org.

We as scientists know the devastating effects that humanity is having on our worlds seagrass meadows. Although much work is needed to keep documenting, understanding and highlighting the problems facing seagrass we as a research community need to also provide a voice of optimism about how we can make changes to ensure survival of these precious ecosystems. We must go beyond science, and use it to inform policy and management, and ultimately to catalyze change. We know that there are many examples of this, from stakeholder led management and successful restoration to improvements in water quality and the management of boating activities. We encourage participants to contribute stories of seagrass conservation success in order to strengthen this theme. We also encourage submission of research stories that aim to provide evidence to make future successes.

Let's make ISBW12 a conference that celebrates seagrasses and has a spirit of #oceanoptimism

The workshop therefore has 4 key themes that will form the structure of the sessions held throughout the week. These are:

- Resilience and a changing environment
- Ecosystem services
- Restoration and management
- Raising the profile of seagrass meadows

for more information, visit <http://isbw12.org/>

GALLERY

Moreton Bay , QLD (Australia): 20 - 21 May 2016 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Wellington Point: 20 May 2016
Wynnum: 21 May 2016

Mackay - Whitsunday QLD (Australia): 04- 06 May 2016 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Hamilton Island: 04 May 2016
Midge Point: 05 May 2016
Sarina Inlet: 06 May 2016

Townsville , QLD (Australia): 04 - 07 May 2016 <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/gallery.html>

Jerona: 04 May 2016
Bushland Beach: 05 May 2016
Magnetic Island: 06 May 2016
Shelley Beach: 07 May 2016

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 (over 40,734 views to date)

...seagrass matters blog

World Seagrass Association blog <http://wsa.seagrassonline.org/blog/>

Keep up to date on what's happening around the world from the WSA with regular updates from WSA President Dr Richard Unsworth and *notes from the field* by Dr Siti Yaakub.

FROM HQ

Past E-bulletins <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/publications.html#bulletin>

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

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

Virtual Herbarium <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/herbarium.html>

Future sampling dates <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/sampling.html>

Handy Seagrass Links <http://www.seagrasswatch.org/links.html>

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