

**Green sea turtles
consume approx.
2 kg of seagrass
leaves per day**

Help seagrass

There are many ways you can help: don't litter; be aware when applying fertilizers and pesticides, as excess amounts can wash down gutters and drain into the ocean; when boating, slow down and avoid shallow areas; support marine conservation initiatives; learn about these special marine habitats and volunteer to monitor their health by joining Seagrass-Watch.

Seagrass-Watch: Global Seagrass Observing Network monitoring efforts are vital to assist with tracking global patterns in seagrass health, and assess the human impacts which have the potential to destroy or degrade these coastal ecosystems and decrease their yield of natural resources.

To protect valuable seagrass meadows, everyone must work together.

**Seagrasses
of
Wop-pa**

About Us

Seagrass-Watch: Global Seagrass Observing Network is one of the largest long-term seagrass observing programs globally, and is highly recognised for its scientific rigour.

Participants all share a passion in marine conservation.

Participants involved in the Global Seagrass Observing Network develop a deep sense of custodianship and understanding of their local marine environments that reaches throughout the wider community.

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Local eyes. Global wise





Aerial photograph 29 June 2004, courtesy Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management (©DERM)

About seagrass

Seagrasses are the only marine flowering plant. There are approximately 60 seagrass species (possibly 72) globally that belong to four major groups. Seagrasses are not seaweeds. Seaweed is the common name for algae.

Seagrass live in sheltered coastal waters, undergo pollination while submerged and complete their entire life cycle underwater. They grow much like land grasses, with extensive below ground rhizomes or runners. Plants form small patches that develop into large continuous meadows. These meadows may consist of one or many species, sometimes up to 12 species present within one location.

Importance

Seagrass is one of the most productive natural ecosystems globally. Seagrasses are as important as forests in storing carbon (on an areal basis) and can store carbon 35 times faster than rainforests.

Seagrass occupy less than 0.2% of the world's oceans, but are responsible for more than 10% of all carbon in ocean sediments annually.

Seagrasses improve water quality by acting as nutrient sinks, buffering/filtering nutrient/chemical inputs to the marine environment. They also stabilise marine sediment and help avert erosion.

Seagrasses provide food and shelter for many organisms including Sea turtles and dugongs.

Wop-pa's seagrass

Wop-pa (Great Keppel Island) is the largest island, covering an area of more than 14.5 sq km, out of the 18 islands in the Keppel Group.

There are 17 beaches on the island and Monkey Beach is one of the most accessible and popular beaches to visit. Monkey Beach is fringed by a coral reef on its seaward edge and has seagrass growing on its intertidal flats. Scattered over the sandy areas exposed at low tide you will find the clover leaf shaped *Halophila ovalis* and the strap leaved *Halodule uninervis* (narrow), which are both a favourite food for dugongs. There are also patches of *Zostera muelleri* and the fern like *Halophila spinulosa* present, particularly toward the seaward edges of the intertidal flats.

If you look carefully, you may also find patches of *Syringodium isoetifolium* with it's distinct spaghetti shaped leaves. In the subtidal areas, particularly in Fisherman's Beach Bay, the larger leaved varieties of *Halophila ovalis* and *Halodule uninervis* are common.