

# SEA COUNTRY

INFORMATION ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES OF THE CAPE YORK MARINE PARKS

NUMBER 1

APRIL 1995

## LOOK INSIDE

- crayfish - how they live, where they are found and threats to their survival
- trawling - how much they catch and how to tell when they are trawling
- Flinders Islands - a special sea country
- Community Rangers

## NOTICE BOARD

Regional workshops  
Everybody HAVE YOUR SAY and come to the workshop on Planning the Marine Park for your area. How do YOU want to see the Marine Park managed? We're going to talk together about fishing, access, zoning, and much more. Don't miss out!

Hope Vale 2 - 3 May  
Coen 6 - 7 May  
Lockhart River 15 - 16 May  
Injinoo 22 - 23 May

If you want to know more, talk to one of these people:

Alima Panuel  
Meun (Shorty) Lifu  
Jimmy Wallace  
Gwen Toby  
John Bowen  
Derek Deemal  
Abraham (Blade) Omeenyo  
Phil Wallis

**GREAT BARRIER REEF  
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY**

26 JUN 1996

LIBRARY

*Sea Country*, our new newsletter, will keep you up to date with sea country matters that are important to people on Cape York. *Sea Country* is written by staff from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage (QDEH). Community Rangers (and your Councils) will pass them around, every month or two. If you want to say something in the newsletter, tell your Community Ranger or Ross Williams of the Marine Park Authority.

## Marine parks planning

Staff from GBRMPA are looking at how well the Far Northern Section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is managed. They have been visiting communities on the east coast of Cape York to find out how people want sea country managed.

Staff from QDEH are working with GBRMPA. They are especially looking at coasts, islands and estuaries. They want to know how people feel about the idea of including these areas in a marine park too.

Some meetings have already been held. The first was the big meeting at Pajinka in April last year. This planning work

will take about two years so you will see staff from GBRMPA and QDEH more often. We are working towards joint planning and cooperative management of marine parks.

Staff from the Cape York Land Council are helping too. Together we are planning two-day workshops at Hope Vale, Coen, Lockhart River and Injinoo in May this year.

Community Rangers will also help to organise these workshops. We hope everyone will come along. Everyone - old and young, men and women - should have a say in protecting sea country.

*Joan Phillips*



*Presentation by Cape York Land Council Executive Director, Noel Pearson, at the Far Northern Rezoning Workshop held at Pajinka, Cape York in April 1994. From left to right: Noel Pearson, Nigel Hedgecock (QDEH), Geoff Kelly (QDEH), John Bowen (Hope Vale Community Council), Tony Flinders (Hope Vale Community Council), and Jimmy Wallace (Lockhart River Community Council)*

**Marine Parks**



## Crayfish on the crawl...

Crayfish are found in murky waters on reefs close to the coast.

They feed at night on anything at all but prefer shellfish like scallops and trochus; even small bêche-de-mer are eaten. They also eat small fish (by-catch) thrown away by trawlers.

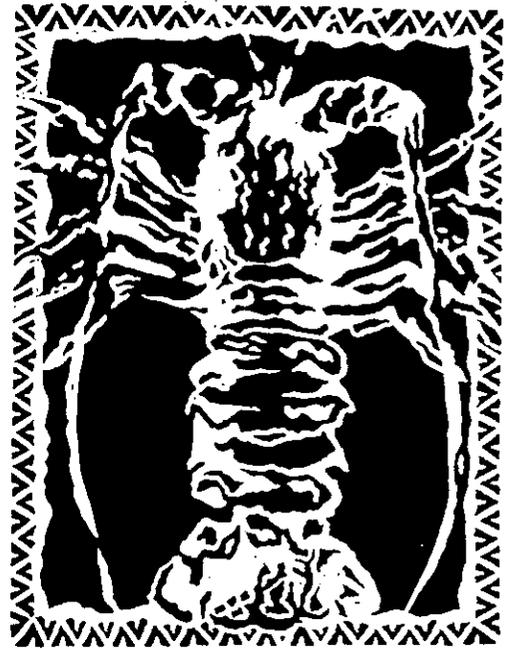
The female crayfish carries fertilised eggs under her tail. She migrates (moves) many kilometres to special areas where the eggs will hatch into tiny floating young ones called larvae. After this the adults die. In Torres Strait, adults migrate eastward across the Gulf of Papua to deep waters. On the east coast of Cape York crayfish move south and east across the Great Barrier Reef to breed on the edge of the reef near deep waters.

Larvae drift at sea and currents spread the larvae back to the coral reefs. After 9 months of drifting they turn into tiny crayfish. If they are lucky to find a good place on a reef, the crayfish will survive to grow into an adult.

Crayfish in Torres Strait are important because they help provide larvae to the east coast.

### The cray fishery

Fishing for crays can be done by diving or trawling. Both Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Australian fishermen share the crayfish



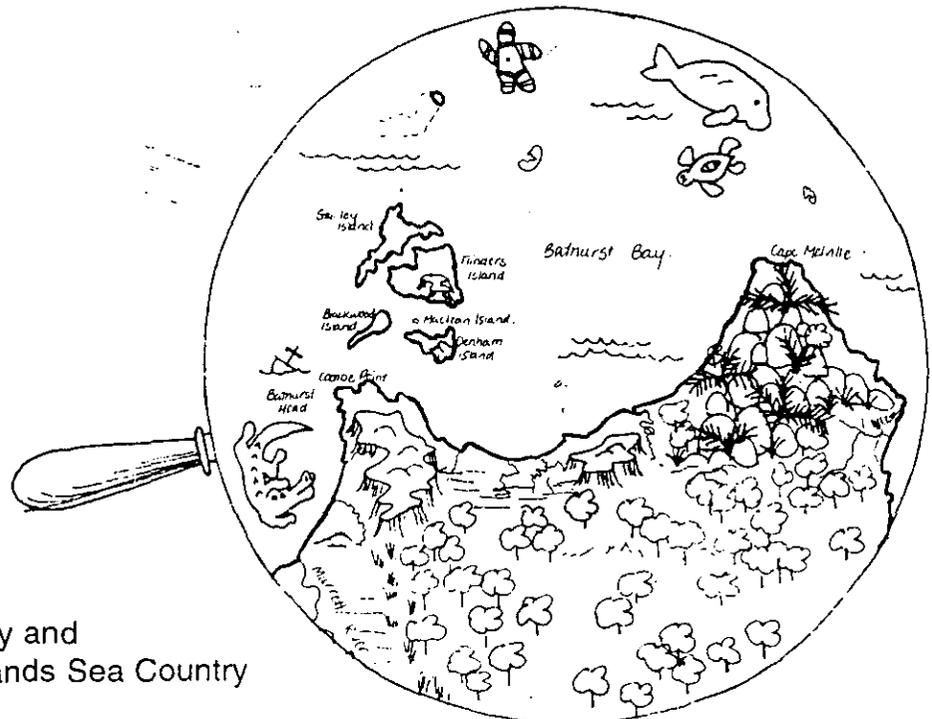
in Torres Strait and on the Reef.

In 1980 the Australian and Papua New Guinea Governments agreed to ban trawling for crayfish and to keep the crayfishery as a dive fishery for indigenous peoples.

Together Papua New Guinea and Australia must manage the fishery and protect the crayfish habitats from threats. These threats include run-off from mine sites in Papua New Guinea, oil spills from submarine pipelines in the Gulf of Papua, and possible future oil drilling in the Torres Strait. *Wallace MacFarlane Julie Swartz*

### DID YOU KNOW?

- total catch of crays is 220 tonnes of tails worth 10-12 million dollars
- females lay up to 2 million eggs but very few eggs survive to grow into adult crays



Bathurst Bay and Flinders Islands Sea Country



# Facts on prawn trawling



- Commercial prawn trawling in Queensland is the most valuable fishery in Australia. The east coast trawl fishery catches about 7000 tonnes of prawns a year. Most trawling is done at night.
- Several different types of prawns are caught including tiger, banana, endeavour, king, bay and school prawns.
- The fishery has more than 900 vessels; about 750 work in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Most boats have a crew of two or three full-time people.
- The Far Northern Section is the most valuable part of the Great Barrier Reef for prawn trawling and many boats fish there between March and December. The most important prawns are grooved tiger and brown tiger prawns.
- Trawling is only allowed in the light blue zones (General Use 'A' zones) of the Marine Park. Trawlers are allowed to travel and anchor in other zones but they are not allowed to fish there.

*Joan Phillips*

---

## Flinders Islands - special sea country

The scenery of the Flinders Islands and Bathurst Bay area is outstanding and the area is rich in culture. It is the home of the Flinders Islands and Cape Melville people, and traditional story places and campsites are still used and treasured. The islands have some of the best rock art sites in Queensland. Big mounds of shells on beach ridges near Bathurst Head show how important sea country is for traditional lifestyles.

The area is home to rare animals like the Red Goshawk and the rainforests are different to rainforests in other places.

Sea country is an important part of the area. Turtles and dugongs feed on the good seagrass beds and the reefs of the Great Barrier Reef are very close.

The area is also important because many pearl ships were wrecked in the early

1890s when a cyclone passed through the area. Today a monument stands in memory of the lives lost on the shipwrecks.

The National Parks have been claimed by the Flinders Islands and Cape Melville people. Planning is under way to make sure the traditional owners have a strong voice in how the areas are managed.

### Marine Park planning issues

- Many boats use the passages between the islands as safe places to anchor. Over time, more and more boats might anchor there. Does this worry you?
- Waters around the coast of Bathurst Head and Combe Point are not in the marine park. There are other areas along the east coast of Cape York also not inside the marine park. The water, animals and plants are not protected by marine parks laws. Do you think this is a problem?

*Leanne Sommer*



## Community Rangers

the introduction of the community ranger course at TAFE College Cairns in 1989.

### SEA SPY

- Injinoo and other northern communities had a wet and windy time in early March, thanks to the cyclone, when the new Chairman of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority visited with Greg Smith and others.
- Chicka Turner found a bottle on the beach at Hope Vale in January. It had a message in it written by someone from Vanuatu in July 1994!!! It took more than six months to float west for thousands of miles!
- Thankyou to Lockhart River for the friendly welcome you showed to Leanne Sommer, Joan Phillips and Prue Keen from the Marine Park Authority in February. They enjoyed spending time with people and would love to return.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Ranger TAFE students receive boat licences through Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol at Injinoo (October '94)

Our land and sea need protecting.

The Cape York Peninsula region is generally seen by the rest of Australia as remote and somewhat isolated, however, this point couldn't be further from the truth when you take into account the past uses and present exploitation and management of natural and cultural resources.

Tourism, recreational and commercial fisheries have a continuing effect on Aboriginal peoples and their communities. Tourism and recreational activities are on the increase with more and more people going to more and more places and in most cases ignoring the local people and their important social, cultural and economical places.

Elders and community members continually raised concerns about these impacts and the management of these impacts. Their voices and their views were not taken seriously until the mid-80s with

The course has proved successful with the number of students last year graduating with Associate Diplomas in Natural, Cultural Resource Management. However 4 years of hard work and dedication from the students would never have happened without the support of their communities, families, friends and dedicated TAFE College staff.

Each module of their course confirmed the community rangers' dedication and commitment in what they are doing on behalf of their communities.

The rangers continually expressed their communities' desire to protect their land and sea from overuse and exploitation.

Some rangers have had the opportunity to work with National Parks and Marine Parks staff on a number of projects which has benefited them and their communities.

Community rangers have a lot of skills and knowledge to offer their community, management agencies and the general public, however, without the resources like vehicles, boats, safety gear etc., their jobs are limited.

For community rangers their work has just begun. They need support to continue as they will be called upon in the near future to plan and manage the marine parks.

The protection and wellbeing of the environment and its people will take a big effort from all of us with the community rangers in the front line.

Ross Williams

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about planning in the marine parks talk to Ross Williams on (077) 81 8811 or write to him at GBRMPA, PO Box 1379, Townsville Qld 4810.

These articles are the views of the authors and do not represent the views of GBRMPA or QDEH.

## Who's who ?



Ross Williams is the Liaison Coordinator at GBRMPA. He is of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. Ross has been working with GBRMPA for three years on planning and permit issues. At present he is involved in planning for the Far Northern Section of the Marine Park.

Ross has experience and knowledge of the Cape York by spending a lot of time speaking with people about their country and issues.

He advises other organisations about Aboriginal and Islander peoples interests and has been to environmental and indigenous meetings in Canberra, Adelaide, Sydney and Darwin to speak on

behalf of GBRMPA and represent indigenous peoples views.

Likes - food, football, fishing and fast cars. Dislikes - being called 'boy' by Europeans.