

SEA COUNTRY

INFORMATION ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES OF THE CAPE YORK MARINE PARKS

Look Inside...

- **Ship aground** - the grounding at Piper Reef.
- **Seabirds** - What you can do to help.
- **Community Ranger views** - **Gwen Toby**.

The sixth issue of Sea Country is written by staff of the Department of Environment (DoE), the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Community Rangers of Cape York

We thank you for your feedback about Sea Country to date and would like to hear of any changes you would like to see made or other information that should be included. Contact your Community Ranger, or ring our offices.



NOTICES

The GBRMPA and DoE would like to take this opportunity to extend our apologies to John Bowen. His name was mistakenly omitted from the Community Ranger list in Sea Country edition No. 5.

Need more details about marine parks?

Ask one of these people:

- John Bowen
- Phillip Bowie
- James Creek
- Rocky Gibson
- Alison Liddy
- Meun (Shorty) Lifu
- Conrad Michael
- George Monaghan
- Abraham Omeenyo
- Alima Panuel
- Gwen Toby
- Jim Wallace
- Phil Wallis

Illustrations by Lockhart River Art Gang:

- Edna Johnson - cover
- David Michael - cover & page 3
- Richard O'Brien - page 1
- Steven Short - page 5
- Vanessa Macumboy - page 5

Farewell to Charles (Chika) Turner

GBRMPA and DoE staff and friends would like to take this opportunity to farewell Chika who has been working as the Community Ranger Coordinator at the Authority, based in Townsville. Chika came to the Authority from DoE two years ago and is now returning to work for DoE as a Ranger on Bribie Island.

Chika has worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations for a number of years on issues such as conservation plans for turtle and dugong, cultural heritage site management, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within Government Departments.

In the last two years Chika has worked specifically with Community Rangers and believes that when working between Government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, you have to be honest, keep a foot in both camps and not forget where you come from.

More recently Chika has been working to move the Community Ranger



Project from the GBRMPA Townsville office to the DoE Marine Parks office in Cairns. The Cairns office is where day-to-day management is based for the Cairns and Far Northern Sections.

This move will allow Community Rangers greater involvement in day-to-day management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and State Marine Parks in or adjacent to their communities or clan areas.

Chika believes that this is an area where a co-operative management presence between marine management agencies and Community Rangers is really needed for the future of the marine park.

See ya, Chika! Good luck down south!



Torres Strait pigeon

Used to be called: Torresian imperial pigeon

Now called: pied imperial pigeon

In August, these beautiful black and white pigeons returned to Australia. They had just taken their annual winter trip to Papua New Guinea and maybe even as far as Indonesia.

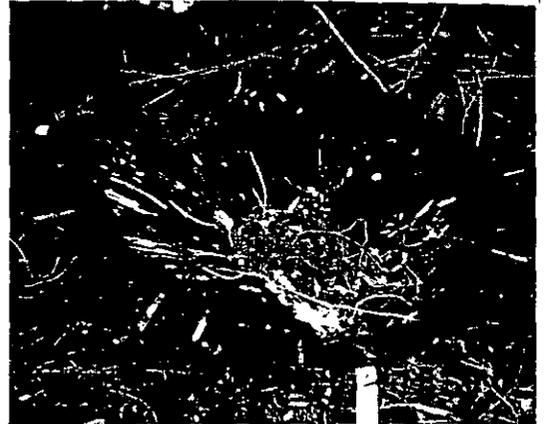
Between October and March, the pigeons nest on islands offshore - Low Isles, Hope, Low Woody, Turtle, Howick, King, Clack and Night Islands and mangrove islands near Portland Roads. Night Island is the largest Australian colony with over 60 000 birds.

Each day they fly a long way over the mainland to feed on many different rainforest plants. Only one parent leaves the nest each day to look for food.

Studying pigeon droppings

Last summer, Brandon Walker and Brian Singleton (DoE trainee rangers at the time) did a strange thing. They put seed traps under Torres Strait pigeons' nests on Low Isles to collect droppings. They then emptied the

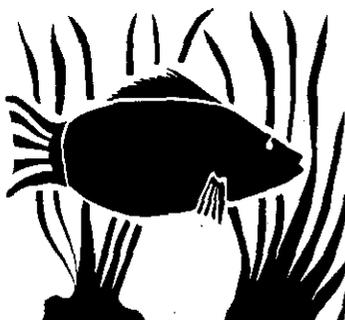
traps each month to see what the pigeons were eating.



Pigeon droppings trap

Sorting the droppings, they found pigeons liked best Yarrabah satinash, ribbonwood/pink poplar, damson, little gooseberry tree, Melville Island white beech and hairy mary lawyer cane.

DoE will repeat the study this year, hopefully collecting pigeon droppings from Lockhart River to the Whitsunday area.



DID YOU KNOW?

- Rangers found 68 different kinds of seeds in the pigeon droppings collected from Low Isles; these seeds were germinated (grown) to seedlings in the DoE nursery.

- DoE rangers and Mossman Gorge Community Rangers weeded out lantana and cleared strips on Snapper Island to plant the seedlings, where they are growing well.

- Threats to nesting birds include storms, cyclones, other birds and disturbance by visitors or low flying aircraft.



Torres Strait pigeon



Islands for the birds

In June, George Monaghan, Willie Michael, scientists and marine park rangers visited islands to look at the nesting seabirds. They were especially interested in the red-tailed tropicbirds - white birds with long red tails.

Rangers caught about 40 tropicbirds and put a metal ring around one leg. The band has a number so that the bird can be recognised if caught again. Banding helps scientists to understand where the tropicbirds go after nesting and how often they nest.

Found a banded bird?

Bird bands are like turtle tags. If you find a banded bird, write down the number of the band, the type of bird and where you found it.

These details can be passed onto Community Rangers or direct to DoE staff. The information will help us to know more about the birds so that their nesting sites can be protected.

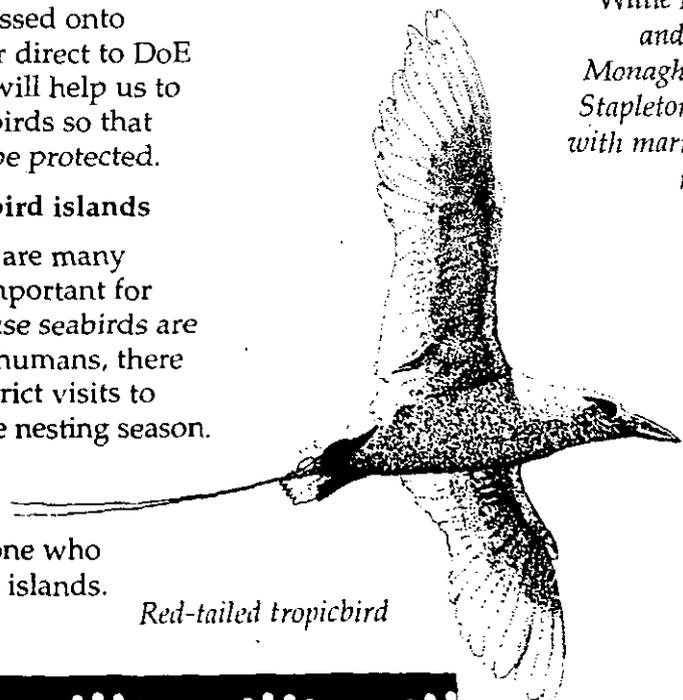
Protecting important bird islands

In the Far North, there are many islands that are very important for nesting seabirds. Because seabirds are so easily disturbed by humans, there might be a need to restrict visits to these islands during the nesting season.

This is an idea that needs further discussion with everyone who has an interest in these islands.



Willie Michael and George Monaghan visit Stapleton Island with marine park rangers.



Red-tailed tropicbird

IMPORTANT SEABIRD ISLANDS

National park islands - Pelican Island, Sandbank Number 8, Quoin Island, Wallace Island, Cholmondeley Island, Milman Island, Combe Islet, Magra Island, Saunders Islet, Macarthur Island, Bushy Islets, Halfway Islets.

Non-national park islands - Stapleton Island, Night Island, Morris Island, Fife Island, Hay Island, Hannah Island, Stainer Island, Tydeman Cay, Moulter Cay, East Hannibal Island, Raine Island.



Community Ranger Views

Gwen Toby - New Mapoon

I'm a Community Ranger from New Mapoon area, situated in Bamaga.

I started my first year as a ranger, training at Cairns TAFE. After

finishing the first-year course I received a certificate in Natural and Cultural Resource Management. Then I studied for another two years to get my Advanced Diploma.

I decided to become a ranger to help my people to look after our land and sea. As well as working as a ranger, I communicate with the Elders in my area and Marine Parks people. I also help the Elders to prepare for meeting the people from Marine Parks, explaining what the issues are about and what they need to discuss.

As a ranger I'd like to do a whole lot more for my people at New Mapoon and the Northern Peninsula Area like cleaning up the beaches in the area, helping manage the tourist camp by keeping it tidy and patrolling during the dry season when all the tourists are around.

Written by Gwen Toby

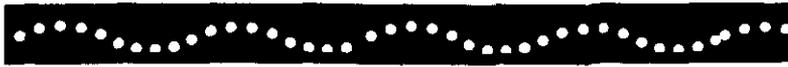
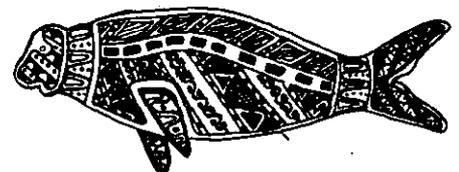


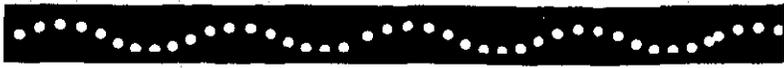
'I decided to become a ranger to help my people to look after our land and sea.'

An historic agreement

A 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MOU) was signed on 1 August 1996 in Rockhampton between the Darumbal-Noolar Murree Corporation for Land and Culture and the GBRMPA to protect dugong in Shoalwater Bay. Traditional people of this area have taken an important step towards stopping the decline in dugong population in the bay by

agreeing not to hunt until the next dugong survey scheduled for 1999.





Next steps in Planning

The Draft Plan for the Far Northern Section will now be completed early next year. We will be working closely with other sea users to discuss how bama proposals affect them. The commercial fishing industry may be affected by bama proposals so these discussions will be very important.

Leanne, Frank and Ross are continuing to visit people at Hope Vale, Coen, Port Stewart, Lockhart River and Injinoo. If you haven't seen them recently, there's a good chance you will soon. Robin and Joan have been working on other parts of the project, including the legal wording of the Draft Plan, and meetings with other agencies.

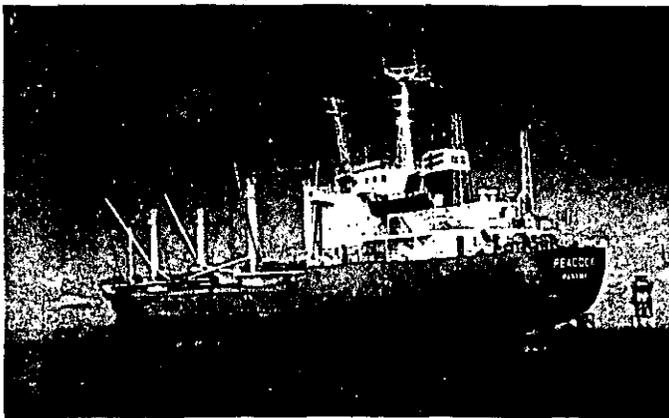
The Cape York Land Council (CYLC) has employed Ross Johnston and Lynn

Baker to support bama in planning. During July, Ross Johnston and Archie Tanna talked to many east coast *bama* about the idea to form a Sea Council to finalise planning and other matters of sea-use and management. CYLC, along with GBRMPA and DoE, will continue to develop the Sea Council proposal.

The review of management of marine parks will now include plans of management as well as zoning. GBRMPA will develop these plans jointly with Aboriginal people on eastern Cape York. The plans will cover each traditional sea country estate. Cape Melville/Starcke sea country and the Injinoo sea country will be started first. Other traditional sea country areas will be planned next.

High and dry...

MV Peacock grounding on Piper Reef



• *Piper Reef is only 20 km from Temple Bay, which is an important natural area supporting seagrasses, mangroves and coral reefs. Temple Bay is within Kuuku Ya'u sea country, and is an important resource area for the Lockhart River Community.*

Early on the morning of 18 July, the cargo vessel MV Peacock grounded on Piper Reef, near Lockhart River.

In case of an oil spill, protective

booms were set up, oil recovery vessels were on standby and oiled fauna recovery equipment was ready for use.

A salvage company pumped 400 tonnes of fuel oil out of the vessel's

holds into a fuel barge and checked for damage. The vessel was refloated on 26 July and steamed to Cairns.

The Lockhart River Aboriginal community, in particular Jim Wallace, and Kuuku Ya'u Elders, Jerry Pascoe and Sweeney Hobson were involved in the salvage along with the salvage company, AMSA (Australian Maritime Safety Authority), DoT (Department of Transport), GBRMPA and DoE.



MV Peacock aground on Piper Reef



- Two GBRMPA staff members relied on locals to dig their way to a lucky escape after becoming bogged to the axles during a recent trip to Shelburne Bay. Yes, they were in a 4WD! Any guesses?

- GBRMPA has released a 'Dugong Information Kit'. Phone the Education/Information Section, GBRMPA to find out more. Tel: 1800 802 251.

- Johanne Omeeny, Jim Wallace, Hilton Noble and Robert Kellermeier have so far assisted Gary Luchi (DoE) with aerial surveillance flights. Gary is keen to involve Community Rangers in future flights so please contact him at DoE on (070) 523 952.

- Jim Wallace also took part in a sea patrol with Customs Officers on the vessel Sir William Lyne in the Lockhart River area. No offences were detected but this type of exercise creates opportunities for community rangers to be involved in Customs operations. For more information contact Andrew Frugtriet in Cairns, (070) 523 576 or Michael Johnston at Thursday Island, on (070) 691 554.

Community Ranger training

Caring for Country is a project that aims to develop a national curriculum for training Indigenous people to care for country. The courses currently offered by TAFE for Community Rangers will be updated.

Elders will be involved in the teaching and studies will include land and sea management practices and culture and heritage protection. The courses will be more flexible and can be made to suit communities' needs. Some of the courses can even be taken as work experience for organisations such as

DoE or GBRMPA.

At the moment the Standards and Curriculum Council and the ATSI People's Training Advisory Council are reviewing the framework of courses and we hope they will approve continued development.

Community rangers currently doing the TAFE course will be able to complete their studies or convert to the new courses - the courses should be even better! Phone Sue Howard on (070) 422 479 if you have any

Who's who?

JOHN CORNELIUS

John Cornelius is co-ordinator of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



Liaison group in Coastal Management at DoE in Cairns. He has been a

naturalised Australian citizen for twenty years (before that, he was American!) John worked on the NSW state fisheries research vessel before moving to Queensland, where in 1978, he became one of the first state marine parks rangers. (Does that explain the grey hair??) He has worked with Aboriginal communities since 1985.

John confesses to a mis-spent youth as he worked his way around the world (three times) on everything from a 22 foot sloop (sailing boat) to a Norwegian cargo ship and Caribbean sailing charter vessels. John studied to be a biologist and laboratory technician but that was in his past - he now looks forward to continued involvement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - he is here for the long run.

FURTHER



INFORMATION

For further information about planning the marine parks, talk to Ross Williams or Leanne Sommer at GBRMPA on (077) 500 700 or Frank Gleeson at DoE on (070) 523 043.

We welcome your contributions to Sea Country - talk to Julie Swartz at DoE on (070) 523 043.

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