

Number 7 April 1997

GREAT BARRIER REEF  
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

# SEA COUNTRY

INFORMATION ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES OF THE CAPE YORK MARINE PARKS

## Look Inside...

**Planning** - Latest on the plans for the marine parks of Cape York

**Dugong** - why all the fuss?

Travel Diary - Ross Williams meets the **Haida people** of Canada

Community Ranger views - **Hope Vale Rangers**

The seventh 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. If you have any questions - contact a Community Ranger below.

## 4th Member of the Marine Park Authority It's happened!!

*The board of GBRMPA makes major decisions about the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. They are Ian McPhail, Chair of GBRMPA; Tom Tolhurst, Director General of DoE; and Professor Rhondda Jones from James Cook University. Now there is another position...*

Mrs Evelyn Scott was appointed as the 4th member of the board of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in December 1996.

Mrs Scott (who prefers to be called Evelyn) was appointed because the law was changed to make the Authority a four person board. The new position is to represent the views of communities for the marine park area.

Evelyn lives in Cairns. Although she is 'retired', she holds several honorary positions - Chairperson for the Cairns and District Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Corporation for Women; Deputy Chair of the Wuchopperen Medical Service Limited in Cairns and President of the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association Inc, Sydney.

Before she 'retired', Evelyn spent many years with the Aboriginal Hostels Limited, ending up in 1993 as the Controlling Manager of the Tony Mundine Student Hostel in Sydney. Somehow, in such a busy life, she has also raised a family of five children.



You can contact Evelyn through the Indigenous Cultural Liaison Unit at GBRMPA. Contact Greg Smith, Ross Williams or Barry Hunter on (077) 500 700 or 1800 802 251.

## NOTICES

Need more details about planning for the marine parks off Cape York? Talk to a Community Ranger or key person.

John Bowen

Alima Panuel

Meun (Shorty) Lifu

Phil Bowie

Gwen Toby

Phil Wallis

Jim Wallace

Abraham Omeenyo

Alison Liddy

James Creek

Conrad Michael

Rocky Gibson

George Monahan

Illustrations by Lockhart  
River Art Gang unless  
otherwise identified

## Marine Parks



GREAT BARRIER REEF  
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Department  
of Environment



# Going going Dugong

Have you seen these stickers? Or noticed all the news lately about dugong numbers? Government is concerned that numbers of dugong, particularly south of Cape Bedford (Cooktown), are very low. They say urgent action is needed to save dugong.

In Sea Country Number 5, we talked about the problems of dugong survival. Staff from GBRMPA and DoE are currently visiting all the communities south of Cooktown to explain the dugong problem and what is being done.

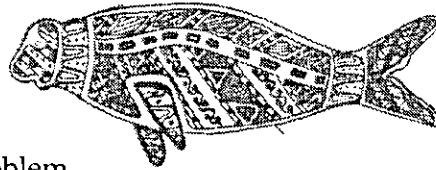
## Why are dugong going, going, gone?

All over the world, dugong numbers have dropped. Our Australian seas are the last refuge in the world for dugong. But even here they are in danger. Here they have been killed by mesh nets, shark nets, collisions with boats, pollution and loss of seagrass beds as well as by hunting.

Dugong are slow-breeding, long-lived animals. They live to 70 years old and only start to breed when they are about 10 - 17 years old. The females have one calf at a time and wait 3 years before having another.

This means that if their population numbers go down too much, dugong are in trouble. It will take a very long time to build up the population again, if at all.

In the southern parts of the Great Barrier Reef, these problems have become so great that the dugong may not survive there. Their numbers have halved over 8 years.

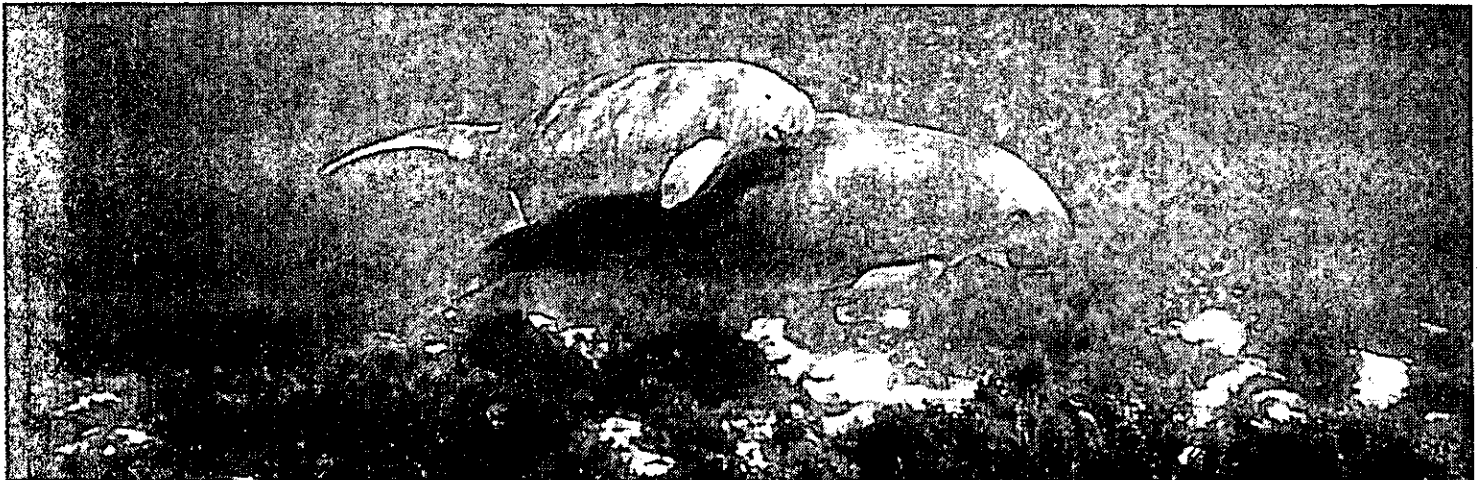


In the northern areas, near Cape York, the numbers are about the same as 8 years ago but we know we need to

protect the seagrass beds and reduce accidental deaths to give dugong a chance.

Bama are concerned about dugong survival - communities such as Mossman Gorge, between Cairns and Cooktown, have agreed not to hunt dugong. Other groups, such as fishermen, are also taking action to reduce dugong deaths in their nets. In Shoalwater Bay, the Commonwealth government has banned all netting to protect dugongs.

For more information on dugong, phone Linda Craig at DoE (070) 523043 or Janet Slater at GBRMPA on (077) 500 731.



# Travel diary

## Ross meets the Haida

by Ross Williams (GBRMPA)

In the late afternoon of 2nd October, I was in a plane that was so big I could have put my house in it. I was flying out of Australia to a country, Canada, that I have always wanted to visit.

The furthest overseas I had been before was Lizard Island so it was scary to look out the window and watch Australia disappear into the hazy horizon. Then, all I could see was water and more water. I began to think that if this plane crashed we had a long way to swim!

Anyway, after more than 14 hours in the air, I arrived in Vancouver, Canada. I spent a couple of days recovering with friends and then flew to Haida Gwaii, the indigenous (Haida) people's name for their land (also known as Queen Charlotte Islands). This is a group of islands south of Alaska.

The Haida people are best known for their totem poles - tall wooden poles carved with animals and faces. The poles represent spirits and stories; they are used to mark important areas like burial places.

Spending several days with the people, I learnt about the way they look after their lands, sea and fisheries. The Haida co-manage fisheries - they are also involved in the commercial fishing industry. They have a major problem with over-fishing by outside people. This leaves the Haida people with high unemployment and limited income.

The Haida are also involved in forestry and tourism where protection of burial sites and other important sites is a problem. The government would not



*Totem poles are carved of wood and painted.*

listen to the Haida people's concerns so they formed a ranger group called the Watchmen to patrol and protect their sites. They kept other people away from their sites until proper management was put in place. The government didn't like this so they sent out the troopers (police) and some Haida people were arrested.

The Haida continued their fight, however, until the government recognised their rights. Management plans were developed and the Watchmen program was given funds so they could continue to patrol and protect their special sites.

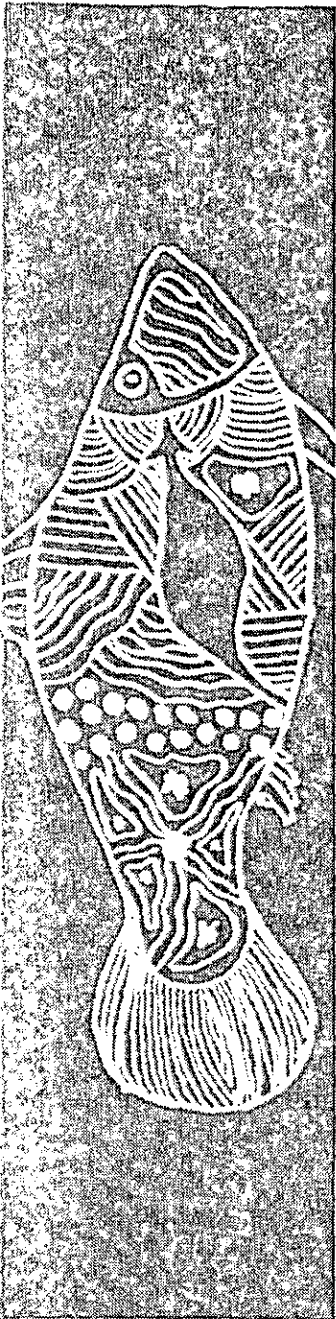
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*Totem pole of the Haida Gwaii.*

# Community Ranger Views

John Bowen and William (Willy) Michael



**J**ohn is a Marine Parks Community Ranger operating from Hope Vale. John has been a marine ranger for almost 6 years and has been a Commonwealth Marine Parks Inspector for 3 years. John has been working closely with GBRMPA, DoE and other organisations including Coastwatch and DPI Fisheries on their patrols and investigations. John has worked on crocodile and coral surveys and monitoring programs, to name but a few of his duties.

**LIKES:** Football, pig-hunting and marine activities of diving and spearing

**DISLIKES:** being treated like a black-tracker in the workplace

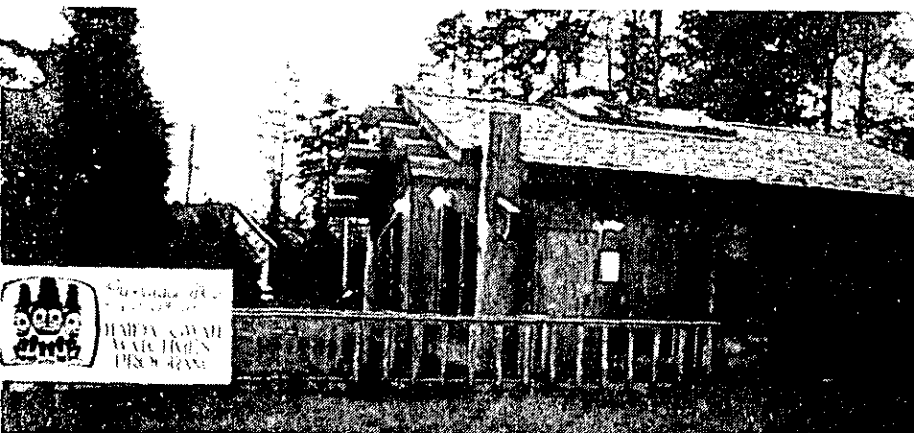
**W**illy, as he is called, has been a Community Ranger in Hope Vale for almost 6 years and is presently close to finishing his Associate Diploma Course with TAFE in Natural and Cultural Resource Management. Willy's duties have included fire management in Lakefield National Park, trapping of wildlife, mapping and working with school children and Elders. Willy wants to continue his work in the community once he has completed his Diploma so as to pass on what he has learnt to others.

**LIKES:** Pig-hunting, teaching children and working with Elders

**DISLIKES:** Don't like white people coming to our country and destroying it



## Travel diary: Ross meets the Haida... continued



After Haida Gwaii, I went on to Montreal to attend a meeting of the International Union for Conservation and Nature, an international organisation. Stay tuned for the next Sea Country....

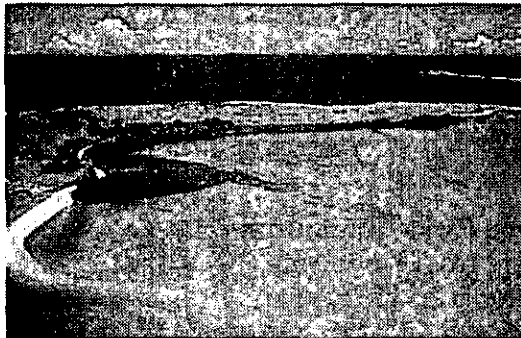
Ross Williams is the Liaison Officer at Townsville GBRMPA. If you want to contact Ross phone 077 500 859

Watchman Program headquarters



# Next steps in planning Far Northern Section

The draft plan will be out soon. Other groups will have their say on the draft and it is important that bama say what they like and dislike about the draft plan.



*Cliff Islands from the air*

Over the past 2-3 years, GBRMPA has been reviewing how the Far Northern Section of the Marine Park is managed. Aboriginal people, with help from Community rangers and Cape York Land Council, have had a say about their concerns and what they would like to see changed in the zoning or management.

Now the draft plan for the Far Northern Section of the Marine Park is nearly completed. Leanne Sommer has already visited communities to talk about what the draft plan might say.

So what does the draft plan say? There are some changes to zoning for areas of high natural values. Bathurst Bay, Temple Bay, Lloyd Bay and Cliff Islands are proposed to be green zones (National Park zones). These areas are the ones that Aboriginal people said were important and needed protecting.

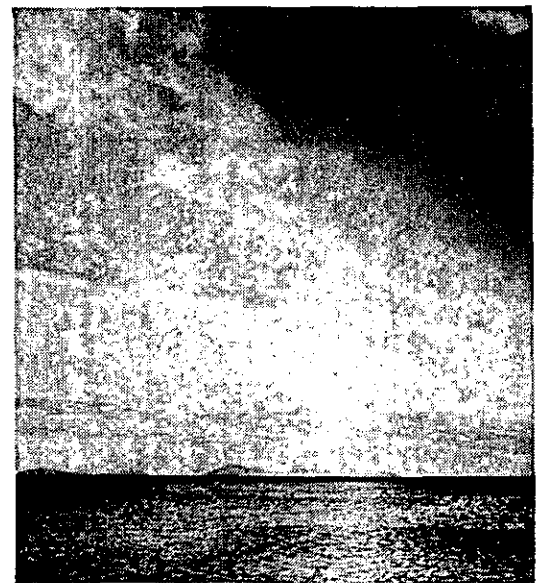
In May, when the draft plan is ready, GBRMPA staff will visit all communities again. Bama can tell GBRMPA staff what they like and dislike about zoning changes. Or they can put their

ideas in writing. Their comments, and those of other people, will be considered in making the final plan.

After the zoning is sorted out, GBRMPA wants to develop management plans for areas in the Far Northern Section, in co-operation with Aboriginal groups and the Cape York Land Council. This will be the way that GBRMPA makes sure that Aboriginal people are involved in the ongoing management of their sea country.

## State marine park

DoE staff have also spoken with Aboriginal groups about the idea of making a state marine park on the inshore, coastal and estuarine areas of eastern Cape York - areas that are not already part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Details of the draft plan for the state marine park will be in the next issue of Sea Country.



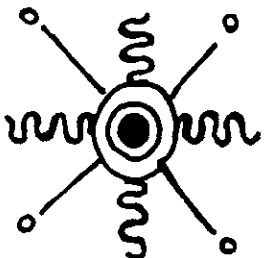
*Sunset over the Cape*



Chika Turner has been seen in Cairns recently wearing an afro wig, rose-coloured glasses, purple flares, platform shoes and dancing to his old 70's records. Is he - i) trying to hide from us ii) changing his image; or iii) working for Fisheries? Find out in the next Sea Country.

Has anyone been wondering where cranky Franky has got to? Frank Gleeson is now the Ranger-in-Charge at Port Douglas, where he runs the DoE Aboriginal Marine Ranger program, with trainees, Linc Walker and Clayton Enoch.

On 22 March, Cyclone Justin passed over the reef on its way through Cairns. Early reports show damage to island and cay vegetation (a concern because of seabird breeding), pontoons on the reef and some coral damage. The reefs offshore from Cairns, such as Green Island, were exposed to huge swells caused by winds up to 60 knots.



## Coastcare \$\$\$\$\$\$

This is a new source of funds for communities to do work on their coast. Incorporated groups, together with the land manager, such as a Community Council, can apply for funds for monitoring, planning, on-ground works and education. Money can be used for part-time project officer / coordinator positions as well as materials and equipment hire. It can't be used to buy vehicles or buildings.

Coastcare requires voluntary input from communities to match the funds provided. This can be in the form of CDEP work. Jana Kahabka (no, not Wendt... just call her Jana!!) is the Coastcare Facilitator for indigenous communities. She is new at DoE and will be visiting many communities over the next few months. If you want more information, call her on (070) 52 3043 or mobile 017 722 461.

## Who's who?



**Barry Hunter** is the Cultural Liaison Officer at GBRMPA, working with Ross Williams and Greg Smith in the Indigenous Cultural Liaison Unit. Barry is a Djabagay man from Kuranda (near Cairns) and has only been with GBRMPA for about a month.

Barry has particular experience and knowledge in cultural heritage. Besides currently studying a degree in cultural heritage, he has been employed with DoE in the Cultural Heritage Branch in Cairns. Here, his duties were to record and help communities manage their cultural heritage.

Barry is keen to get out to the communities within the Marine Park and listen to their issues and meet people. Some of the issues Barry will be dealing with include dugong, traditional hunting, tourism and cultural mapping.

*Likes:* being with family, football, reading, educating non-Aboriginal people about Aboriginal people's issues.

*Dislikes:* people who speak out against indigenous issues yet don't really have a clue or are ignorant and uneducated.

### FURTHER



### INFORMATION

For further information about planning the marine parks, talk to Ross Williams or Leanne Sommer at GBRMPA on (077) 500 700 or John Cornelius 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.