

SeaRead

Marine Park news from catchment to coral



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

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Celebrating World Wetlands Day

World Wetlands Day 2006 focussed on the theme 'Wetlands and water - supporting life, sustaining livelihoods' and the GBRMPA helped to celebrate by launching a range of exciting new educational products in communities across the catchment.

Interactive touch-screen information booths highlighting the importance of wetlands were unveiled in Mission Beach, Mackay and Emerald on 2 February to coincide with the event.

The 'Exploring our wetlands' interactive display is the brainchild of the GBRMPA, with the support from the Great Barrier Reef Wetlands Taskforce.

GBRMPA Director of Water Quality and Coastal Development Hugh Yorkston said the booth, a collaborative effort between the Federal and State Governments and regional community bodies, was an important educational resource that explains the value of local wetlands.

'Exploring our wetlands' is an exciting interactive experience and a great way for the community to enhance their knowledge, understanding and awareness of wetlands within the Great Barrier Reef Catchment," Hugh said.

"Wetlands are an essential part of the ecosystem, linking the catchment to the reef. The booth contains information on their important hydrological and habitat connectivity, values, variety and threats."

Mackay Local Marine Advisory Committee representative Noel Whitehead said that in the tropics, wetlands were vital waterways contributing to the health of the catchment.

"The overall aim of these booths is to show the varied types and functions of wetlands; everything from protecting the coast and absorbing pollutants to purifying water and forming nurseries for fish and marine creatures."

These booths complement other new educational resources including a new series of 'Reef Beat' posters on wetland values, school curriculum units and a wetlands web quest.

GBRMPA Education Manager Fred Nucifora said the curriculum unit for middle school students in grades five to eight showed wetlands were vital to the Great Barrier Reef.

"The new curriculum unit is a fun and interesting way to show school students the valuable and diverse role wetlands play in the ecosystem," he said.



The launch of the Wetland Booth at the Mackay Botanical Gardens. Front: Matt Bloor (Mackay/Whitsunday NRM), Patricia Corrie (Traditional Owner - Yuiibera Tribe), Stuart Fyfe (Mackay City Council) Back: Noel Whitehead (Local Marine Advisory Committee/Sunfish), Clive Rogers (Mackay/Whitsunday NRM), Randall Owens (GBRMPA), Dale Arvidsson (Mackay Regional Botanical Gardens), Helen Paulsen (Mackay Regional Botanical Gardens), Ray Allan (Mackay/Whitsunday NRM) and Chris Manning (GBRMPA)

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We recently announced the new membership of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Local Marine Advisory Committees. Located in various communities along the Great Barrier Reef coast, these groups play an important role by providing advice and feedback on Marine Park issues at a local level.

I would personally like to congratulate the new and returning members and I, along with all our staff, look forward to working with them over the next three years.

I cannot overstate the importance we place on having the ability to link in to communities on this level. Each and every committee member brings

a depth of local knowledge and understanding that helps us as managers achieve a clear perspective on issues of interest to these communities.

February also saw the celebration of World Wetlands Day which provided a great opportunity to focus on the important role wetlands play in the ecosystem, and how they link the catchment to the reef.

The GBRMPA celebrated by launching education products in Townsville and the Burnett Mary region, and our new interactive touch-screen information displays (*Exploring our wetlands*) were placed in Emerald, Mackay and Mission Beach.

The displays are an exciting and interactive way for community members to boost their knowledge, understanding and awareness of wetlands in their region. They're fun, informative and appealing to both adults and children alike and in my view, are certainly worth a look.

Andrew Skeat
Acting Chairman
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

END

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"The unit encourages students to investigate and explore wetlands in local areas, highlighting the unique ecological mix of plants and animals that depend on the wetland for food, water and shelter.

"The unit is aligned to outcomes in society and environment and science units for teachers, providing them with all the information to deliver a comprehensive and thorough examination of local wetlands."

These educational products were developed as part of activities under the Queensland Wetlands Programme to support the *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan*, a ten-year programme to halt and reverse the declining water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef. For more information, visit www.deh.gov.au/water/wetlands/qwp.



Benjamin Murray learns all about wetlands using the new interactive wetland booth at the Emerald Science Centre



The launch of the Wetland Booth at the C4 Environment Centre at Mission Beach. Left to Right: Brenda Harvey (President, C4 Environment Centre), Leonard Andy (Traditional Owner), Tony Stokes (Regional Liaison Manager, GBRMPA), Chris Gloor (Director, Coastal & Marine, Far North Queensland NRM) and Bill Shannon (Chair Mission Beach LMAC)



Ross Ingram (Board Member, Fitzroy Basin Association) unveils the new interactive wetland booth at the Emerald Science Centre

END

New Local Marine Advisory Committees to advise the GBRMPA

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is delighted to announce the new membership of the Local Marine Advisory Committees for the next three years.

GBRMPA Acting Chairman Andrew Skeat said the response to a call for nominations was overwhelming, with 158 nominations received.

"The level of interest from the community to serve on the LMACs was fantastic and we sincerely thank everyone who nominated," Andrew said.

"We have been fortunate that many people who have served on the LMACs in previous years have joined the committees for another three-year term.

"In addition, we are excited to have so many new members representing varying interests in the Marine Park."

Andrew said the LMACs played a vital role in advising the GBRMPA about the management of the Marine Park from a local perspective.

"The committees provide a forum for representatives from local interest groups, the community, and other management agencies to

discuss management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park," he said.

"We look forward to working in partnership with the LMACs over the next three years to help protect the social, economic and environmental values of the Marine Park."

LMAC membership is voluntary and membership renewal occurs every three years.

The committees meet approximately six times a year and the first meetings were held in February and end in March when a chairman and secretary will be elected.

There are 11 LMACs located in regions adjacent to the Marine Park including Burnett, Gladstone, Capricorn Coast, Mackay, Whitsundays, Townsville, Hinchinbrook, Mission Beach, Cairns, Port Douglas and Cape York.

For more information on the LMACs please contact the Regional Liaison Manager in your region.

END

Operators urged to register mooring details

A new GBRMPA initiative makes it possible to contact mooring owners and make a booking to use their mooring.

The web-based mooring register provides a comprehensive directory of all permitted moorings.

The online facility can be searched to identify who owns a mooring and where it can be located.

All vessel operators are encouraged to use a mooring wherever possible in the Marine Park, and can search the register at www.gbrmpa.gov.au under "Tourism and Recreation."

Operators who are yet to pass on their contact details to the GBRMPA for inclusion in the database should contact the Tourism and Recreation Group on (07) 4750 0775.

END

Interesting Facts

Male seahorses give birth! They have a pouch on their belly which holds the eggs until they hatch. Seahorses are the world's slowest fish!



Marine Park offences

As usual the Marine Park was very popular with people fishing over the holiday season and the GBRMPA was pleased with the response from people in making sure they knew where they could go and what they could do. Enforcement officers on patrol throughout the Marine Park detected only six offences over the holiday period, which is a small number for what is traditionally a very busy time of year. The GBRMPA continues to urge users to check zoning maps before they venture out on the water and to take the maps with them. This will help to avoid possible fines. Some examples of recent court results are shown below:

Location	Offence	Fine
Beaver Reef	Unpermitted Fishing (Recreational Fishing)	3 x \$950 1 x \$1150

Remember you can do your bit to keep the Reef great by reporting any incidents you see by emailing compliance@gbrmpa.gov.au or phoning (07) 4726 0510 or (07) 3830 8246.

END

Experts assess coral bleaching in southern Queensland



Undertaking coral bleaching surveys

Coral bleaching in the southern section of the Great Barrier Reef was inspected first-hand by leading Australian climate change experts.

The GBRMPA team spent three days assessing corals off Keppel Island near Rockhampton with experts from the University of Queensland and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

The GBRMPA team later assessed corals in the Mackay region as well as Heron and Lady Elliot Islands further down the coast.

GBRMPA Climate Change Response Unit Manager Dr Paul Marshall said the Keppel region showed the year's first evidence of severe coral bleaching.

"Sea temperatures have been one to one and a half degrees Celsius above the January average in the southern Great Barrier Reef, triggering severe coral bleaching around the Keppel Islands," he said.

"Over three days we visited 10 sites around the Keppel Islands, finding severe bleaching at most sites.

"While this is certainly not yet as widespread or significant as the mass bleaching that occurred four years ago, any further increases in temperatures could lead to more bleaching throughout the Reef."

Paul said the GBRMPA had also received Bleachwatch reports from Reef operators about minor bleaching further north in the Marine Park late last year.

"There was some minor bleaching in the northern section of the Great Barrier Reef earlier in the season but cloud-cover and a cooling of central and northern Great Barrier Reef waters offered some reprieve," he said.

"The bleaching we have seen in the Keppels, by comparison, is quite severe. Should the hot conditions resume, it is possible this level of bleaching could happen elsewhere in the Great Barrier Reef."

Corals become stressed when water temperature increases and they lose the microscopic algae that live within their tissue, causing them to turn bright white.

A bleached coral is still alive, and close inspection can reveal the nearly transparent tissue and tentacles that cover the skeleton.

A lot of the corals' energy and colour comes from the algae. If hot conditions persist, then bleached corals are unable to regain their algae causing starvation and death.

Corals normally range from brown and green to yellow, blue and even pink. Bleached corals appear extremely pale or bone white.

The last mass bleaching events occurred in 1998 and 2002, affecting over 60 percent of the Great Barrier Reef. Up to five percent of reefs suffered greater than 50 percent coral mortality in each of these years.

END

Help celebrate the Year of the Turtle



We can all help celebrate and protect our marine turtles during the Indian Ocean - South-East Asian (IOSEA) 'Year of the Turtle - 2006'.

GBRMPA's Species Conservation Manager Dr Kirstin Dobbs said the official 'Year of the Turtle' campaign was launched on 1 March 2006 and provided us all with an opportunity to celebrate marine turtles and to support their conservation in our local communities.

"Six of the world's seven species of marine turtle live in the waters

around Australia, and all six are found within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area," she said.

"All six of these turtle species are threatened and the IOSEA 'Year of the Turtle - 2006' provides us with a focus for protecting and conserving turtles in our own back yard."

Kirstin said one of the best things about the IOSEA 'Year of the Turtle' was that everyone could get involved.

"There are so many ways individuals, communities and organisations can become involved in the 'Year of the Turtle'.

"By logging onto the 'Year of the Turtle' website you can find ways to contribute. You can also help ensure you look after turtles in our Great Barrier Reef Marine Park by learning more about them."

There are five main objectives to the 'Year of the Turtle' campaign that we can all play a part in. These are to:

- Celebrate marine turtles: Organise and host events that celebrate marine turtles, and help raise awareness and funds for their conservation.

- Ensure a future: Put in place and apply best practices that ensure the long-term survival of turtles, while involving and benefiting local communities.
- Save a marine turtle habitat: Identify sites that are important for turtles and lobby for their inclusion in the proposed IOSEA Site Network.
- Reduce turtle mortality: Actively promote policies and technologies that reduce the accidental death of marine turtles.
- Study your turtles: Support or take part in ongoing research.

If you have a 'Year of the Turtle' activity, SeaRead would love to hear about it. Please email us at searead@gbmpa.gov.au. The 'Year of the Turtle' campaign will run through to the end of 2006.

For more information about the 'Year of the Turtle' go to www.ioseaturtles.org. For further information about turtles in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park see the following website - www.gbmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/conservation/threatened_species/turtles/index.html.

END

No anchoring areas protect coral

No anchoring areas protect the fragile coral communities at popular diving and snorkelling spots Manta Ray Bay, Hook Island and Bait Reef Whitsundays.

Generally, no anchoring areas are designated by reef protection markers (white pyramid shaped buoys with blue Marine Parks labels).

Anchoring is not allowed inshore of the line of buoys except when anchoring on adjacent beach areas.

Manta Ray Bay (as shown on the map) and Bait Reef are no anchoring areas, however they are unmarked. Operators must use coordinates and landmarks to ensure they do not anchor within the no anchoring area.



A detailed map of the no anchoring area at Manta Ray Bay

There are public moorings available that can be used according to the tags.

To find out about other no anchoring areas please call the GBRMPA on (07) 4750 0700.



GDA94 datum

END

Reef HQ welcomes a new addition

A special visitor, who received national media attention, arrived in the tanks of Reef HQ early this year in the form of a baby leopard shark.

Reef HQ Aquarist Paul Groves said the female shark entered the world in quite unusual circumstances.

"This particular shark is unique in that its casing was damaged before it hatched, which meant Reef HQ staff had to place it in an artificial casing, something that has never been done by any other aquarium in Australia for a shark of this type," Paul said.

"Most sharks give birth to live sharks, however the leopard shark is one of only a few egg-laying sharks."

A name is yet to be decided for the shark and people have been calling in from around Australia to suggest names.

It is the first born to Reef HQ Predator Tank residents Leo and Leoni and may have some brothers and sisters in the coming months as others from the same parents are born.

The leopard shark is now on display at Reef HQ Aquarium, 2-68 Flinders Street, Townsville.

Reef HQ is open from 9.30am to 5.00pm, seven days a week, everyday of the year except Christmas Day.



The baby leopard shark can be seen in the tanks of Reef HQ

END

What are the rules for no anchoring areas?

When you are visiting a reef or bay that has a no anchoring area, you can help protect the coral reefs of that area by following a few simple rules:

- You cannot anchor inside a no anchoring area or inshore of the line of buoys.
- You can enter no anchoring areas when approaching or leaving moorings or beaches, if safe navigation allows.
- You cannot attach your vessel or aircraft to a reef protection marker.

Anchoring is not restricted if it is necessary for the safety of life or if a vessel is threatened.

END

Interesting Facts

Marine turtles travel vast distances throughout the year, but usually return to lay their eggs in the same region where they themselves were born.





A profile of Dr Evelyn Scott AO Marine Park Authority Board Member



Dr Evelyn Scott AO is in her 10th year of serving on the Marine Park Authority Board

Dr Evelyn Scott AO is one of the four members of the Marine Park Authority Board, and is the longest serving of the current Board members since her initial Ministerial appointment in December 1996.

Evelyn was the first appointee to the Board to represent the interests of Aboriginal communities adjacent to the Marine Park, as is required by the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act*.

Evelyn grew up in Ingham and now lives in Cairns. She is passionate about the environment and is concerned about the overuse of sea country and the disturbance of important environments, such as seagrass beds, due to a general lack of awareness of their value.

In her role on the Board, Evelyn has participated in the decision-making process for major issues and legislative changes including the Representative Areas Programme and the protection of a range of threatened species, and has progressed the profile of sea country issues.

More recently, Evelyn was involved in the official signing of the first accredited Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) for

the Girringun Region - a history-making agreement that she believes is just the beginning of things to come for Indigenous people looking after their sea country.

"I am thrilled about what the TUMRA stands for, it is the best thing that has happened in my lifetime. I got very emotional about it," she said.

"There has been a major shift in the recognition of Traditional Owner groups, and their sea country over the past 10 years I have been on the Board. This has been due in part to the increasing strength of partnership arrangements between the GBRMPA and Traditional Owner groups."

Evelyn believes the progress of Indigenous issues in sea country will continue through an ongoing educational process within the broader community.

END

Redefining Indigenous Tourism

The opportunities for Indigenous participation in tourism and its management are being highlighted in a positive new approach by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Tourism Queensland and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

GBRMPA Acting Chairman Andrew Skeat said that for years there had been a common misconception that Indigenous tourism meant the mainstream industry communicating Indigenous stories and other aspects of cultural life.

"We are now working collaboratively with Indigenous groups, government agencies, industry and volunteer tourism operators to foster broader Indigenous participation in tourism in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park," he said.

The joint long-term vision is to have Indigenous people owning, operating and being involved in tourism operations in the Marine Park, and to have Indigenous participation in the way tourism is managed.

"There is a range of opportunities and permits available throughout the Marine Park for Indigenous communities that are interested in operating their own tourism venture," Andrew said.

"In addition, the GBRMPA has specifically identified 13 Indigenous marine tourism permits allowing everyday operation within the Whitsundays, Hinchinbrook and Cairns Planning Areas."

Andrew said the permits were a small but significant part of the bigger picture of Indigenous marine tourism.

"Tourism is a very real avenue for long-term economic development in Indigenous communities" he said.

"The permits are an opportunity for Indigenous people to build exciting and viable marine tourism businesses, and build relationships with existing operators."

Information sessions are taking place in the region to provide advice on general tourism permits available for Indigenous enterprises, and to scope Indigenous community interests and aspirations for participating in marine tourism.

For more information contact GBRMPA on (07) 4750 0700 or visit the website at www.gbrmpa.gov.au.



Indigenous groups are being encouraged to participate in tourism in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

END

Tour guides get tips on "selling" the Marine Park

A publication produced regularly by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority gives tourism operators and guides useful tips on how to "sell" the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park to their customers.

Reef Facts for tour guides, contains facts on all facets of the Marine Park.

GBRMPA Acting Chairman Andrew Skeat said it aimed to ensure all operators were up-to-date with the latest information on the World Heritage Area.

"*Reef Facts* engages directly with tourism operators and guides, encouraging them to give key messages about the reef," he said.

"Tourism in the Great Barrier Reef catchment is a major industry, contributing \$5.1 billion each year to the Australian economy."

Andrew said the first edition focused on a "big picture" view on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, with subsequent editions set to cover everything from sharks to Indigenous sea country.

"*Reef Facts* provides accurate information on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in an interesting format so visitor satisfaction, understanding and connection with the Great Barrier Reef and its values are enhanced," he said.

"Our Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee supports the GBRMPA giving local operators the information and tools to more effectively promote the Marine Park."



Tourism in the Great Barrier Reef catchment contributes \$5.1 billion each year to the Australian economy

END

Research needs in the spotlight

The GBRMPA's focus of using the best science to guide management decisions, means that its research needs are constantly changing and evolving.

The GBRMPA has recently implemented a new online database, which highlights its key research needs and presents them in a structured and user-friendly format.

The Research Information System allows the GBRMPA to present its research needs and determine how well these needs are met. It also helps determine how well national research priorities and legislative/policy requirements relating to the Marine Park are being addressed.

Dr Fergus Molloy, from the GBRMPA's Research and Monitoring Coordination unit, said it was a valuable tool for managing and coordinating research relevant to the Marine Park.

"The system is a one-stop shop where the research community can explore present and past research relevant to the management of the

Marine Park and easily identify where research opportunities exist," he said.

"The database also assists the GBRMPA to determine the research effort in specific areas and to identify those areas that need attention."

The system is organised into two sections: information on research needs and information on research activities.

The information on research needs is presented in broad categories called 'themes.'

Under this are more specific 'research questions' that aim to guide researchers into areas of research that will help improve the management of the Marine Park.

Information on research activities includes details of current and past research projects that address the research needs.

The database has three main search options: a themes browser that is similar to flicking through a book, a questions search, and a similar search on research activities.

Col McKenzie from the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators said the publication contained interesting information for marine tourism operators to deliver to their customers.

"*Reef Facts* is a fantastic resource for marine tourism operators who not only want to get the information they provide to tourists correct, but to make it interesting as well," he said.

Reef Facts is available online at www.gbrmpa.gov.au under 'Tourism and Recreation' - 'Publications'.

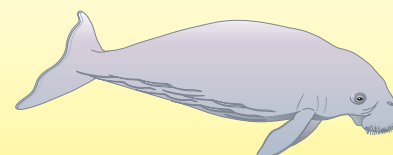
These searches employ a variety of criteria to make it as easy as possible for the user to extract the required information.

The Research Information System can be found at: www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/science/research_priorities/database.

END

Interesting Facts

Whales, dolphins and dugongs are all marine mammals. Dugongs can grow up to three metres long and weigh up to 400 kilograms! They are closely related to elephants.





Reef Guardian projects begin for 2006

The Reef Guardian Schools programme for 2006 has kicked off the year with a range of new teacher and student resources to help make a difference in their communities and keep the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park great.

Reef Guardian Schools Programme Manager Angela Colliver said that there was very strong interest in the programme once again this year and all schools were being encouraged to submit their action plan in order to have access to the many great educational resources available.

"Schools receive calico bags, a stamp, aqua clics and Bleachwatch wristbands when an action plan is received", Angela said.

"We now also offer a range of new and exciting teaching resources."

"This includes a new set of 10 Reef Beat posters along with an accompanying activity book covering all aspects of wetlands, a wetland web quest for online learning, and a Reef Guardian promotional CD that highlights the many excellent opportunities and activities Reef Guardian Schools can get involved in."

Central State School in Townsville has already begun their Reef Guardian activities for this year. Students were some of the first to test-drive the new 'Exploring Wetlands' web quest on World Wetlands Day. The web quest is available at www.reefed.edu.au/students.



Central State School Principal Anthony Ryan, GBRMPA's Donna Audas and Fred Nucifora celebrate World Wetlands Day 2006 with Central State School students



GBRMPA's Fred Nucifora shows School students the new Exploring Wetlands Web Quest

END

Communication and Education vital when working towards a shared goal

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Reef Guardian Schools Programme Manager Angela Colliver was a keynote speaker at the Yokohama International Workshop for the Revival of the Tokyo Bay Ecosystems late last year.

"Having more than 30 million people living in the coastal zone, Tokyo Bay has been contributing to the Japanese economy by providing ports. This has led to the decline of the bay, however due to the efforts of governments and communities, the water quality of Tokyo Bay has been improved extensively," Angela said.

Angela presented a paper titled *The challenge of using education, training and communication for the preservation and protection of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.*

"The paper focussed on how important communication and education activities are when trying to get a collective group of people working towards a common goal," Angela said.

"Unlike the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, there is no eelgrass (seagrass) left to maintain in Tokyo Bay, so the conference was more about how they were going to revive the eelgrass and continue to maintain it."

The first day of the conference was spent touring Tokyo Bay and getting a chance to look at the work that had already been done.

"Students and community members were recognised for their work in replanting the Bay with eelgrass by the Emperor and Empress of Japan, with more than 50 Japan dignitaries in attendance," Angela said.

"The Japanese Government in conjunction with attendees to the conference will now devise a strategy on how to address land-based activities in order to improve the quality of water leading out to the bay.

"The need for a maintenance plan was also discussed, and the Japanese Government believed enough good advice and guidance came out of the conference for them to feel confident of finding a way forward and reviving Tokyo Bay and keeping it sustainable for the future."



GBRMPA's Reef Guardian Schools Programme Manager Angela Colliver tours Tokyo Bay



The water quality in Tokyo Bay will continue to improve due to the efforts of the government and communities

END



Seaweek 2006

"Footprints for our Future" The choices we make

March 5 to 12 is SeaWeek 2006 and this year's theme is 'Footprints for our Future - The choices we make'. In support of the UNESCO 'Decade of Education for Sustainable Development', SeaWeek celebrates the many ways we can all learn to live more sustainably for the future, and focus on a different theme each day.

Sunday 5 March 2006	Clean up Australia Day
Monday 6 March 2006	Sustainable Biodiversity
Tuesday 7 March 2006	Sustainable Water use
Wednesday 8 March 2006	Sustainable Energy use
Thursday 9 March 2006	Sustainable Tourism
Friday 10 March 2006	Sustainable Fisheries
Saturday 11 March 2006	Sustainable Recycling

SeaWeek is an initiative of the Marine Education Society of Australasia (MESA). For great educational material and links to useful information about sustainable living and other information visit www.mesa.edu.au/seaweek.asp.

What's new on

www.reefED.edu.au

educate to keep it great

Recently new to Reef ED:

- Explore a wetland as if you are there with the new 'Exploring Wetlands' web quest. You can choose from a variety of wetlands to explore and complete different tests at each site to monitor the state of your chosen site.
- Check out the 10 new colourful Wetland Reef Beat posters and accompanying activity booklet to learn all about how wetlands help protect our Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and plenty more.

END

Volunteers win Australia Day Award

Eighteen years and 250,000 hours of service have earned the Reef HQ Volunteer Association the Achievement Award at the 2006 Townsville City Council Australia Day Awards.

Ranging in age from 15 to 82 years, Reef HQ Volunteers come from various backgrounds, and the association currently has seven husband and wife teams, one family team and 18 student volunteers.

The Townsville City Council Australia Day Achievement Award is presented to a person or organisation that has made a significant contribution or exceptional achievement in a chosen field.

The annual recruiting of new Reef HQ Volunteers commenced in February. For further information please phone Reef HQ on (07) 4750 0800.



reefHQ
AQUARIUM

END

GBRMPA staff receive Australia Day awards

Six GBRMPA staff were presented with Australia Day achievement awards recently for their dedication and hard work towards helping to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

- Chris Briggs, Manager of Industry Engagement, Tourism and Recreation Group, received the Australia Day award for his hard work within the tourism industry.
- Kathy Rossini, Office Services Manager within the Corporate Services Group, was awarded for her work in assisting the Day-to-Day Management team.
- Chicka Turner, Manager of the Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit, was recognised for his work in getting the first Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) signed off in the Giringun Region.



Australia Day medal recipients (from left) Chicka Turner, James Monkivitch, John Baldwin and Chris Briggs

- James Monkivitch, Project Manager for Environmental Impact Management, was given the award for his expert contribution in the area of environmental impact assessment and recent work on artificial reefs.
- John Baldwin, Manager for International Business, received the Australia Day award for his dedication to the Authority over the years and his work with the International Coral Reef initiative.
- Margie Atkinson, Project Manger within the Fisheries Group, was recognised for her hard work and contribution toward the coral collecting policy.

END

Wetlands – ‘Kidneys of the landscape’

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority recently helped celebrate World Wetlands Week by launching a range of educational products stressing the importance of wetlands, particularly to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Wetlands are often described as ‘the kidneys of the landscape’ because of their ability to filter and remove some pollutants from runoff waters and improve water quality.

There are many different types of wetlands and their functions vary, depending on factors such as the water source, water quality (fresh or salt), geographical location and the type of vegetation surrounding the wetland.

The structure of a wetland also depends on the amount and frequency of flooding in the area. Largely, wetlands can be categorised

into two main types: saltwater wetlands and freshwater wetlands.

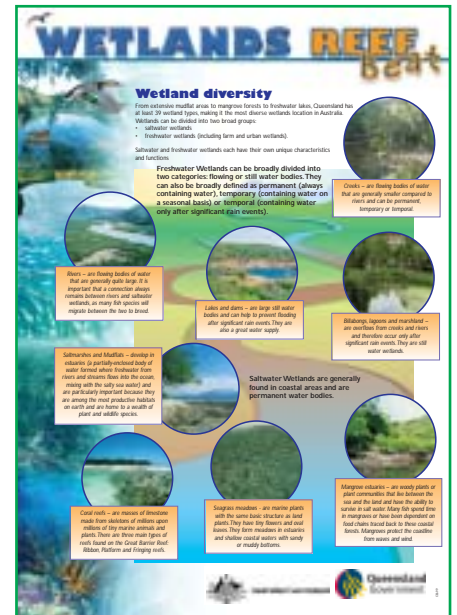
A total of 79 fish species have been identified as using both freshwater and saltwater habitats along the Great Barrier coast within the last 15 years. Therefore, it is important that the connection remains between these wetlands to encourage fish breeding.

Wetlands offer a variety of values to the community and the environment, however the importance of wetlands has only recently been recognised and understood. Aside from improving water quality, wetlands offer many other economic, social and ecological benefits.

Saltwater and freshwater wetlands are of high cultural importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. They offer significant sources of food and are places of ceremony, meeting and teaching.

Our wetlands are disappearing, however there are many groups in Queensland that are doing their bit to revegetate and restore these amazing and complex ecosystems.

To find out more about wetlands and for a free copy of 10 colourful wetland Reef Beat posters phone the GBRMPA on (07) 4750 0700.



An educational poster describing the types of wetlands in Queensland

END

How does the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park differ from the World Heritage Area?



Hamilton Island is within the World Heritage Area however does not form part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

A recent oil spill in Gladstone Harbour highlighted the confusion some people have about how the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park differs from the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

GBRMPA's Conservation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships Director Jon Day said the World Heritage Area covered a larger area, and included all the islands and their surrounding waters.

"Unless it is a Commonwealth island, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park only extends up to low water mark, both around islands and along the mainland coast," Jon said.

The Marine Park comprises 99.3 percent of the World Heritage Area.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park differs from the World Heritage Area in that it does not include:

- Most islands (Commonwealth-owned islands are part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park).
- Internal waters of Queensland (e.g. some deep bays, narrow inlets or channels between islands; many of which are State Marine Parks).
- A number of small exclusion areas (called State waters) around major ports/urban centres; these areas have not been proclaimed as part of the Marine Park following agreement with the Queensland Government.

"The recent oil spill in Gladstone occurred within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, but not within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, as the port is an exclusion area and not part of the Marine Park," Jon said.

Along much of the mainland coast, the Marine Park and the World Heritage Area both share low water mark as the boundary, but there are differences as highlighted above. Offshore, the seaward, or outer boundary of both areas is the same.

"All Great Barrier Reef islands, and their surrounding tidal waters, are therefore part of the World Heritage Area, but only Commonwealth islands form part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park," Jon said.

"Even developed islands, like Hamilton Island or Magnetic Island, including the urban areas, are part of the World Heritage Area."

Most intertidal areas are not part of the federal Marine Park. Around Queensland islands, the tidal lands and tidal waters have been declared part of the (Queensland) Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park which has complementary zoning to the federal Marine Park. That is virtually identical zoning provisions and zone types apply.

"From a user's point of view, anywhere seaward of high water mark is probably part of either the State or Federal Marine Park, so complying with Marine Park zoning requirements is essential."

END

Marine Park Partnerships

Profile of Regional Liaison Officer, Central



Cath Maclean

Cath Maclean is the Regional Liaison Officer – Central, based in Mackay and covering the area from Bowen to St Lawrence.

Cath was attracted to her current position because of the challenge she faced of establishing something new in the region for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and meeting and working with a range of people.

“We have managed to establish a friendly, personal presence for the GBRMPA in the region,” Cath said.

“We have been working with the central region community members to achieve cooperative outcomes that are of benefit to both the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and the region.”

Cath loves that the central region is diverse and has a good community feel about it.

“I like working with the people associated with the Mackay/Whitsunday Natural Resource Management group. I am continually learning new things and I feel I am getting a clear understanding of the people and the challenges they face much better now.”

Before joining the GBRMPA in August last year, Cath worked with the Australian Customs Service as an Enforcement Officer which involved doing patrols on land and water and liaising with stakeholders and other government departments.

“I was able to travel a lot within the job, including terms in Sydney, Cairns, Canberra and Mackay. It was both an interesting and challenging

job involving a diverse range of activities,” Cath said.

“I spent six years in the role and this year I was awarded an Australia Day award from Customs and the National Australia Day council for the ‘Helicopter Boarding at Sea Initiative.’”

Cath loves living in the coastal region and would one day like to get down to Mon Repos Conservation Park to visit first-hand the hatchling season.

Cath is step-mum to three active, outdoor boys which include twins Kyle and Dylan, 11 and Josh 14, and is happy to have survived the entire school holiday period with only one trip to the hospital.

END

Creature Feature

Blue-spotted fantail ray

Taeniura lymma

- This is the most commonly seen stingray on the Great Barrier Reef.
- They grow to about 70 centimetres in total length.
- They move in schools into shallow, sandy areas during the high tide to feed.
- At low tide they can be found sheltering in caves and under ledges.
- The blue-spotted fantail ray has one or two needle-sharp tail spines coated with poisonous mucus which can cause extreme pain if knelt or stood on.



Doing your bit to look after it!

When boating in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park you can do your bit to help look after it by following these responsible reef practices:

- ➔ Be on the look out for marine animals and travel slowly in areas where they are known to be present.
- ➔ Use the voluntary speed limits and transit lanes in the Hinchinbrook area.
- ➔ Look out for shallow coral, or other environmental hazards, and take into account tidal changes. Leave at least 30 centimetres clearance between the propeller and seabed.
- ➔ Slow down to minimise the wake when you're approaching reef edges, shorelines and beaches.
- ➔ Take all litter (for example, rubbish, food scraps and cigarette butts) with you and responsibly dispose of it on shore.
- ➔ Be considerate of others when motoring or anchoring near them (e.g. avoid wakes and do not anchor too close).
- ➔ Keep noise levels low to minimise animal disturbance.



Community Links

A profile of

Matthew Bloor

Coastal and Marine Coordinator
Mackay Whitsunday Natural Resource
Management Group



Matthew Bloor loves his position as the Coastal and Marine Coordinator for the Mackay Whitsunday Natural Resource Management group because it is diverse, challenging and pushes him to learn more about the things he is passionate about.

Matthew's role incorporates the Shorebird Programme, with the aim of conducting comprehensive monitoring of high tide shorebird roosts in the region.

"I recommend and prioritise habitat for best management practice based on condition and status," Matthew said.

"I also support the monitoring of seagrass, mangroves and coral in the region and work with the community to raise awareness of marine and coastal management issues and develop regional solutions."

Matthew's goal whilst in this position is to engage the community to take a greater role in participating in activities that protect important habitats.

"I want to emphasise the link between our catchments and the Great Barrier Reef. There is so much that we can do to improve the condition of our waterways, soils and native habitats that will improve the reef and near-shore habitats."

Matthew says his job is extremely rewarding because he gets to work with so many great people in the community and spends lots of time in the field.

"There are so many great places in our region worthy of protection," Matthew said.

"I love the climate in the region, the mountainous Clarke Range and its large swathes of rainforest, the offshore islands, beaches and coral reefs. It hasn't undergone the massive growth of South-East Queensland and other places around Australia's coast."

Matthew has been in his current role since September 2005, however he has worked in various coastal/resource management roles since he first moved to the Mackay/Whitsunday region in 1999 from Tasmania.

"In the past seven years, I have worked with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, local catchment groups, and WWF-Australia (World Wildlife Fund) on various biodiversity and coastal-related projects."

Matthew has recently been nominated to represent the Mackay Whitsunday Natural Resource Management group on the Mackay Local Marine Advisory Committee. The new committee has not yet convened, however Matthew says he is looking forward to working with the group.

END

Calendar of events

05 – 11 March 2006

Seaweed: Footprints for our Future

07 March 2006

Hinchinbrook LMAC meeting

07 March 2006

Mackay LMAC meeting

08 March 2006

Mission Beach LMAC meeting

08 March 2006

Gladstone Beach LMAC meeting

09 March 2006

Burnett Mary LMAC meeting

22 March 2006

World Water Day: Water and Culture

14 April 2006

Good Friday

17 April 2006

Easter Monday

25 April 2006

Anzac Day

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