

Library

SEA COUNTRY

INFORMATION ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES OF THE CAPE YORK MARINE PARKS

NUMBER 3

OCTOBER 1995

LOOK INSIDE

- **Trochus focus** - a look at the shellfish that makes money
- **Community Ranger views** - from Phil Wallis
- **Effects of fishing** - what happens when trawlers trawl?
- **Turtle tagging** - your chance to help in the understanding of one of nature's mysteries

NOTICE BOARD

Need more details about planning for the marine park off Cape York? Talk to a **Community Ranger:**

- Alima Panuel
- Meun (Shorty) Lifu
- Gwen Toby
- Phil Wallis
- Alison Liddy
- James Creek
- Jim Wallace

GREAT BARRIER REEF MARINE PARK AUTHORITY

John Bowen
26 JUN 1996

The third issue of *Sea Country* is written by staff from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage (QDEH), and Community Rangers from Cape York. This newsletter will keep you up to date with sea country issues on Cape York.

Regional Workshops - which way for sea country planning?

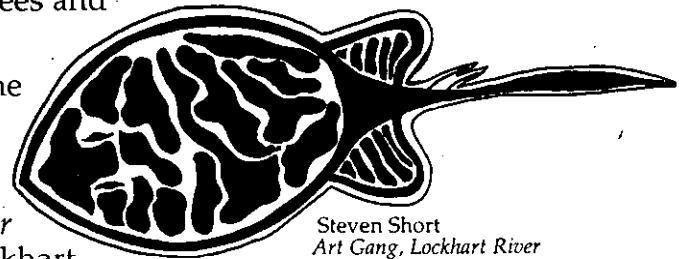
Staff from QDEH and GBRMPA travelled to Hope Vale, Coen, Lockhart River and Injinoo during May to talk to people about planning their sea country.

These meetings - Regional Workshops - were a major step in asking people to have a say in planning and managing the marine parks of Cape York. As we said in the last two newsletters, there is a management review for the Far Northern Section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and a proposed state marine park for the coastal and tidal waters of Cape York. Aboriginal people will have a big say in how these marine parks are managed.

Because it is so important, there was lots of interest in the workshops. At Hope Vale, elders talked about how boundaries drawn on maps by governments did not match clan boundaries. They said better coordination between government people was needed and that Community Councils should be more involved in planning.

At Coen, the two clan groups formed planning groups to keep talking to government about sea country planning. Rangers, Alison Liddy and James Creek, are part of these committees and helped run the workshops.

Lockhart River people invited the new Chairperson of GBRMPA, Ian McPhail, to attend their workshop. They presented him with an action plan for *Caring for Our Country - Sea and Coast!* Lockhart River people have said strongly what they want for their sea country. Now they will work with government to see how marine parks can help make their sea plan work.



Steven Short
Art Gang, Lockhart River

At Injinoo, many people, old and young, came to the workshops. They were interested to see the Lockhart River sea plan. They talked about the idea of doing their own plan so they could talk to government 'as equals' about marine parks.

(Continued over page)

LIBRARY

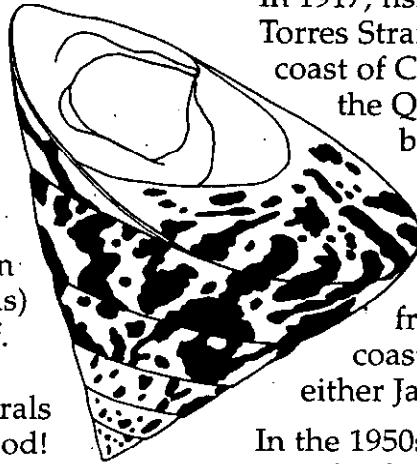
Marine Parks



Trochus Focus

Trochus are shellfish that are found in the shallow waters of coral reefs.

They live in the rough water in the 'surf zone' of the seaward side of the reef. Young trochus live in the rocky zone of the reef top just behind the reef edge. Trochus feed on small algae (seaweeds) that grow on the reef. Trochus, like other shellfish, 'lick' the corals and rocks for their food! Inside their mouths they have a small tongue that is rough like sandpaper. They use this tongue to scrape algae from the coral rocks.



tonnes were taken in the early years.

In 1917, fishermen moved out of the Torres Strait and spread along the coast of Cape York. By 1927, all of the Queensland coast was being searched for trochus. Crews of the trochus boats were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people from settlements along the coast. The skippers were either Japanese or European.

In the 1950s, plastics became more popular for buttons than the real pearl shell from trochus so the industry decreased. In the 1970s, trochus became fashionable again and so the industry began again.

A taste for trochus

Trochus have been collected by Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander peoples for a very long time. They were used for food and decoration such as jewellery.

The mother-of-pearl layer of the trochus shell became popular for buttons in the early 1900s. Commercial collecting in the Torres Strait began in 1912. Up to 500

Taking trochus

Collectors go out in small outboard powered boats with 2 or 3 divers per boat. Hookah breathing equipment is used to allow divers to move freely underwater. Mother ships take the shells that have been collected each day. Shells are cooked to remove the meat and shells are bagged and stored on the mother ship. Trochus and bêche-de-mer collection are often done on the same boat but in different seasons.

(Continued from front page)

Everyone said that planning was important; that they want control over their sea country and benefits from commercial use of their sea country; and that Community Rangers need powers and more resources.

Community Rangers must be congratulated for their work in helping with the workshops.

What happens next?

The next step is for communities, QDEH and GBRMPA to keep talking. Some communities will start planning for their sea country. QDEH and GBRMPA will help with resources, advice and skills. Community Rangers will be an important link between their communities and government. See the next issue for information on the workshop with Kaurareg people at Horn Island.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Trochus spawn just after dark near a new or full moon.
- Baby trochus settle onto the sea floor 3-5 days after spawning.
- At one year old, trochus are 3 cm long; by the time they are 12-15 years old, they are up to 15 cm long.
- The reef used to be so thick with trochus that you could collect them with a shovel! High numbers of trochus have been found on some reefs in the Great Barrier Reef but on the Pacific reefs they are collected heavily and few can be found.

Far Northern Section Trawl Project

The effects of trawling are not well understood. Issues that concern people are:

- the large bycatch (trash fish, non-commercial catch)
- long-term impacts on the seabed (and animals and plant communities).

GBRMPA commissioned a study of the environmental effects of prawn trawling in the Far Northern Section of the Marine Park starting in 1992. DPI and CSIRO have been undertaking this study and they are looking at the sea country in and next to the green zone (cross-shelf transect) off Shelburne Bay, where commercial trawling is not permitted.

As well as finding out how the seabed is affected by trawling, the study will provide the following information:

- how long the seabed takes to recover to its original condition after trawling
- the effectiveness of closing a large area (green zone) to conserve prawn stocks and seabed communities.

In the first year, the study began by surveying the plants and animals on the seabed as well as fish, prawns and bycatch. Everything from underwater video to trawls and underwater grabs were used for this study.

In the next year, fish, prawns and seabed communities in the green zone were compared to those in areas nearby where trawlers were allowed to go. The reason this was done was to find out whether trawling had made any difference to populations of fish, prawns and the seabed communities and how long recovery would take after trawling.

In the third year, manipulative research (which means experimenting with trawling) was done by comparing 'trawled' and 'non-trawled' areas in the green zone. Work also focused on how much bycatch (trash fish) survived after being thrown overboard and which animals scavenged on the bycatch.

The project is now entering into its fourth year which will involve a continuation of experimental trawling and a monitoring program to study the recovery rates of seabed communities in nominated areas on the seabed.

This information will help us to understand how trawling affects reef ecology. Then management can make sure that fishing is done sustainably. This will help researchers, managers and fishing groups to better work together.

John Robertson

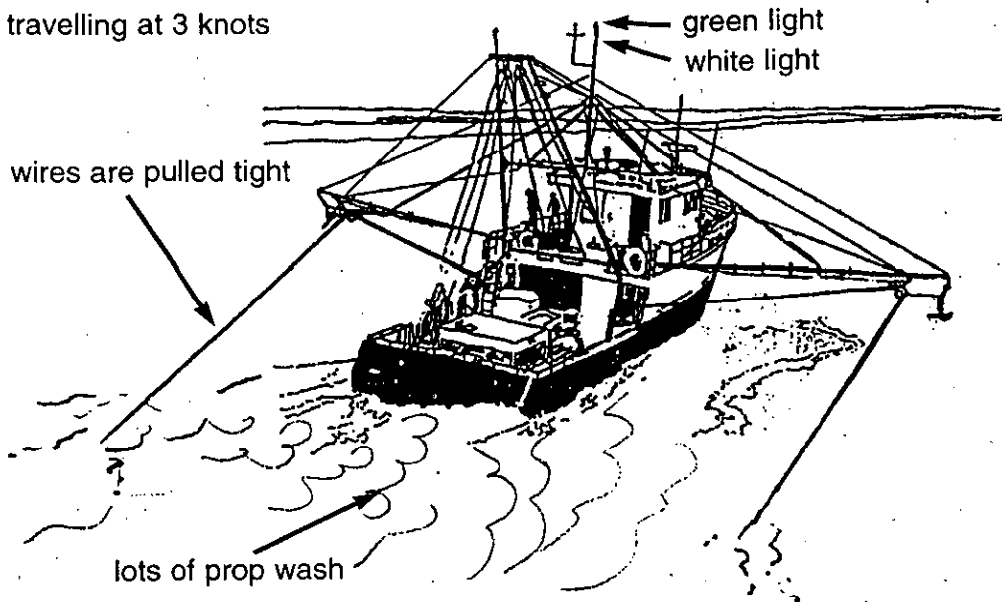


Ross Williams presenting the GBRMPA trophy to Ernie Dingo, winner of the spear-throwing competition at the Laura Aboriginal Dance and Cultural Festival



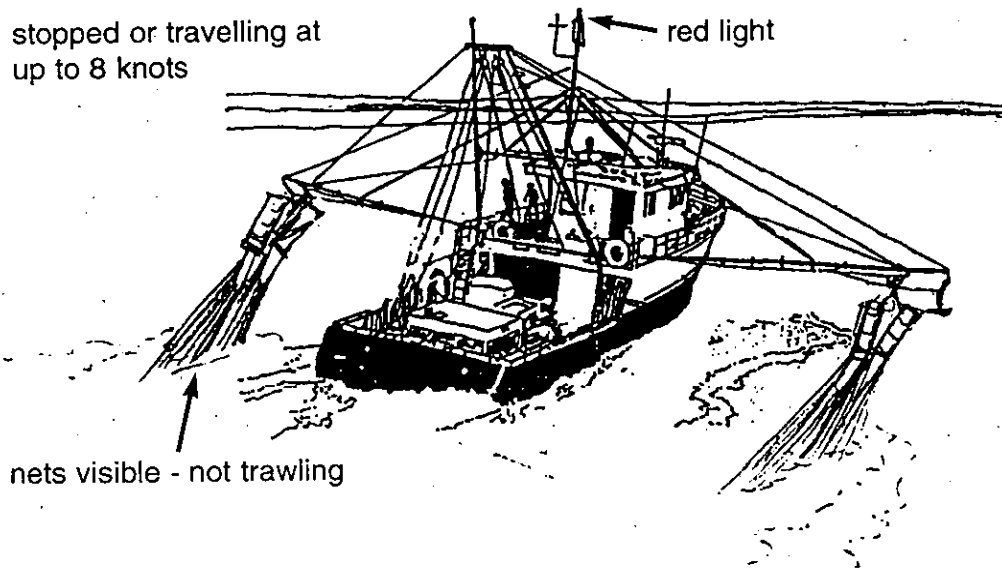
Facts on prawn trawling

travelling at 3 knots



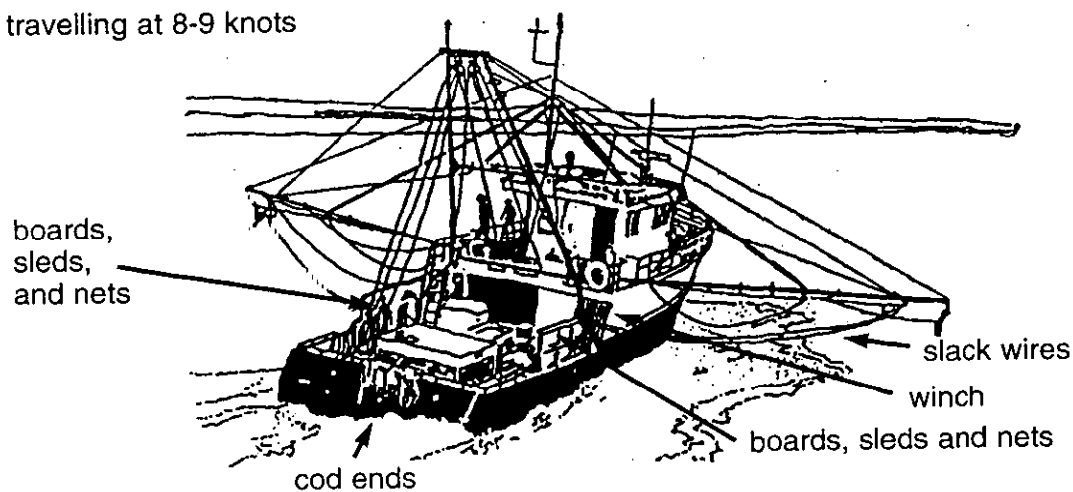
Trawler trawling: as well as normal navigation lights there are all round green and white lights on the mast, wires pulled tight, travelling at 3 knots, no boards or nets visible, lots of wash from boat.

stopped or travelling at up to 8 knots



Trawler with gear out but not trawling: normal navigation lights plus may have an all round red light on, nets pulled out of water, not stowed on deck, boards and nets visible.


travelling at 8-9 knots



Trawler with gear stowed away: boards and nets on deck, wires hanging loose, travelling at 8 or 9 knots.

Note: The trawler has deck lights and normal navigation lights on all the time.





Community Ranger views Phil Wallis - Wuthathi

I'm a Community Ranger at Injinoo. I did my TAFE ranger training at Lockhart River. My traditional estates are Shelburne Bay, Cape Grenville and Temple Bay.

We've got the green zone in the northern half of Shelburne Bay so hardly any activities can be done in there, although we still get trawlers through Cape Grenville and Temple Bay. We still need better surveillance of this area. The problem of people scribbling names all over the rocks in Margaret Bay - in marine paint that takes a long time to deteriorate - is of great concern. I'd like to see these writings erased from those rocks. To us, that's desecration. I mean we don't go to their churches and write all over their church walls. And it's an eyesore too, in such beautiful country.

The problem with fishing is the need for more involvement in management by Aboriginal people. This is a problem all the way down the coast on clan estates adjacent to the seas. Those estates run right out, to the outer reef and include islands and cays. Before there was no consultation with indigenous people on their sea estates, but government is doing it now. This is our time to get in there and help make decisions about where people can and can't fish; to have greater involvement. This will benefit not only us but our future generations. We will be making sure fish stocks are still there in the future at a sustainable level.

The marine park rezoning will give us hopefully more say in what goes on. We will put in zones what we

want, not what somebody else has already gone and done. Once these zones are in place (through our ranger training and working with the Government agencies) we will be looking at a greater role in management of those areas. Hopefully, we can set up a management body for land and sea.



Community Rangers are on site all the time but we've not had resources to do our job. There are resources available but we need agencies like Coastwatch, DPI, QDEH, GBRMPA and ATSIC to coordinate in providing those resources and assist us to help manage the marine park.

The problem can be overcome if we all work together. The big thing in our favour is the green zone - so hopefully it won't be changed too much. Personally, I'd like to see the mangroves protected - if there are no mangroves you get a dead river. We might even have Aboriginal Management Areas in these water ways. I'd like to see that happen because it's very important for our future.



SEA SPY

- Who had a brush with fame when he presented a GBRMPA trophy to Ernie Dingo for winning the spear-throwing competition at Laura?
- More gossip from Laura - which Community Rangers were seen chasing Ernie Dingo and Christine Anu for autographs?
- Uncle Gordon Pablo showed his too deadly style when he led the kids in shake-a-leg for the mobs from GBRMPA, QDEH and Cape York Land Council. Many thanks to the people of Injinoo for making us so welcome.
- The Art Gang at Lockhart River have been busy. They presented their ideas on caring for sea country to GBRMPA and QDEH staff during our school visit. Some of the gang plan to become rangers, so look out!

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.

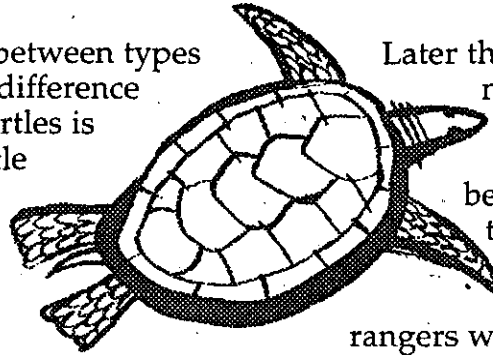
These articles are the views of the authors and do not represent the views of GBRMPA or QDEH.

TURTLE TAGGING

Telling the difference between types is easy but telling the difference between individual turtles is harder. One green turtle looks very like another green turtle.

We tag turtles to find out what individual turtles do, where they live, and where they breed. It is like giving a person a name - the tag identifies the individual turtle just as a name identifies a person.

QDEH scientists have been tagging turtles at their nesting beaches in Queensland for almost 30 years and have learned a lot about their biology. However, there is still a lot to learn. You can help gather information about turtles in your area by collecting tags from turtles caught in your country. Send tags to your local QDEH ranger or give them to QDEH or GBRMPA staff when they visit. Please tell them the date and the location of where the turtle was found or caught. (Anyone who sends in a tag will get a deadly turtle research cap!).



Later this year and early next year, if they are keen, several communities will be able to help with tagging turtles. QDEH staff, local people and

rangers will work together to catch and tag turtles and release them. (You will receive on-the-job training). When these turtles are found again (in the local area or at distant nesting sites), we will know more about what they do and where they go. You will know more about turtles in your sea country and together we will be better able to protect them. In this way we can work together to make sure that turtles are here for our grandchildren and their grandchildren to enjoy.

If you want more information, call John Cornelius at QDEH, on (070) 52 3047.

Jeff Miller, turtle researcher with QDEH, is offering to train rangers so they can help with turtle research on their communities.

Who's who?



Robin Clark is a planning officer for coastal and marine park planning in the Cairns office of the Department of Environment and Heritage. Since joining the Department two and a half years ago, she has been involved in developing plans for Fitzroy Island and Trinity Inlet around Cairns and is the main planner involved in the proposal to establish a marine park in the intertidal area on the east coast of Cape York Peninsula.

Originally from Victoria, Robin fell in love with far north Queensland while travelling around Australia several years ago and has stayed there ever since. Robin studied geology and environmental science at university and is keen to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. She wants to see indigenous issues taken seriously by government during the planning for marine parks and coastal developments.