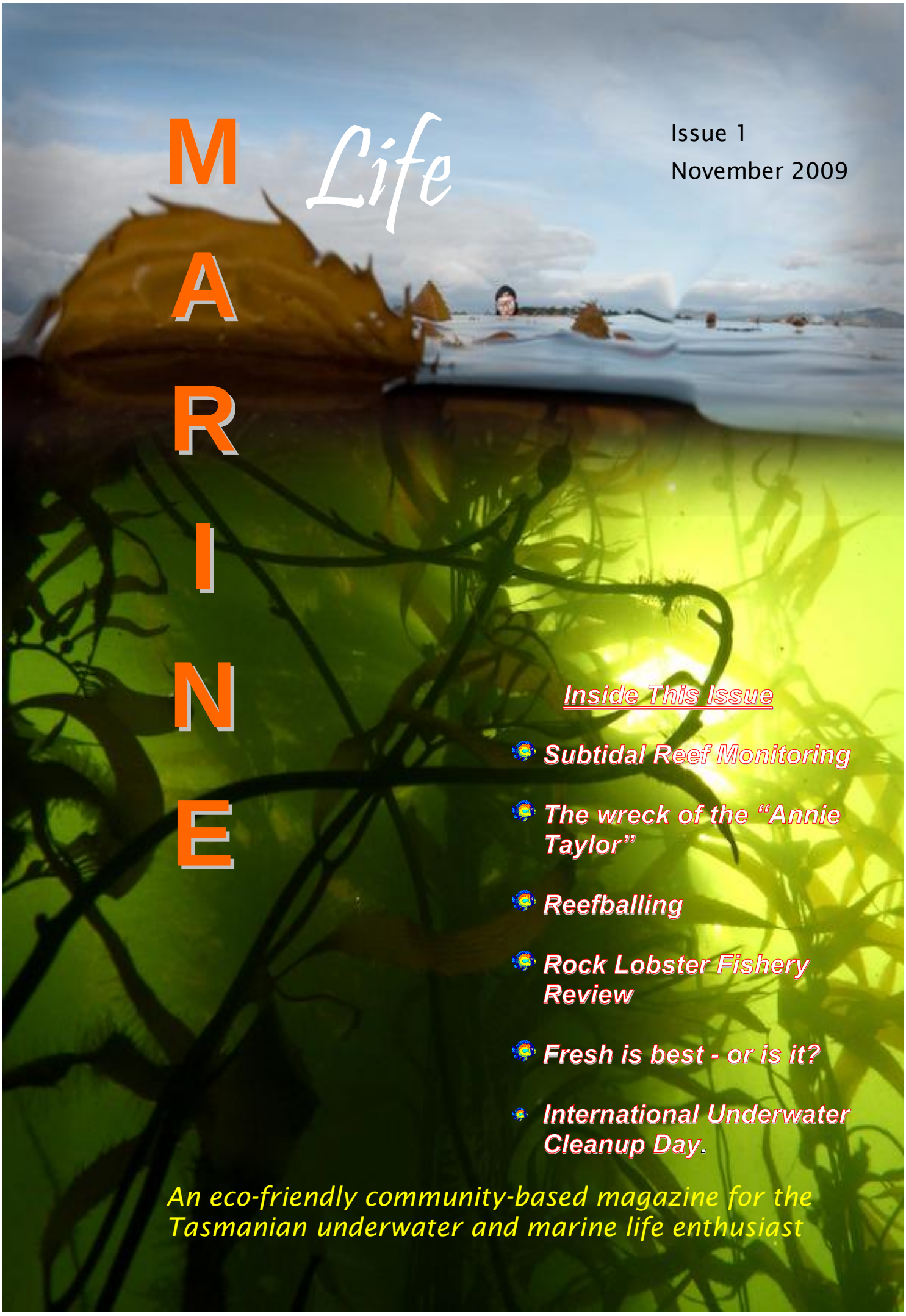


MARINE Life

Issue 1
November 2009

Inside This Issue

An eco-friendly community-based magazine for the Tasmanian underwater and marine life enthusiast

Our goal

To educate, inform, have fun and share our enjoyment of the marine world with like-minded people.

Our Team

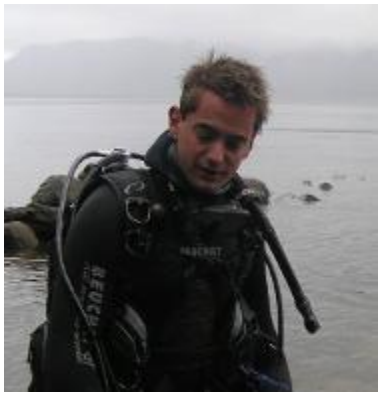
Mike Jacques

Editor in chief and author of "Dive Tasmania". Definitely not the murderer you'll find on a Google search. Send your brickbats and bouquets to: **marinelifetassie@gmail.com**

Emma Flukes

UniTas honours student in marine science. Involvement with a pseudo-academic e-news service is sure to further her skills in professional procrastination. Member of the Tas Uni Dive Club.

Geoff Rollins (Rolli)



Our man in the North. Member of Ocean Divers Plus. Shanghaied into the team by our esteemed editor in chief

Phil White

Our man in the North West. Another unlikely candidate press ganged into dredging up editorial content and fixing up the layout – Hey Michael, Where's the ice cream you promised me? Member of the Leven Scuba Club.

Marine LIFE

Underwater this issue

Fisheries news

Research & conservation news

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Photo Spots

The big stories…

Fishing for the Future – DPIPWE

Rock Lobster Fishery Review

Ken Saville from the Tassie Divers website reports "An upper size limit of around 145mm is being proposed to tackle the urchins on the east coast which is probably a good idea, as is a review into recreational take on the east and south east coasts. For those interested there is an online questionnaire at http://www.fishing.tas.gov.au I'd suggest we all complete it if we want to keep on cray fishing. A full discussion paper about broader questions on the fishery will be released later. A new management plan will be introduced in March 2011."

For more details, see the rock lobster fishery review flyer on page **25** of this issue.

Recreational Sea Fishing Licences for 2009-2010

Time to renew your licences at a Service Tasmania outlet or online here.

New scallop rules for 2010 season

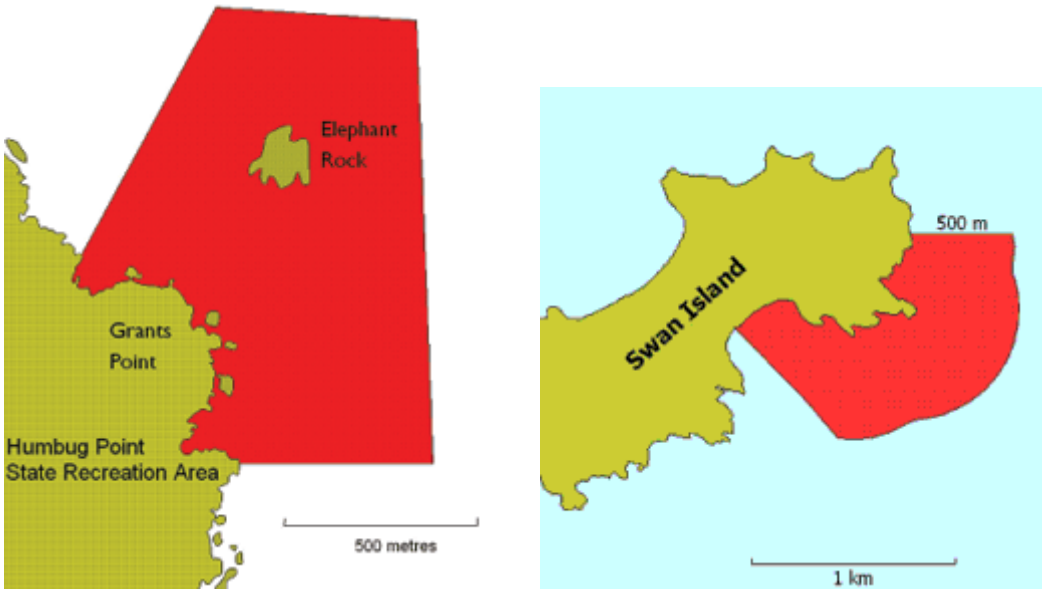
The draft new management plan for the Tasmanian scallop fishery is available for public comment until 14 December 2009. It contains lots of interesting items to assist with the better management of this popular recreational fishery.

Scallop Season Changes

There will be a limited scallop season in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel from 1 – 31 July 2010 with a minimum size limit of 110mm for commercial and queen scallops. All other State waters will be open for the 2010 scallop season.

Changes to Research Area Boundaries

The northern boundary of the Elephant Rock Research Area has been extended. There is no fishing by diving or use of rock lobster pots or rings in this area. The southern boundary of the Swan Island Research Area has also changed. There is no taking of any fish by diving within 500 metres of the high water mark in this research area.

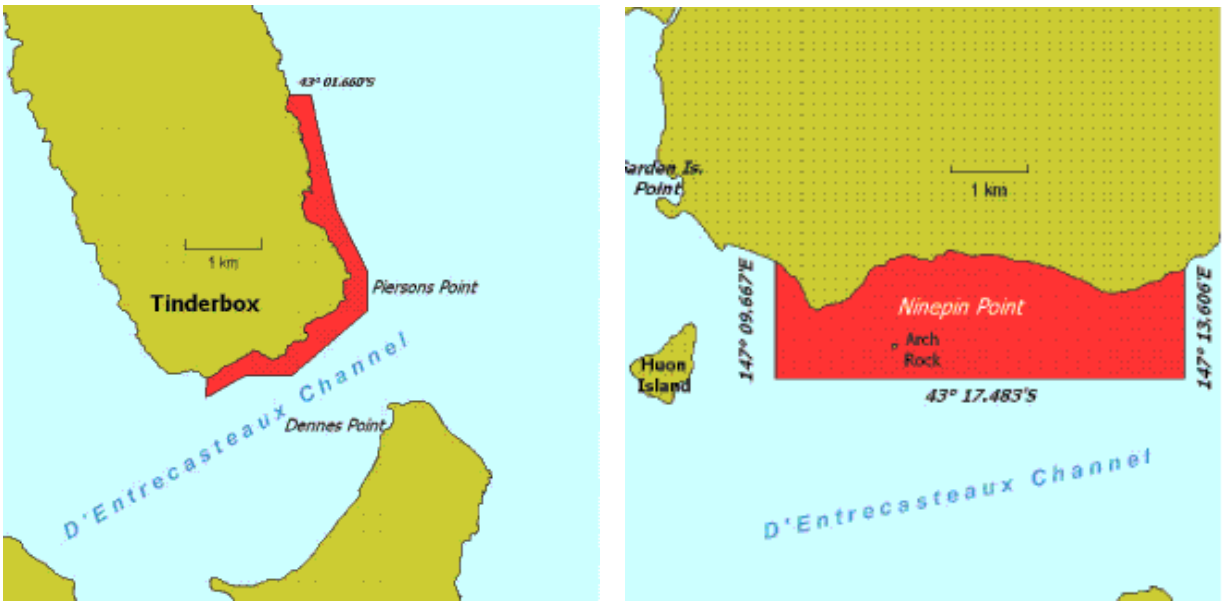


Research area surrounding Elephant Rock and a section of Swan Island, indicated by red shading. Rock lobsters cannot be taken by divers or lobster pots/rings within these areas.

[Commentary -Seems like the large crays translocated for experimental purposes have been attracting some overeager fishermen who have been apparently fishing the boundaries pretty actively. It is illegal to catch or possess any of these tagged research crays and badly damages this expensive and very worthwhile research program. Please stay away. As a result DPIPWE have extended the closed research area. - Ed]

Bruny Bioregion MPAs

In 2008, the Tasmanian Government announced the creation of 14 new marine protected areas in the Bruny Bioregion. These were declared multiple use MPAs and no new fishing restrictions apply. However, the existing marine nature reserves at Tinderbox and Ninepin Point have been extended and current no take fishing restrictions apply in these areas. [more information on the new marine parks will be covered later]



TARFish
Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing Inc.
www.tarfish.org

Results of scalefish review - new regulations

courtesy of Mark Nikolai

Minister Llewellyn has today (14th October 2009) announced his decisions in relation to the Scalefish Rules Review. The following changes come into effect from 1st November 2009 for recreational marine fishers.

Set Line Licence: A licence is now required to use any set line. A set line is either a dropline or a longline, with up to 30 hooks. A person may only use one set line at a time.

Gillnets: Gillnets may only be set for a maximum of 2 hours in Shark Refuge Areas and a maximum of 6 hours applies in other waters. Night netting in Macquarie Harbour is the only exception.

Possession Limits: There have been changes in possession limits for the following species:
Striped Trumpeter: the overall possession limit remains at 8, however an on water possession limit of 4 fish applies.
Blue Eye Trevalla: the overall possession limit remains at 8, however an on water possession limit of 5 fish applies.
Southern Calamari: the possession limit remains at 15 except in south east waters where an on water possession limit of 10 applies. The annual spawning closure has been reduced from 10 weeks to 1 month (15 October to 14 November inclusive for both 2009 and 2010).
Bastard Trumpeter: the possession limit is now 10 fish.
Snapper: a possession limit of 5 snapper has been introduced.
Yellowtail Kingfish: a possession limit of 5 yellowtail kingfish has been introduced.
Elephantfish: there is a possession limit of 2 elephantfish and this species in no longer included within the shark possession limit or boat limit.

Size Limits: There have been changes to the minimum size limits of the following species:
Striped Trumpeter: the minimum size limit for striped trumpeter is now 500mm.
Bastard Trumpeter: the minimum size limit for bastard trumpeter is now 380mm.
Snapper: new minimum size limit is 300mm.

Striped Trumpeter: In addition to size and possession limit changes, additional changes include the introduction of a closed season from 1st September 2010 to 31st October 2010, inclusive. Striped Trumpeter must either be landed whole with head and tail attached or as two fillets with the frames (including head and tail).

Port Sorell and Ansons Bay: Are now closed to commercial scalefishing with the exception of two commercial fishers holding an endorsement for Port Sorell until they retire from the fishery.

The TARFish Committee will shortly be provided with a comprehensive Scalefish Rules Review Report prepared by the department and will scrutinise in detail Minister Llewellyn's decisions and update recreational marine fishers in a program of public meetings to be held throughout Tasmania in November.

Ocean Planet

The "End of the Line" film presentation and discussion

The film screening in Hobart mid October was a huge success - many thanks to Michelle Grady and Martin Exel for speaking, and to the 150-odd people who attended!

Ocean Planet Tour 2009 report

Ocean Planet Tasmania conducted a tour of the state in September 2009 to discuss with the community how we can secure a healthy and sustainable future for Tasmania's unique and diverse marine environment. The Tour involved 20 events in the North, South, East and West of the state. Film screenings, workshops and field trips facilitated discussion on the future of Tasmania's oceans with over 150 people from commercial and recreational fishing backgrounds, diving, tourism, conservation groups and councils. The Ocean Planet Tour highlighted that there is resounding support from the community for healthy oceans based on a well-planned and well-resourced network of marine national parks where the benefits are clearly communicated, stakeholders are actively engaged, and the government takes a leadership role. For more information contact ocean.planet.tas@gmail.com

Change of Staff at Ocean Planet

Rebecca the employed co-ordinator for OP is taking 6 months maternity leave and will be replaced by Amy Tyler, so any questions don't hesitate to contact Amy.

Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council

Cleaning up marine debris, Bruny Island - Sunday 1st November

The Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council is organising Community Clean Up Days at Marine Debris "Hot Spots" on Bruny Island.

Date: Sunday 1 November

Time & Place: 10:00am – 12:30pm at Sheepwash Bay

1pm - 4pm at Conley's Beach (including a lunch BBQ)

Red flags will mark the meeting and collection areas at each beach. Bring sturdy shoes and wet weather if needed. We'll supply gloves and collection bags. Marine farmers will be supporting these activities by disposing of debris collected and through their own clean up programs. Further activities will be scheduled for the summer and will be advertised in the Bruny News. For further information contact (TSIC) on 62242332, projectofficer@tsic.org.au or check out the Bruny Island Environment Network (BIEN) website (www.bien.org.au).

Tasmanian Marine Naturalists Association

From Jane Elek, "The community group, Tasmanian Marine Naturalists Association (TMNA) has been very active since it was founded in 1995. It has published the field guide, Between Tasmanian Tidelines, that is still selling well, coordinated the Dragon Search project in Tasmania, used the results to develop posters, publish a paper and made a DVD of the life and threats to the weedy sea dragon (The Dragons Lair), which also includes a set of slides on Tasmania's marine environment. It has developed other educational materials and actively promoted our marine environment through Adult Ed classes and displays at school fairs and other public events. All this in addition to monthly meetings and field trips. However, recently the membership and participation of the community group has reached an unsustainable low level. A special general meeting has been scheduled for November 11th when we will vote on dissolution unless we have sufficient people interested in taking on the responsibilities of managing it.

There is no reason why the TMNA could not be an umbrella group for the many smaller groups that are concerned about different aspects of our marine environment. If you are concerned at losing this community group, whether a professional working in the marine environment or a member of the community, come along to the meeting and offer to help keep it going. See details below.

Our website with information on our activities will be available until Oct 26th, when geocities is closing down its server http://www.geocities.com/tasmarinenat/index.html"

Mollusc photos wanted

Simon Grove is a local Mollusc guru in Tassie who would love the help of divers. He has a comprehensive website on Tasmanian molluscs, that will no doubt provide a useful resource for IDs if you haven't already discovered it - www.molluscsoftasmania.net. He wants to expand his website and including some of the molluscs that he can't get in situ photos of (as he doesn't dive). He is keen on photos of any marine molluscs you happen to get – particularly nudis, but also squid, cuttles, Occys, shells etc – and are willing to donate (your name would be put on the bottom of the photos used of course). So please think of him if you happen to see and photograph any molluscs whilst out and about and send photos to: simon@molluscsoftasmania.net. A bonus from helping Simon is that he will provide a definitive ID on any mollusc photos you send him (whether from himself or from sending on to other experts).

Tasmanian Aquacultural and Fisheries Institute

TAFI scientists win national award for website

Info taken from UTAS news here

Scientists from the Tasmanian Aquaculture & Fisheries Institute have won a national award for their educational CD and web-based interactive guide at the annual Whitley awards (19th September 2009). The Whitley awards recognise excellence in publications relating to the fauna of the Australasian region. The "Guide to the Marine Zooplankton of south eastern Australia," gained a Whitley commendation certificate for the best CD ROM Electronic Guide.

The Guide features facts, figures, diagrams and photos of a wide range of tiny creatures from the sea. One of the website authors, Dr Kerrie Swadling, from the UTAS School of Zoology, said it was an honour for the website to be nationally recognised. "The website provides a comprehensive, fully-illustrated means of identification for the major zooplankton located is south east Australia via an interactive guide…It also provides an understanding of the role of zooplankton and its importance in the marine food chain and how it is the main diet for larger commercially important fish."

The team of scientists who produced the website guide include Dr Swadling, Anita Slotwinski and Dr John Gibson of TAFI, Assoc Prof David Ritz from the UTAS School of Zoology and Dr Graham Hosie of the Australian Antarctic Division.

Just two of the many exciting images you might come across whilst perusing this guide…

Director of TAFI, Prof Colin Buxton, said the award recognised the importance of taking science to the community and would reinforce the website's proficiency as an education and research tool. "The website has been used by researchers in more than 80 countries and receives an average of 5000 page downloads each month," Prof Buxton said.

The website can be viewed at: http://www.tafi.org.au/zooplankton/

Reef Life Survey

Training day on 10th & 11th November, and how to enrol

A Reef Life Survey training day is coming up at last, but because RLS need the results in the Derwent to meet a project deadline and make use of a donated boat, it'll be in the south this time.

RLS have to be careful with the time and money devoted to training, so they are after the keen volunteers willing to get a bit cold sometimes and get right into discovering the names of the critters.

If you are gung ho to have be involved get back to Jemima at TAFI for more information. You might be asked to fill out a form just so they have all your background info.
Jemina.StuartSmith@utas.edu.au

Me and My Compact Camera

Cuttlefish – by Richard Mason, great shot and shows what you can do with a cheap compact u/w digital camera

Tasmanian Recreational Dive Clubs Subtidal Reef Monitoring and Community Awareness Project

Project supported by the Tasmanian Government's Fishwise Fund.

Full reports at www.otsweb.net/divesurveys

All Tassy's dive clubs recently got together to try to help out with research efforts to control the spread of the NSW black urchin barrens that have currently wrecked the dive reefs of St Helens. The idea was to repeat parts of a 2000 study and also search out in deeper depths to see if the problem was getting any worse. This is what we discovered…

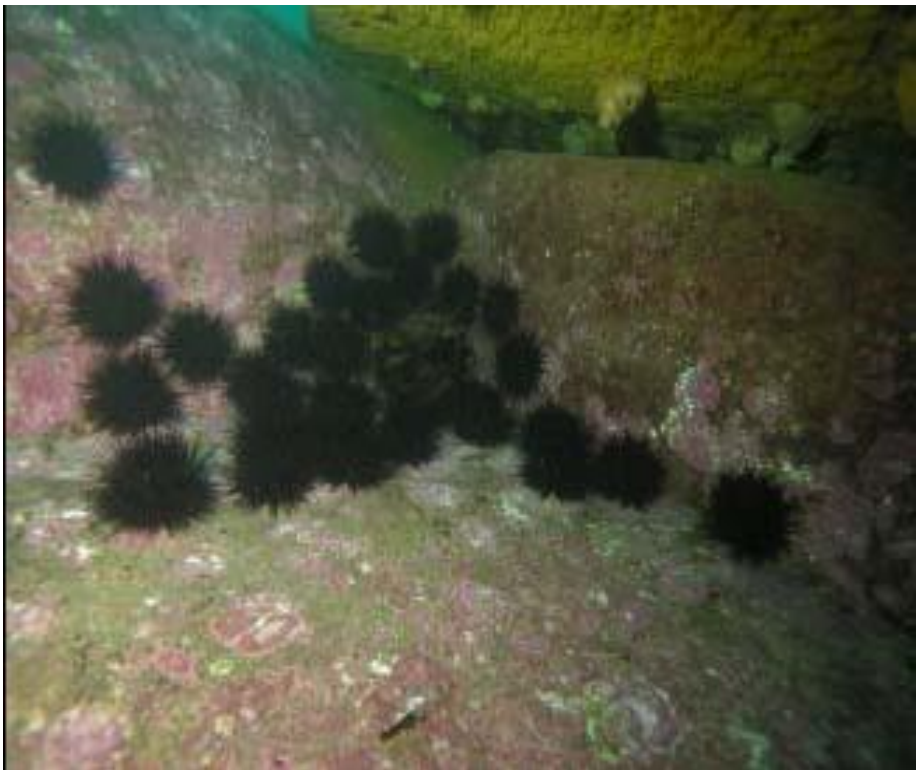


Photo James Parkinson

Data Collection Results

It would appear that average black urchin densities in many areas have not increased since 2001/02 study except for St Helens and Eddystone where high densities occur and there is some evidence that densities have been increasing, even possibly within areas that are already barren. It would appear that this population density 'head start' has advantaged urchins in these areas, whereas in other areas their population growth appears to be relatively static.

While there has been no general spread of large urchin barrens outside of St Helens and Eddystone, there has been widespread and probably growing damage from small incipient

('swiss cheese' type) barrens that are relatively common down the East Coast at least as far as Fortescue Bay. This should be of concern because it augers poorly for the health of reefs if there are further major recruitment events in the future. It also creates concerns where these relatively small barrens coincide with areas of high biodiversity and fisheries importance, eg, the Fortescue Bay kelp forest, Marine Protected Areas like Governor Island and Handfish habitat along Eastern Tasman Peninsula particularly.

Organisational Summary

The project succeeded in over delivering on the targeted number of urchin surveys. These survey results were produced under-budget and with the active participation of a large proportion of the recreational club divers in the State. It is the first time that dive clubs across Tasmania have joined together in a cooperative volunteer undertaking of this kind.

Overall the project ran exceptionally well and was very successful within the limits of the relatively straightforward and tailored tasks that the participants were asked to perform. It appears to have produced useful data along with very worthwhile community awareness and marine education outcomes. The project also made linkages with the scientific community and has encouraged divers to further participate in general surveying and climate change programs.

BackGround Information

Purpose

The program arose as a result of simmering disquiet within the diving community at the growing levels of urchin damage at St Helens where recreational diving reef has been destroyed over a wide area in a once popular diving location.

A number of active club divers visited the St Helens area after a long absence and were galvanised to do something concrete in response to the physical damage observed. After discussions with Prof Craig Johnson, Dr Scott Ling and Dr Graham Edgar we were directed towards repeating some of the 2001/02 FRDC survey sites as a project that divers with minimal training could usefully perform.

What we did

The project has consulted with the local scientific community to create an education and training program. Particularly important input came from the Scientific Advisor employed by the project, Dr Scott Ling.

Don Humphries, Leven Scuba Club at Elephant Rock St Helens - an usually bushy patch in the barrens. (onya Don), Photo Mike Jacques

Divers were invited to marine awareness and survey methodology training that achieved a solid penetration within the local recreational diving community. At training days run at St Helens in the North and Tinderbox in the south of the State, representatives from all of Tasmanian's dive clubs attended.

After training, participants adopted responsibility for 13 different regions along Tasmania's East Coast. The surveys were split into two types with density counts along lines being done north of Tasman Island where the Eastern Australian Current (EAC) is strongest. South of Tasman Island the surveys were often done as free-range dives looking for barren spots, rather than as full survey counts.

A decision was taken to attempt to duplicate some of the sites from the earlier FRDC study in 2001/02, so that participants could obtain immediate comparative information. Other sites were new sites selected largely to investigate a deeper depth range. Participants were also encouraged to collect and report further information on barrens encountered during regular social dives on the East Coast.

In southern areas generally 4 transect lines were successfully completed. In the northern area some survey trips were duplicated to provide more information on the most active areas. A

website was created to store the information and also to advertise the need for social dive reports at www.otsweb.net/divesurveys.

In the final phase of the project divers from within and without the organised recreational diver community were invited to a marine naturalist course which focussed on information useful for scientific and survey diving. Divers were encouraged to participate in further survey programs and particularly the TAFI Reef Life Survey (RLS) and the TAFI Climate Change Redmap (CCRedmap) project.

What we got done

Valid scientific results as discussed.

As a 'hands on' project it allowed participants to connect with the issue. A considerable amount of email correspondence, talk sessions, etc, failed to achieve the same level of engagement that simply 'seeing for yourself' provided to the participants. It is now hoped that these people will disseminate the message to a wider audience through their own social networks. In a recreational fishing community that can be very inert to issues other than catch maximisation, it raised other broader scale issues such as climate change, for the first time in some cases. The project has also allowed a deeper appreciation of the value and complexity of scientific research and its role in big picture story of fisheries management. It has probably lessened resistance to possible future fisheries amendments that may be necessary in order to manage urchin impacts. Hopefully some divers will become active and vocal supporters of research and change as a result of the project.

It is hoped that this project will also lead to active engagement with well-structured volunteer friendly TAFI programs such as the CCRedmap, and more 'hard core' survey projects like the RLS for the keener and more zoologically savvy diver. It has also hopefully awoken a broader interest in marine zoology basics among some participants who previously thought of sessile invertebrates as "plants". Hopefully this will allow them to perhaps be the savvy RLS volunteers of tomorrow, especially if a structured follow-up strategy is employed by the clubs post-project. We have also clearly stated that marine research is something that ordinary people care about.

Mainly, I hope we had a good time, because without creating fun and enjoyment a volunteer program is doomed to an early and unproductive death.

St Helens, before and after a close shave by black urchins.

Photo courtesy of James Parkinson, layout by M.Jacques

BIG THANKS TO ALL THE DIVERS WHO TOOK PART AND ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO DID THE HARD YARDS ORGANISING DIVES AND EVENTS. .

Thanks to our participating organisations,

Leven Scuba Club (Devonport, Tas Scuba Diving Club (Hobart) , Oceans Divers Plus (Launceston), Tas Sub Aqua Club (Hobart) and Tas Uni Dive Club, TDA Crabs Dive Club (Hobart), Tas Marine Nats Asscn, DPIPWE, TAFI, UTas School of Zoology.

By Mike Jacques

Reef Balling [insert your own lewd 'ball' pun here- Ed]

by Phil White

Mention artificial reefs and what comes to mind for many people are TV news images of surplus ships sunk in an explosive manner amidst a frenzy of hype and testimonials that they will generate millions in cash for local economies. The sinking itself is an orgasm that culminates after years of on again off again foreplay involving endless lobbying of state and federal governments for funding, fending off rival states for the acquisition of suitable ships and the commissioning of scientific and economic studies to validate the creation of the wreck.

After the froth and bubble come the divers, hopefully lots of them, after all millions were spent so they could have their very own wreck to safely explore. Trusting those that wrote on the survey forms that they would dive the reef several times a year do just that and don't descend on it just once and then grumble about nothing interesting to see.

Its a shame really that artificial reefs, particularly the sunken ship kind are invariably linked to divers expectations, many who dive shipwrecks are disappointed by the almost "safe" environment of an artificial wreck which is often stripped of interesting and historical artifacts. We often overlook the real purpose of an artificial reef, which more often then not is

to create the framework for a marine ecosystem where none existed previously. Divers and the projected dollars they bring in are really just a small piece of the big picture. The real action is quietly happening beneath the waves as our surplus junk slowly transforms into a living entity.

Anyway, let's not knock the efforts of those groups around the world who have managed to acquire ships and other large structures for reef creation. It's a hard slog and takes an awful lot of perseverance and money to attain the desired result and good luck if it all works out as planned.

For most marine environmentally aware groups and clubs, acquiring a ship for an artificial reef is usually well beyond their means and resources. Fortunately there are other options. The reefball foundation http://www.reefball.org/ is a non profit group which was established to help rehabilitate the marine environment by encouraging organizations around the world to construct artificial reefs. In order to achieve this they devised the concept of "reefballs" A typical reefball is a metre high hollow "igloo" of concrete which is honeycombed with several large holes. The holes allow fish, and other marine organisms to enter and take up residence. The exterior of the balls often attracts, invertebrate and algal life.

When deployed in sufficient numbers, reefballs can be the basis for a new reef system, used to rehabilitate existing reefs, establish fish breeding areas and modify coastal wave action. Depending on their location, they can be covered in corals, sponges, kelp and many other life forms. They are non polluting, cheap to manufacture and relatively easy to transport. This makes them ideal for many reef building coastal care groups who would otherwise be thwarted by the drawn out process and money required to sink a ship. Indeed, many government departments have established reefball reefs for various projects and to date over half a million have been deployed world wide.

Here in Tassie there is a reefball reef which was established in 2001 by the North West coast Leven Scuba Club off Morelands Beach near Port Sorell. It is the solitary example of such a structure in the state and the Leven Club has the distinction of being the first and probably the only dive club in Australia to construct an artificial reef using DIY reefball modules. The creation of the reef out of reefballs came about after the long term failure to establish another artificial reef using an ex navy dive tender. Club members put in much time and effort to acquire a boat and prepare it for sinking while complying with all the relevant environmental

guidelines and legislation. The Seal as it was known was not the first choice for the club. The procurement of a fairly substantial barge fell through at the last minute leaving the club scrambling for something else which happened to be a wooden hulled craft.

Despite the successful sinking of the Seal at a depth of 30 Metres off Devonport and its early adoption by pelagic species it soon broke up and little remains to this day. To the clubs credit, they continued to work on establishing a reef in Bass Strait and eventually settled on constructing it out of reefballs. The complete and unabridged saga of the Leven Clubs reefball adventure can be read by visiting the clubs web site at http://www.levenscubaclub.com.au/ but the upshot is that if you want to create an artificial reef that is environmentally sound and within your means think outside the square and consider the reefball option.

Sure it won't be a wreck as such, and there's a mountain of regulation to wade through and then you have to organise working bees to construct the modules, decide on a site to put them, work out a structure and figure out how to get them there but at the end you have your very own reef which will last a long, long time. It won't attract tourists, (If you deposit the modules to make an artwork they may come) but it will attract life and that's what its all about. To see an ecosystem become established in an otherwise barren environment is something pretty special and there is that sense of satisfaction that you did it all by yourself.

International Underwater Cleanup Day

Info taken from the Project Aware news site
www.projectaware.org/english/take_action/international_cleanup_day.aspx

On September 19th, a bunch of Tassie divers jumped into the deep blue (or brown) in search of marine rubbish for International Underwater Cleanup Day, an initiative of the Project AWARE foundation. The Tasmanian University Dive Club organized a cleanup of the Bellerive Quay area, with 18 divers in the water and additional personnel for surface support. Roughly 40 onion bags were filled with rubbish, with items ranging from fishing rods, chairs, bottles and glasses to marine batteries, power drills, sunglasses, tyres and mobile phones. Care was taken to check rubbish for critters living inside it before removal, as glass and metal can provide important structural habitat in soft sediment areas. A full six-pack of beer was amongst the better finds of the day, although nobody was brave enough to crack it open…

By all reports the GoDive crew also put in a great effort of cleaning up the Gielston Bay area.

Internationally, one of the weirdest underwater finds this International Cleanup Day was a 250cc motorbike pulled up from Wellington Harbour, New Zealand. And across the globe thousands volunteers removed dangerous debris from our coasts and underwater environments. At Snapper Island Queensland, Australia volunteers found 237 shoes. The Byron Underwater Research group pulled out 40 shopping trolleys, 4 push bikes and 1 scooter from the Tweed River.

More unusual finds include deck chairs in Australia, a television in Brazil, an IV bag with needles in Mexico, gallons of diesel in Costa Rica, toilets in New Zealand, scaffolding poles in Cyprus, a computer hard drive in Norway, and a gravestone in the Rhine River, Switzerland. The list of marine debris is growing daily as data from 1000 cleanups across the globe is submitted. "The data collected by Project AWARE Foundation contributes to the Global Marine Debris Index. All data helps policy makers identify ways to bring about change and find solutions to this global crisis," said Project AWARE Foundation Director, Jenny Miller Garmendia.

All data collected from cleanups around the world will feature in the Ocean Conservancy ICC report to be released in 2010. Check out the Project Aware website for more details and crazy finds!

Tas Uni club divers (and a few extras) getting ready to haul rubbish from the Bellerive Quay.

Maritime History - Those were the days

Wreck diving the Med in the mid 1960s. The guy at the back is bit more recognisable having a BC and drysuit. The twin hose looked the part but free flowed and was hard to clear. Now rare to see one even hanging up in an old garage. Anyone like to sell me one? [Mike]

Effect on estuaries after heavy rain

by Geoff Rollins

Recent heavy and sustained rainfall across Tasmania has led to poor conditions for divers, particularly those who frequent estuarine areas such as the Tamar or Derwent Rivers.

Estuarine environments are particularly affected by rainfall, at least from a diver's visibility perspective, owing to freshwater run off from rivers and streams which discharge into the estuary. The Tamar River is no exception and for the months of August and September, Tamar visibility has been close to nil with large sediment shifts from the silt choked upper reaches, combining with a mixed layer of fresh and saltwater. But does this turbid state have an effect on the estuarine flora and fauna, besides making diving an unattractive proposition?

David Maynard, Lecturer with the National Centre for Marine Conservation & Resource Sustainability, University of Tasmania, addresses this issue. "The biodiversity of the Tamar Estuary has been formed by the environmental conditions. There are two assemblages of animals, the resident animals (truly estuarine species) and seasonal visitors (migratory species and species with a short life cycle). Seasonal visitors only reside in the estuary during favourable conditions, generally summer when the water temperature is high (22 degrees) and salinity is high (around 33 ppt). As the weather cools (the water temperature gets down to 9 degrees) and the rains begin (the salinity drops to 9.5 ppt), these species leave the estuary and inhabit waters with more stable temperature and salinity. The resident animals stay all year round and tolerate what nature throws at them."

Haven't been diving in the Tamar or Derwent recently? This is what you've been missing out on…

"The estuary has seasonal heavy rains (in most years) which inundate the waterway reducing the salinity. The rugged bathymetry [underwater shape] of the estuary combined with a 3 m tide range, causes complete mixing of the water layers – there is no salt wedge effect [an

area where a seawater forces its way under a layer of fresh, as in the Derwent], hence the organisms must be able to tolerate a dramatic reduction in salinity or perish. These seasonal rains also resuspend and shift large amounts of silt from the upper reaches to the lower reaches of the estuary. The silt tends to settle in embayment's along the shorelines (places such as Middle Arm, Deception Cove and York Cove) forming a soft sediment habitat. Some of the sediments settle out in sponge gardens and algal beds, but is either utilised as a food source or resuspended on the next strong tide. So, is the silt bad for the organisms of the lower estuary? No, the animals are adapted to live in an estuarine environment."

Applying Maynard's knowledge of our doorstep diving playground, we can relax safe in the knowledge that whilst diving may be relatively unenjoyable during periods of high rain, the estuarine environment remains relatively healthy in normal circumstances, albeit somewhat diminished, until the warmer waters return over summer and throughout autumn.

Some of our favourites from your portfolio

Presenting Adriaan Van Huissteden

Adriaan is a South African born but pretty Aussified diver who is also President of the TSDC. One of his considerable accomplishments are a big portfolio of underwater photos he displays at his gallery site http://www.vizbiz.com.au . He also runs his own diving research program in marine conservation but if I tell you about it without his permission I would have to kill you all.

Adriaan has graciously allowed us to use his photos. We'd like to show you more of these in the coming months and also have plenty of room for your own portfolio too, just email us if you'd like to submit some.

I can't play music while you look at the photos, but the next best thing is a poem. Don't worry I've found a 'not to cheesy' one.

On This Island

Look, stranger, on this island now
The leaping light for your delight discovers,
Stand stable here
And silent be,
That through the channels of the ear
May wander like a river
The swaying sound of the sea.

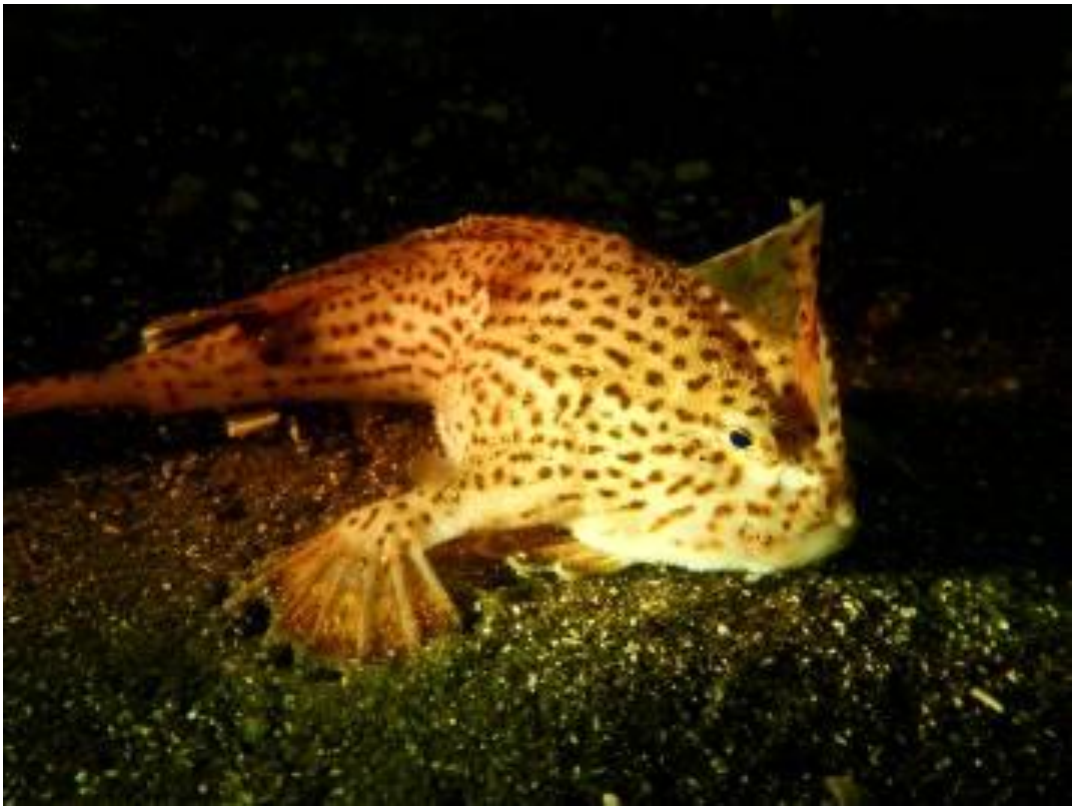
Here at a small field's ending pause
Where the chalk wall falls to the foam and its tall ledges
Oppose the pluck
And knock of the tide,
And the shingle scrambles after the suck-
-ing surf, and a gull lodges
A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships
Diverge on urgent voluntary errands,
And this full view
Indeed may enter
And move in memory as now these clouds do,
That pass the harbour mirror
And all the summer through the water saunter.

W.H. Auden 1935

Halt in Ralphs Bay development makes for happy handfish

by Emma Flukes



The $300 million Lauderdale Quay luxury development proposed for Ralphs Bay has been pretty much dead. It started with the Clarence City Council declaring it an "unacceptable risk" to ratepayers as of September 2009. The Resource Planning and Development Commission (RPDC) announced on 21st October that it intended to recommend against the development. The reasons related to the inappropriate style of the development as well as environmental grounds, including that it is adverse to handfish and seabirds. The death knell came the Tasmanian Government decided to accept the "umpires decision".

Save Ralphs Bay protest group greeted the recent developments with delight. Spokeswoman Jane MacDonald said her organisation had been warning the State Government and Clarence Council for months about the way risks had been played down.

While opinions on this latest development decision are likely to remain divided, the move comes as a great success for the critically endangered spotted handfish that inhabits the bay. This species is endemic to the lower Derwent River estuary and inhabits sand and silty areas from 2 to 30 metres depth. The spotted handfish was common in the lower Derwent River

estuary until the mid 1980s, when the species underwent a castastrophic decline with only two individuals sighted between 1990 and 1994. Although unproven, it is thought that the introduction of the northern Pacific seastar (*Asterias amurensis*) to Tasmania may have been responsible for decimation of the handfish population by consumption of handfish eggs or the sea squirts upon which the eggs attach. The deterioration of coastal habitats due to developments such as the proposal for Ralphs Bay may also have been involved in their decline and their popularity in the aquarium trade make the species a target for poachers.

Recent reports suggest previous breeding colonies in areas around Sandy Bay have been decimated by destruction of egg masses by small boat anchoring. Ralphs Bay is currently one of the few areas where spotted handfish are found in a relatively undisturbed environment. Potential extinction of this species would make it the first marine fish in the world to officially become extinct in modern times. The halt to the Lauderdale Quay development brings new hope for the preservation of this important breeding colony in the fight against extinction of the spotted handfish.

The other side of the Story - What Walker Corp had to say about handfish

• Overall risks to marine biodiversity are considered small primarily because of the limited size of the development site as a percentage of Ralphs Bay (3%).

• A small colony of endangered spotted handfish species is located approximately 2.5km from the proposed navigation channel entry to the development site.

• Coastal processes and water quality assessments indicate that this colony is not likely to be impacted by the development

• Nevertheless, Walkers offered to contribute to research into the Spotted Handfish

Check out http://www.arkive.org/spotted-handfish/brachionichthys-hirsutus/ for some fantastic pictures and videos of this weird and wonderful critter.

Handfish information also from Sue Wragge's (Underwater Adventures Tasmania) submission to RPDC

Rock Lobster Fishery Review - Have your say on how the fishery is managed

Introduction

A review of the management of the Tasmanian rock lobster fishery has now commenced.

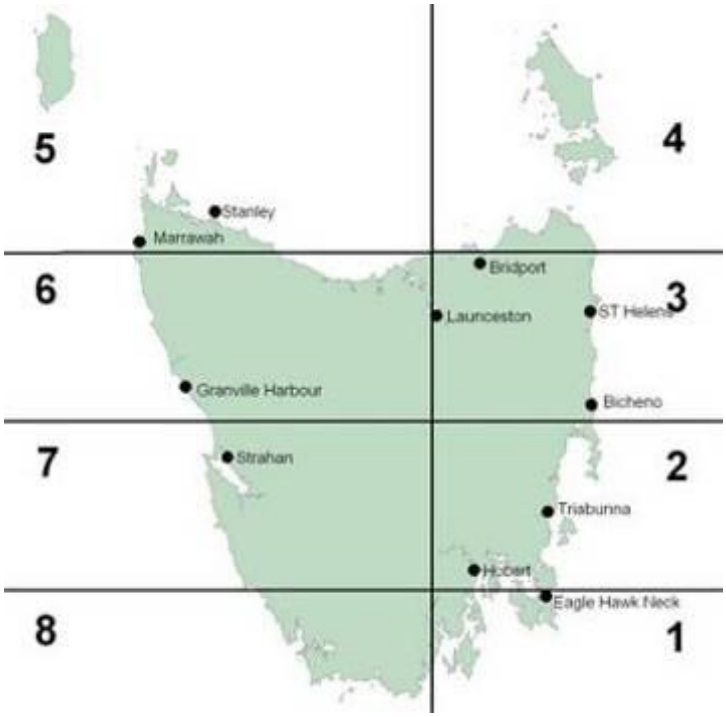
You are invited to comment on the issues you believe are important to the fishery by completing an online questionnaire.

Whilst the questionnaire focuses on recreational rock lobster fishing, in mid-November wider community comment on the fishery will be undertaken with the release of a discussion paper about the strategic (broad) directions for the rock lobster fishery.

Challenges Facing the Fishery

State-wide legal size lobster and catch rates

Recent fishery assessment reports for the Tasmanian rock lobster fishery by the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI) indicate concern about the trend of declining stock levels state-wide and in particular assessment areas. After the introduction of quota management for the commercial fishery in the mid 1990s, there was a decade of improving rock lobster stocks. Since 2006, there has been a continuous decline in the overall state-wide stock level of legal size lobsters and projections indicate that this trend will continue. There have also been similar trends in other lobster fisheries in Australia.



Highly regionalised recreational effort in the East and South East

Around 60 per cent of the state-wide recreational rock lobster catch is taken on the east and south east coast of Tasmania (area 1,2 & 3 refer map in section 2). Given the state-wide decline in rock lobster catches and

the importance and the relative easy access of this region to recreational fishers, this region may warrant targeted management responses to help maintain a reasonable satisfaction level for the average recreational fisher.

Sharing the rock lobster resource

The number of individuals with recreational fishing licences has doubled over the last decade, with around 20,000 individuals holding at least one type of recreational rock lobster licence. In 2008/9 this comprised of around 17,500 pot licences, 9000 dive licences and 5500 ring licences. The total recreational catch, however does not necessarily follow the same magnitude of variation as indicated by licence numbers, as individuals participate at different levels depending on individual circumstances and seasonal effects etc.

Statistically designed phone/diary surveys provide estimates of the total recreational catch every two years. The most recent survey of the recreational rock lobster fishery (2006/7 fishing season*) - indicates that around 20,000 individuals landed an estimated 135,275 lobsters or around 135 tonne was landed. This equated to around 8 per cent of the total catch allocation (commercial and recreational) for that year (1693.5 tonnes). The average recreational catch was 1.2 lobsters per fisher day.

Monitoring of recreational participation and catches will continue, and the information periodically assessed in terms of sustainability and resource sharing. The views expressed in the questionnaire, may assist in developing ways to prepare for future adjustments that spread the resource fairly amongst the recreational sector.
* This is the last published survey, a survey for the 2008/9 season is being finalised.

Possession limits for non fishers

The spirit of recreational fishing revolves around catching your own fish. Currently the rules allow a licenced recreational rock lobster fisher to possess 10 rock lobster, or a person who is not the holder of a recreational lobster licence to possess 5 rock lobsters without a receipt. This mechanism allows some fishers to take large numbers of lobsters, leaving less lobsters available for other recreational fishers. In addition, in some circumstances this can be abused by "off loading" substantial numbers of lobsters as acts of goodwill or indeed for sale or barter**. There is some merit in continuing to allow some "gifting" and sharing of recreational catch, however it needs to be within the spirit of recreational fishing.
**The sale or barter of any recreational caught fish is illegal for both the provider and the receiver.

Catch rates for different methods

Generally, recreational fishers using pots have only one "shot" with their pot per day. Divers, on the other hand, have the ability to swim over greater areas of reef and continue their fishing activity which increases their potential to successfully take their daily bag limit. This is reflected in the results of the surveys that indicate recreational divers are approximately twice as successful as potters in regard to their average daily catch (2.2 versus 0.9 rock lobster respectively).

Increasing sea urchin barrens

The long spined sea urchin (*Centrostehpanus rodgersii*) is impacting some reef systems on the east coast of Tasmania by grazing on the seaweed. This then creates extensive barrens that no longer support the same numbers and diversity of fish species. This sea urchin has few native predators in Tasmania, but studies have shown that large rock lobsters (greater than 140 mm carapace length) predate on this urchin and may be successful in helping control the spread of these urchin barrens. With the prediction that these waters will continue to warm into the future, it is expected that these urchins and their associated impacts may become more and more common. The Department is considering proposals to protect large lobsters to combat the risks of extensive urchin barrens forming on the East Coast. This will be a targeted response possibly prohibiting the take of large lobsters in the area from Eddystone Point to Cape Pillar in the south. A maximum size of 130, 135, 140 or 145 mm may be considered.

Views on Management Options

Pro-active management measures need to be considered from time to time to prepare the fishery (both in terms of the stock and participants) to adapt to current and future challenges. The rock lobster review will need to consider the latest fishery assessments, the risks of the formation of urchin barrens on the east coast, and resource sharing between and within sectors. In addition the findings of the recently released report on the vulnerability of the rock lobster fishery to climate change impacts and adaptation response options need to be considered.

In December 2008, the Minister responded to the declining stock indicators mentioned in the previous section, by reducing the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) for the current commercial season. Further reductions may be required. Given the stock trends for the fishery, management options may need to be considered for the recreational fishery (as well as the commercial sector).

At this stage there are no firm proposals to address these issues. We are particularly

interested your views relating to the challenges raised previously and your views on possible management measures.

Further Information

Fishery Assessment Report Tasmanian Rock Lobster 2007/08 Malcolm Haddon and Caleb Gardner January 2009 download at http://www.tafi.org.au/index.php/site/publications/category/rock_lobster

Pecl G, Frusher S, Gardner C, Haward M, Hobday A, Jennings S, Nursey-Bray M, Punt A, Revill H, van PuttenI (2009). The east coast Tasmanian rock lobster fishery – vulnerability to climate change impacts and adaptation response options. Report to the Department of Climate Change, Australia. Download at http://www.climatechange.gov.au/publications/index.html#impacts

Lyle, J.M. Tasmanian Recreational Rock Lobster and Abalone Fisheries – 2006/07 Fishing Season, TAFI internal Report May 2008. Results from the 2008/9 recreational rock lobster survey should be published by the end of 2009. Download from http://www.tafi.org.au/publications/0607_RLAB_FISHWISEreport.pdf

Purpose of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire seeks your feedback on some of the broad issues the fishery is facing. It also is an opportunity for you to raise issues not detailed specifically within the questionnaire.

Some questions seek details about your fishing activities or attitudes to fishing. This will assist in gaining an understanding of the views and potential impacts on recreational fishers when developing future management proposals. The questions are not framed in a way to provide any statistical estimation of recreational catch.

The questionnaire is an important source of information for the Department and the respective Fishery Advisory Committees to consider when developing proposals aimed to meet the current and future challenges of the fishery.

All personal information such as your address and details about your specific fishing activities will be treated confidentially. Summary information may be published, however this information will not be attributed to any particular person.

During 2010 management proposals will be developed. Feedback from both the questionnaire and the strategic directions discussion paper will be considered before drafting and releasing a further discussion paper on proposed management options and policy by April 2010. After

receiving input, the Department will then draft a new management plan (i.e rules) for the fishery, which then will undergo the statutory 60 day consultation period in the latter half of 2010. The new management plan will take effect on 1 March 2011.

During the development of management proposals the objectives of the *Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995*, which includes principles of sustainability, fair access, economic development and the sharing of responsibility for resource management and planning between Government, the community and industry will need to be considered.

How do I keep informed of further developments during the review?

By submitting the questionnaire, you will be kept informed of future consultation periods and information forums. The preferred method is by email contact, however if you do not provide an email address, future notifications for the release of consultation papers will be sent by mail. No further general mailouts to recreational fishers will be made unless they are registered, however the Department will continue to place notifications in newspapers, and on this website. Individuals and associations may also register their details at any time in the contact details of the questionnaire.

How to complete the questionnaire

Completed questionnaires must be received by the Department by Friday the 18th December 2009.

Alternatively you can download the questionnaire below in either PDF or Word format

http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/CVEN-7WM2QQ?open

Critter Files

Pygmy leatherjacket (*Brachaluteres jacksonianus*)

Habitat: seagrass, rocky reef

Depth range: 0-25 m

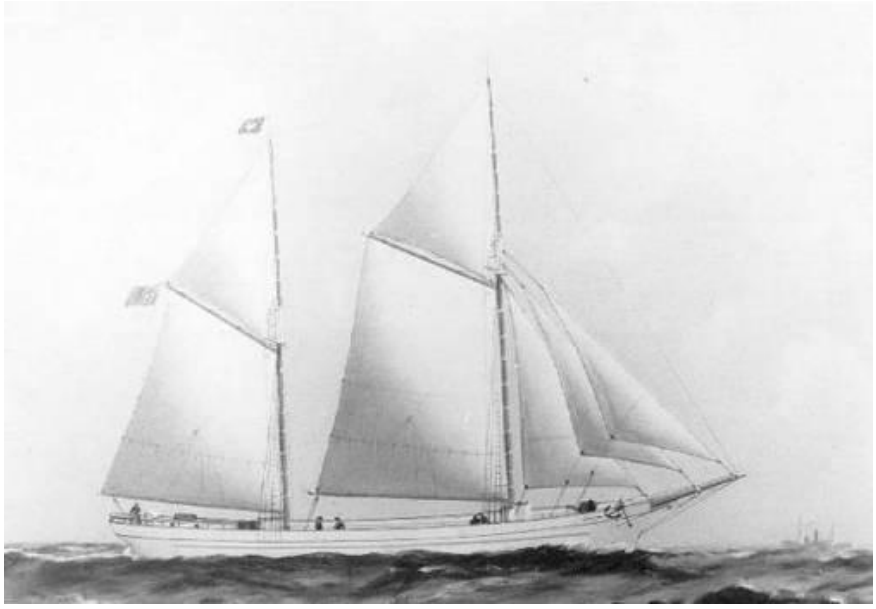
Size: up to 7 cm

Diet: small invertebrates

The pygmy leatherjacket is the smallest of all the Tasmanian leatherjackets. Its rounded shape, distended stomach and small size make it highly distinctive. The males tend to be larger than females and have bright blue markings. Pygmy leatherjackets are widely distributed throughout seagrass and algal beds all around Tasmania. Adults usually occur as solitary individuals, while juveniles can be commonly found in small schools among seagrass and algal beds. Reaching a maximum size of around 7 cm, the pygmy leatherjacket looks remarkably like a leaf floating around in the seagrass. An exceedingly cute, fish-like leaf. With eyes.

Photograph © Richard Ling, from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brachaluteres_jacksonianus.jpg

Maritime History
Annie Taylor, Wrecked Rheban Beach 1923



Below is an interesting State Library picture of the wreck "Annie Taylor" in 1950, the beach must have receded considerably as the bow stem is in about 3 feet of water at low tide. The outline of the hull is still partly visible and worth a quick snorkel on a lazy day. Note the old sawmill jetty, only a few stumps left today. She was loading timber when swept ashore by a storm.

For more pics of Tasmanian historical interest go to the excellent on-line Tasmemory collection.

http://www.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/tasmemory

WHATS ON in November 2009 (as far as we can figure out)

Research, Community and Education

1st November - Cleaning up marine debris, Bruny Island

Organised by The Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council.
(see our "News" section for more details)

7th November – Recreational Cray Season opens

Open to fishing from 7 November 2009 to 31 August 2010 inclusive. Fish enough for a feed and leave some for the rest of us.

11th November – Reef Life Survey training day, Derwent River

(see our "News" section for more details)

11th November – Tasmanian Marine Naturalists Association (TMNA) Special General Meeting

(see our "News" section for more details)

Major biological events to watch out for

Whale Migration – now is the time for whales to be moving again for the Summer, so if you're out in a boat keep an eye out. You are reminded that it is illegal to tag, herd, chase or otherwise harass a whale so approach quietly and cautiously.

Dive club dive calendars amalgamated

Like to get in touch with someone for a dive, email us and we'll forward your message,

If you would like to advertise your club calendar also drop us an email.

South East

7th November - The Thumbs, Tas Sub Aqua Club (TSAC)

7th - 8th November - Lagoon Bay, Tas Scuba Diving Club, (TSDC)

12th November – Night dive at Hobart Docks, Princess Wharf Tas Uni Dive Club (TUDC)

14th November – Tasman Peninsula day trip (TUDC)

14th – 15th November Easy dive TSDC

21st November Cray Dive (TSAC)

21st – 22nd November – Tasman Peninsula weekend (TUDC)

21st - 22nd, November Andrew's Mystery Dive (TSDC)

28th November Dive Rescue Practicals & Barbecue (TSAC)

28th November – Butts Reef, Huon River mouth (TUDC)

28th - 29th TSDC Free weekend, location to be decided

Also Check out Go Dive, The Dive Shop, or your favourite local dive shop who are also likely to be running regular outings throughout the month

East Coast

Try Bicheno Dive Centre or Bay of Fires Dive St Helens , or East Lines St Helens

North West and West

Wynyard Dive Centre

Go Dive Launceston ask if Fitzy is going anywhere

Oceans Plus Dive Club or Leven Scuba Club may also have ad hoc dives planned

Essential news and links for the perfect day out

Likely water temperature

http://www.bom.gov.au/cgi-bin/nmoc/latest_YM.pl?IDCODE=IDY00004

Vis recently

Tamar- according to Rolli its pretty appalling in the Tamar at the moment thanks to the wind and rain. Similar reports for the Derwent. But the equinoctal winds are dying down now, so we are in for a better time soon. As the sea temperature warms up vis can be expected to drop in many areas from time to time as a result of periodic algal blooms.

Best bets – sheltered spots not too close to major freshwater outflows.

Link to marine wind forecasting

http://www.bom.gov.au/jsp/marine/wind/index.jsp

Moon phases Tides Low head & Hobart, Burnie

http://www.bom.gov.au/oceanography/tides/MAPS/tas.shtml

Advanced weather planner based on past records

http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/averages/tables/cw_092003.shtml

How to become a sponsor

We are asking organisations to 'sponsor' the newsletter. This is at you own pace and FREE. We just want you to send us your news when you can and we also want you to ACTIVELY distribute Marine Life amongst your interest group, friends and colleagues so we can get the message out there, or give us email contacts (after asking your people for any objections to release of email contacts) so that we can distribute it for you.

How to make a contribution

This involved sending us an article by email, preferably not too long and with a photo or two. Sorry, no money, its all a love job and just for the glory. We'll use your contribution for the purpose for which it was given, for non-commercial uses and with attribution. *Contact Us;* marinelifetassie@gmail.com

OH NO, SCUBA DIVING OVERLOAD!

We are trying to appeal to all non-mainstream marine activities in, on, under, or near the ocean like, surfriders, beachcombers, shell-collectors, coastcare, fishcare, canoe and kayak, sea bird and marine mammal enthusiasts, marine scientists, sustainable fishers, scuba divers and snorkelers, et al. So send us your news and photos and give these scuba divers a run for their money.

If it gets wet and salty at least twice a day we want to know about it.