



Broome, Australia

Strength to strength

Article by Fiona Bishop
Photography Len McKenzie & Rudi Yoshida

Monitoring Town Beach, Broome



Seagrass monitoring in Broome really does have a lot going for it: the rejuvenating stroll in the fresh ocean air across the luminous, sparkling tidal flats; the gorgeous soft pink-orange sunrises; the sense of wonder at the bizarre and beautiful fauna seen in our quadrats; and the delight at seeing the first patches of seagrass. There is also a great sense of satisfaction learning the methodology, and in knowing that our efforts have made an important contribution to protecting our seagrass through a scientifically robust monitoring project.

Perhaps the joy of monitoring is why the Broome Community Seagrass Monitoring Project saw record numbers of enthusiastic participants signing up for our recent Seagrass-Watch workshop, designed to build the capacity of participants to monitor this precious resource. We had a fun and fascinating time learning about seagrass biology & identification, conducting laboratory exercises, identifying seagrass and practising preparing press specimens. We also learned about seagrass ecology and threats, and were given a comprehensive presentation about Seagrass-Watch methodology. From 6am on the second day, after a lovely breakfast of freshly baked muffins & coffee to wake us up (fast becoming a Broome Seagrass Project tradition), we walked out to the Town Beach monitoring site at Roebuck Bay for

fieldwork practice, where our regional television journalist also turned up to film the event for a positive community interest story on the nightly news.

I would like to extend a special thank-you to the two ranger groups from the Dampier Peninsula who made the effort of travelling hundreds of kilometres to Broome to attend the training; the KLC Bardi Jawi Rangers and the KRCI Djarindjin Rangers. I'm also grateful to Department of Environment and Conservation's Sharon Ferguson who helped organise the event, and to Seagrass-Watch HQ (Len McKenzie and Rudi Yoshida) who ran a highly professional and impressive workshop for us.

The Broome Community Seagrass Monitoring project has been growing from strength to strength, with increasing numbers of participants attending monitoring sessions; what's more, we

have embarked on intertidal, subtidal and aerial photography mapping. The project has benefited from working closely with Indigenous Traditional Owners in the region, while community education has also been a priority. The project was recently granted another year's funding from Coastwest; we received additional funding from the Port of Broome, which recognizes that our seagrass is an excellent indicator of the health of Broome's Roebuck Bay, Ramsar-listed as a

Wetland of International Significance. While the state of seagrass globally is dire, it's heartening to know that, with monitoring projects like ours supported by funders and community participants alike, this precious resource has a better chance of being protected and continuing to flourish.

Seagrass-Watch HQ has formally trained 639 participants worldwide...
Seagrass-Watch HQ

Broome Community Seagrass Monitoring Project is co-managed by Environs Kimberley and DEC, with funding from Envirofund and the Port of Broome.

