

29.07.10 Lyngby in R. Bay  
NEWS

# Team investigates Roebuck Bay algae

**BEN JONES**

ALGAL blooms in Roebuck Bay will be investigated by a group of researchers from the University of WA thanks to funding recently announced by the State Government.

Outbreaks of toxic blue-green Lyngbya majuscula algae, which can cause skin and eye irritation in humans as well as destroying seagrass beds, have been recorded in Roebuck Bay with increasing severity over the past five years.

Andrew Storey, from UWA's School of Animal Biology, has studied Roebuck Bay's food webs

and his research, which will be carried out with colleague Sora Estrella, will track nitrogen, believed to be one of the major causes of Lyngbya outbreaks.

"Roebuck Bay is one of the most important shorebird stop-over points in Australia, where birds refuel on invertebrates living in the mud before making their migration to Siberia," adjunct Associate Professor Storey said.

"Lyngbya has the potential to impact on this food source, which may then impact on shorebird populations.

"We will be looking at when the Lyngbya blooms occur in the bay,



**Lyngbya majuscula in Roebuck Bay.**

where they occur and what affects the blooms have on the invertebrate animals living in the benthic (mud) environment.

"We'll be surveying the invertebrate life in areas of mud covered by the blooms, areas outside the blooms as well as during and after the blooms to see what effect the blooms have on this food source for migratory shorebirds."

The team will also look at nutrient levels in sediments around the bay, and how shorebird feeding behaviour is affected by Lyngbya blooms.

The data gathered will contribute to a management plan for the bay which is recognised as a wetland of international significance.

Professor Storey said nutrient enrichment had been detected in

groundwater feeding into the bay in previous UWA research.

He said the source of the nutrient enrichment was not yet known, but wastewater reticulating sporting areas around Broome had been listed as a possible cause as nutrients could leach into groundwater or be caught in run off from wet season rains and flushed into the bay through stormwater drains.

Professor Storey said authorities were stuck between a rock and a hard place with population growth and ongoing development adjacent to the bay putting pressure on the marine ecosystem.