



Volunteer Claudia makes a release at Roebuck Bay.

Picture: Kandy Curran

Volunteers get involved in bay

KANDY CURRAN

FEW towns in the world are on the shores of an area like Roebuck Bay with such extraordinary biodiversity providing abundant opportunities to participate in scientific monitoring of seagrass, migratory shorebirds, mud-dwelling invertebrates and turtles.

These community projects, co-ordinated by Environs Kimberley, the Broome Bird Observatory, Yawuru Rangers and Conservation Volunteers Australia, are a chance for the community to be involved in science and contribute to better management and understanding of Roebuck Bay's natural values.

Seagrass monitoring is a volunteer project experiencing a

burst of interest. People from all walks of life are getting up at the break of dawn to walk out onto Roebuck Bay's exposed mudflats and monitor the marine creatures and dugong trails found in the seagrass meadows.

The seagrass ecosystem is so fascinating one could stay out all day, but ushered by the tide, monitoring objectives are usually achieved in two hours at the three sites.

Many volunteers new to seagrass monitoring say they had no idea there was such a plant as seagrass, that it grew in coastal waters, or indeed that the southern Kimberley coast, with its sheltered bays, has the highest diversity of seagrass in the world.

While all the volunteer moni-

toring projects are fun, they are professionally run and strongly underpinned by science.

The Roebuck Bay Working Group has been working with Yawuru traditional owners since 2004 to manage Roebuck Bay's values.

It has developed a website with an interactive volunteer calendar to make it easy for the public get involved in the exciting science on Broome shores.

If you are interested in any of the activities, contact the leader on the website www.roebuck-bay.org.au/pdfs/Roebuck-Bay-Volunteer-Calendar.pdf.

■ **Kandy Curran is the Roebuck Bay Working Group project co-ordinator**