



# MangroveWatch

The official newsletter of MangroveWatch Burnett Mary Region

**A Community Coastcare Project**

Helping community volunteers learn about mangroves and monitor environmental change in local estuaries

Re-launch Issue

August 25th, 2010

## MangroveWatch successfully re-launched!!

### **Thanks - one and all!**

After its inaugural year, MangroveWatch BMR was officially re-launched in two outstanding events in Tin Can Bay and Hervey Bay on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> August last. These events were fitting tributes to all those who enthusiastically embraced the MangroveWatch ideology – to learn about tidal wetlands, to monitor estuary and coastal health, to expand social networks, to explore creative expression, and to have fun doing it!

BMR, of course standing for Burnett Mary Region, has become the lively birthplace of MangroveWatch. Celebrating BMR community members, as newly certified MangroveWatchers, were joined by local officials, visual artists and dignitaries. Our willing community hosts were urged on by the BMRG marine science coordinator, Sue Sargent, who originally encouraged our Mangrove Hub team at UQ to take up the challenge. This challenge was supported and made possible with a Community Coastcare grant from the Australian Governments' Caring for Our Country team. With this, our group warmly welcomed Vanessa Myles to

the Tin Can Bay event who, as representative of the Caring for Our Country team, traveled especially from Canberra to attend.

We greatly appreciated this show of continuing support.



MangroveWatch Science Hub on the ground in Tin Can Bay  
Photo: Mangrove Hub

### **With dignity and candor**

The opening of our events provided an opportunity to hear local stories about the cultural significance for the Butchella people of these important ecosystems, provided by Luke Bird in Tin Can Bay, and Marie Wilkinson with Malcolm Burns in Hervey Bay. Their stories highlighted the long-standing interaction between humans and mangroves and our dependence on them for food, resources and culture. Sadly, the stories embodied sobering reminders of change with mangrove life in the region being less prolific now with reduced numbers and types of shellfish, crabs and fish than a century ago.

And, that is exactly why we believe in MangroveWatch, and why it is necessary – to raise awareness for the protection of valuable mangrove resources so they may continue to be enjoyed by future generations.

### Arty Mangrovetravelers



Artist Sarah Mitchell in Tin Can Bay describing her Mangrove Watching experiences as a source of artistic inspiration.  
Photo: Mangrove Hub

The events provided an excellent display of local community spirit and dedication to conserving our mangrove coasts and shorelines. An exciting aspect of the workshops was an amazing display of mangrove art, showcasing the unique visual experience that accompanies these magnificent ecosystems. It was inspirational to see the combination of science and art united in an expression of community interest and commitment to environmental conservation and science.

In this, a special mention goes to local graziers, come environmental advocates, Lindsay (Butch) and Noela Titmarsh, for their brilliant portrayal of mangrove stories from Tandora station with the famous “Mangroves and Mud” photographic exhibition. You can view the Titmarsh exhibition in Gympie early next year, and hopefully later in Brisbane. Further thanks go also to Sarah Mitchell, as local mangrove expert from Tin Can Bay, for displaying a captivating series of sensual prints of mangrove mudskippers cavorting under moonlight. I wonder if there is a connection with the locally famous basking turtles. Not least, we especially

thank Liz Sawrey also for donating her artwork on *Rhizophora*. This was auctioned on the night, to raise funds for the local environment group, SSMEG. Not surprisingly, this was won by Norm as highest bidder.

Specific contributors to the art show include: Elizabeth Sawrey (auction painting / easels); Tanya Easterby (photographic display); Sarah Mitchell (linocuts / art display); Jan Blackshaw / Tin Can Bay Camera Club (photography); Carolyn Smith (painting); Helen Window (painting by Maree Prior); Lindsay Titmarsh (photographic display); Glenda & Brian Johannsen (before & after photos); Clive & Sue Hyde (before and after photos); and Jenny & Bill Adamson (before and after photos). For the event organization and native floral display, we thank: SSSMeg - Norma Sanderson and Shirley Wilson; Cooloola Cityfarm and Alan Jones; Maree Prior with Cooloola Coastcare; and, Rae Gate with GRC. For the venue, we thank the Gympie Library & Tin Can Bay Library staff.

Hopefully next year, we might expand this gala event to include even more creative talent. So, if you have seen the beauty of tidal wetlands and the mangroves, now is your opportunity - we would love to hear from you.



Tandora photographer Lindsay 'Butch' Titmarsh and his wife Noela with the Hervey Bay display of their Mangroves and Mud exhibit.  
Photo: Mangrove Hub



Jock presenting the report cards to the volunteers at Tin Can Bay. Photo: Mangrove Hub

## MangroveWatching in BMR

Fortunately for the Burnett Mary region, mangroves are being watched – very closely! Since our initial launch in June 2009, there have been over 76 active MangroveWatchers, representing 13 community groups who have collected 37 hours of video of 272 km of coastline, estuary banks and mangrove lined shores, with more videos coming in every week. This represents a volunteer time contribution of more than 150 hours. This is a mammoth effort and highlights just how much the local communities of the Burnett Mary region value their mangroves and are concerned for their future. You can read all about these efforts, see the area covered and more on the website ([www.mangrovetwatch.org.au](http://www.mangrovetwatch.org.au)).

Another important aspect of MangroveWatching is the monitoring sites of special interest. These are sites, such as rapidly eroding banks, identified by the River Keepers as requiring further monitoring and attention.

The attendees at the Hervey Bay event were privileged to have in attendance Aub Strydom from QPWS. This was great timing as Aub had just satellite tagged two turtles in the mangroves, where they rest and feed, highlighting once again the valuable role of mangroves in providing habitat for one

of our more iconic and endangered local visitors.

We also welcomed Paula and Ruth Harberger from the River Heads Reserve Committee who came to talk about the reserve at mouth of the Susan River. They have been hard at work setting up a wetland conservation area on the foreshore of the Great Sandy Straits. Paula and Ruth are hoping to use this area to educate people on the importance of wetlands and are looking forward to setting up a MangroveWatch group to help monitor this precious ecosystem.



Aub Strydom explaining his turtle tagging research to a rapt audience at the Hervey Bay Re-launch. Photo: Mangrove Hub

## Matching efforts at the Hub

The volume of video footage has kept the UQ Mangrove Hub team working feverishly to analyse the many kilometers of estuary bank captured on video, with student volunteers clocking in more than 250 hours of assessment. The August Re-launch provided us with the opportunity to showcase all of these efforts in the form of “Mangrove Condition Report Cards”. These report cards give each ‘Watched’ estuary and shoreline an overall bank habitat condition score, as well as detailing the health of the mangroves, bank processes such as erosion and mangrove species distributions.

The report cards also list important features of the estuary and key threats that are current or have the potential to degrade the mangroves in that area.

The report cards and video tracks are available on the MangroveWatch website at [www.mangrovetwatch.org.au](http://www.mangrovetwatch.org.au).



Col Day and Bob Anderson hard at work collecting shoreline video footage for a report card analysis of Coonarr Crk.

Photo: Mangrove Hub

### Management outcomes on the agenda

Now that the first report cards have been generated and a baseline of mangrove and shoreline condition has been established, we are keen to adapt these findings to improve local management of threatened areas. At both Tin Can Bay and Hervey Bay, we were fortunate to have join us at the Re-launch, elected and prospective representatives from all levels of government. In this, we give a special thanks to all our government representatives who attended, including: Cllr Rae Gate (Gympie Regional Council) and Cllr Sue Brooks (Fraser Coast Regional Council); state member for Hervey Bay, Ted Sorensen MP and federal Labor candidate for Wide Bay, Nikolee Ansell. Both Cllr Gate (Tin Can Bay) and Cllr Brooks (Hervey Bay), provided us with their special insights into the important role of community based environmental programs such as MangroveWatch, in

informing local governments as to local issues about their local environment.

A key tenant of MangroveWatch is that protection of valuable tidal wetlands, is dependant on informed popular support, to be voiced by our elected representatives. The attendance of our local representatives is indicative of their desire to listen to the concerns of the local community about mangroves and tidal wetlands. We are hopeful that this translates into continued and improved protection of such valuable natural ecosystems.

Vannessa Myles, from our funders Caring for Our Country, spoke firstly of her amazement at the beauty of the Tin Can Bay environment, highlighting that we shouldn't take such places for granted. Secondly, she expressed the personal inspiration she gained from seeing the energy and enthusiasm of so many local volunteers concerned for their environment and how important that was to experience first-hand as a public servant involved with environmental management. We are hopeful that her experience in Tin Can Bay will be conveyed to her superiors and translated into continued federal support for the ManngroveWatch program.



Community volunteers and participants sharing mangrove stories, knowledge, and art at the Tin Can Bay Re-launch.

Photo: Mangrove Hub

A further management perspective was provided by Maree Prior in Tin Can Bay. Maree has a long history of involvement in community groups with coastal environmental initiatives. Her message was that community groups need to band together with a united voice to

increase funding opportunities, and to reduce overheads and bureaucratic red-tape.

This, most importantly, would allow small groups to share the sometimes burdensome workload of organizing community environmental activities under current legal frameworks. This is an objective embraced by the Mangrove Hub.



### An eye on the future

The role of MangroveWatch appears best as an umbrella organization for the many diverse community groups engaged in MangroveWatch activities. Our aim is to provide a structure within which community groups can work together, share their experiences and band together for a common cause. A key instrument in delivering this outcome has been an effective networking hub. The Mangrove Hub at UQ has taken on the role in a number of key ways, including: coordination of events; training workshops; information feedback sessions; a point of contact for expert information; standardized assessment of monitoring data as report cards; a facility for community networking within the region; and a platform for sharing information with other regions in Queensland, in Australia, and around the world.

Through local involvement in data collection, scientific analysis and public communication of results and issues through the MangroveWatch website we greatly increase our capacity as a community to conserve our valuable

(and beautiful) tidal wetland environments. Keep up the great work!

The means to communicate and network has been greatly enhanced by the worldwide web. As you know, MangroveWatch has an established presence there. But, did you know that our site is receiving at least 20-30 visitors each day. That is not bad after only the two months of operation. And, this is before our site has become fully operational. Already, the site is providing a forum to develop and nurture our vision for the program. We readily acknowledge that the success of the site is greatly enhanced by the generous contributions of talented MangroveWatch member Neil Gillies of Rainbow Solutions. We are hugely appreciative of Neils' boundless technical skills, plus his perseverance and patience in translating a 'hand-waving' vision into something tangible and practical. If the website can further capture our vision, it will also give online access to our hours of videos and show the many shorelines visited in 'street view' format. And, there is more! With these ideas, it seems, we are leaping into unknown territory - so, we welcome any suggestions, and of course, your continued support.

### MangroveWatch Re-launched! - watch this space

A big thank you to MangroveWatchers for organizing respect events, particularly: Carole Gilles (SSMeg) and Shirley Wilson in Tin Can Bay; and, Tim Thornton (Friends of the Burrum) and Carol Bussey (WPSQ) in Hervey Bay.

Each event was wonderfully presented and brilliantly delivered. We had plenty of fine company, great talks, good food and enlightened conversations.



Carole Gilles offering up good food and passionate conversation about MangroveWatch efforts in Tin Can Bay.  
Photo: Mangrove Hub

So as you can see, the celebration of the first year of MangroveWatch and our re-launch into another year was a great success, with both events filled with mud, mangrove critters (and watchers), artistic flair, fun, local enthusiasm, serious science, and management perspectives. We look forward to your continued support and involvement with MangroveWatch, and eagerly await the next round of videos with, hopefully, some new places to explore!

While our funding from Caring for Our Country has ended now, the program will continue. In the BMR, this is helped with our field kits still in use, and the continuing support from the Hub, albeit it in a volunteer mode. This means we are unable to travel, or provide training, promotional assistance, full website updating, or offer analyses of data received. As support for the Hub is essential for these things with MangroveWatch, we encourage all our supporters and community groups to also seek sponsorship and funding to continue our program in your local region.

If you are aware of any opportunities, please contact the MangroveWatch Hub on (07) 3365 2073 or [mangrovewatch@gmail.com](mailto:mangrovewatch@gmail.com).

In the meantime, we will continue to receive and analyze some videos, and offer advice on mangrove matters, albeit in a much reduced capacity. In any case, we look forward to hear from you soon.

**Many thanks and happy Mangrooving!**

From your enthusiastic friends at the UQ Mangrove Hub:

Norm, Jock, Apanie, Britt, Julian, Alex and Karin



Alex proudly displaying his MangroveWatch colours!  
Photo: Mangrove Hub