

Blue Swimmer

Newsletter of the Friends of Gulf St Vincent
Issue 5 – March 2006

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Welcome to the Blue Swimmer

Welcome to another edition of the Blue Swimmer.

It has been a busy time around the Gulf. Given the looming state election, there appears to be quite a few opportunities to raise environmental concerns with prospective politicians and candidates. Hence many of our members have been out and about flying the flag (so to speak) for Gulf St Vincent at meetings and campaign events. These largely surround issues with the dredging operations at Outer Harbor, sedimentation concerns at Maslins Beach and algal discharge from the Torrens.

And whoever thought politics was a "dirty business" obviously hasn't visited Outer Harbor or Maslins Beach in recent times!

But activities during the past few months have not all been about politics and lobbying. Discussion have recently been held between members of the Friends of Gulf St Vincent and SALA (SA Living Artists) Festival coordinators to

investigate the possibility of running a theme on protecting the Gulf congruently with SALA week.

Some of the projects proposed so far have included photo exhibitions relating to the coast, murals, designing flags which can be flown by the coastal councils, getting school children to help create a walk-in aquarium and investigating Jetty culture by designing versions of the old wooden fish boxes.

This would be a great opportunity to educate school children and the wider community about issues impacting upon the Gulf through various artistic media.

SALA Week is usually held in August so watch this space for more information on how you can become involved and learn where exhibitions and events will be held.

Welcome Aboard

A warm welcome to our newest members:

Shaun Corigliano, Lesley Cann, Linda-Marie McDowell, John Cugley, Cathryn Hamilton, Gavin Malone and Rapsodie Barbour.

If you are not a financial member and would like to become one please contact the secretary Nick Crouch on (08) 8372 6887, (Nick.Crouch@tafesa.edu.au). Membership fees are only \$10 for both individuals and groups.

Dirty Business

A number of Friends of Gulf St Vincent members have been flagging recent sedimentation and turbidity issues which is timely given the Adelaide Coastal Water Study results promoted during the "Know more about your Gulf" forum held late last year.

Outer Harbour

You may recall that the Friends of Gulf St Vincent made a submission to the Development Assessment Commission regarding dredging at Outer Harbor and the potential impact offshore dumping of the dredged material would have in terms of spreading *Caulerpa racemosa* and upon unique Gulf ecosystems such as the Orontes Bank.

Since dredging operations began public concerns have been heightened given the visual impact of the sediment that has been churned up (see photos) and speculations that undertaking this harbour deepening has impacted upon fish.

Maslins Beach

Flow of sediment into the sea has been occurring at Maslins beach, which is possibly the result of misguided management whereby a channel was cut to the sea and the seaward face was reshaped.

Torrens outlet

Other "gunk" comprising of blue-green algal blooms, which are known to release toxins, has recently been seen flushed out through the Torrens River outlet, raising health concerns among local residents. Prior to the Torrens River being opened to the sea a system known as the Reedbeds would have assisted in filtering out any "nasties" before it reached our Gulf.

Several public meetings have been held in relation to these somewhat contentious issues and Friends of Gulf St Vincent have endeavoured to attend these and provide an objective view on the issues and management of threats.

On a much more positive note the City of Charles Sturt council recently invited our president and vice president to discuss sedimentation issues with elected members and to advocate for council to identify space suitable for wetlands that will, in a sense, act like the Reedbeds once did and therefore reduce silt loads entering the Gulf.

Subsequently one of the councillors, Cr Howland, put forth a motion to council to this effect and this was discussed and passed at a council meeting in late February.

The unconfirmed minutes of that council meeting can be viewed at their website <http://www.charlessturt.sa.gov.au>.

We look forward to seeing what arises from this action and if a number of wetlands or stormwater detention basins are constructed it would be a huge step towards a cleaner Gulf.



Sedimentation at Outer Harbor – photo courtesy of Shaun Corigliano



Sedimentation at Outer Harbor – photo courtesy of Shaun Corigliano



A river of silt entering Maslins Beach – photo courtesy of John Houlahan

Fishy business

It has been a viewpoint held by many environmentalists that taking the largest fish (and other animals) out of a population can reduce the average size of individuals within that population over successive generations. The reason governing this is that when the largest fish are taken they are no longer available to breed. With the genetically smaller individuals remaining and left to breed, the chances are that their off-spring will also be small as they pass on their hereditary traits.

The results of a recent study provide some backing to this theory. The researchers involved reported that removing the largest fish causes the remaining population to progressively become smaller within laboratory trials with Atlantic silverside. In the lab where larger fish were harvested there was an overall reduction in subsequent populations of larval growth rates, fecundity and larval size and viability which may account for the trend towards smaller individuals.

The theory to overcome this would be to have a maximum size limit as well as the existing minimum size limit for various fish. This is a technique that has appeared successful elsewhere in the world. Given that most of our fisheries are based on a dollar value per weight of fish catch it is unlikely that these types of regulations would be implemented at least in the foreseeable future.

So instead of keeping the "trophy" fish, why not take a photo and frame it as a memento for the pool room or alternatively stick to the tried and true story that it was simply the "one that got away" and release it so it can foster large healthy fingerlings.

More information can be found in the following article.

Walsh, Munch, Chilba and Conover (2006) Maladaptive changes in multiple traits caused by fishing: impediments to population recovery. *Ecology Letters* Vol 9, Issue 2, Pg 142

The 'other' prawns in our Gulf

In mythology, Peneus was a river god. For those who follow the gods' gossip, his daughter was Daphne, but that is another story. In the great period of renaming animals through the 18th and 19th centuries, naturalists reserved the name 'Peneus' for prawns. Except that they mixed Greek and Latin, and chose to spell it 'Penaeus'.

So the 'Penaeidae' are prawns. In particular, the ones that do not carry eggs externally. An even more significant characteristic is that they taste good.

In our Gulf St Vincent the commercial fishery depends on one species, long known as *Penaeus latisulcatus*. Many people believe there is only one species of prawn in our Gulf. In fact, at least 2 others occur naturally. One is *Trachypenaeus curvirostris* (note the 'penaeus' part of the generic name. The specific name means 'curved beak' - it curves upward, not to the side) and the other is *Metapenaeopsis lindae*. Even at full size, they are much smaller than *P. latisulcatus*.

These, or similar species, are put on sale in other parts of Australia, where they may have been called 'bay prawns', or even 'cocktail prawns'. Or the trawlers may sell them through fishing tackle shops for bait. Generally they are not sold in South Australia.

It appears that Gulf St Vincent has recently acquired a "volunteer" - a small species found along the New South Wales coast, called *Metapenaeus bennettiae*. It was named for Ms Isobel Bennett, a pioneer marine biologist, now well in her 90s, who worked out the complicated larval life of this species in the coastal lakes north of Sydney.

We do not know how *M. bennettiae* hitched its way to South Australia, but it has been seen in the Port River since about 1990, and clearly has a breeding population there.

You will be able to read more about all these prawns in our forthcoming book 'The Natural History of Gulf St Vincent'. No, don't send e-mails asking where you can buy it - it will be several more months in gestation - but it will answer lots of questions even about the common species that live in our Gulf.

www. What, Where, Why???

For those who are techno gurus and realise when people mention the web, the net or surfing these that they aren't referring to spiders, methods of catching fish or taking the Malibu board down to the local break, the information below may be of interest.

Even luddites like myself may want to check out the on-line resources mentioned below.

Friends of Gulf St Vincent website

Want to know more about Friends of Gulf St Vincent, who we are, what we have been up to why the Gulf needs protecting? Then check out the Friends of Gulf St Vincent website. This is a great resource with potential to add links to other sites and a swag of photos and snippets of information in the section entitled "Gulf Views".

Most importantly if you visit the site you will also be able to download previous copies of the Blue Swimmer.

<http://users.chariot.net.au/~littoral/fogsv/index.htm>

SA Coastcare – yahoo groups

Another great on-line resource is the SA Coastcare yahoo website. Not only are there some great photos to have a look at but it is designed as an on-line discussion forum. You can use it to post a question about various coastcare issues and see if other volunteers or technical experts can shed some light on these, otherwise just use it to have a chat to other coastcarers around the state and see what they are up to. One of the best ways to work out solutions to problems is to chat to those in the field, and with coastcare participants spread right around the gulf, and even state, the internet is a great medium to have a chat.

<http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/SAcoastcare/>

Josephine's Journal: upcoming events around the Gulf

For more information about Friends of Gulf St Vincent please contact the secretary; Ian (ianrk@iprimus.com.au).

To add your event or workday to Josephine's Journal, contribute an article, photo or snippets of information contact Mel on (0418 802 816, melanie-rees@lycos.com).

Future events:

When	What	Further Details
March		
Sunday 5 th	Clean up Australia Day	www.cleanup.com.au
5 th – 12 th	Sea Week	http://www.mesa.edu.au/seaweek.asp
April		
Sunday 2 nd	Friends of Pat Creek workday	http://users.chariot.net.au/~littoral/pat-ck/fopc/
May		
Sunday 7 th	Friends of Pat Creek workday	http://users.chariot.net.au/~littoral/pat-ck/fopc/
June		
Monday 5 th	World Environment Day	http://www.unep.org/wed/2006/english/
Thursday 8 th	World Oceans Day	http://www.gdrc.org/oceans/oceans-day.html

Friends
of Gulf St Vincent

