



KIMBERLEY MARINE

RESEARCH STATION • CYGNET BAY

AUGUST 2012

What's been happening at KMRS in August?



Spring low tide at Shell Island reef, Cygnet Bay (A McCarthy)

KMRS shortlisted as a 2012 WA Science Awards finalist: We are excited to announce that KMRS has been shortlisted as a finalist for the 2012 WA Science Awards under the Science Engagement Initiative of the Year category. The Minister for Science & Innovation, Hon. John Day, announced the finalists for the various categories under the award with the winners to be announced at the Science Awards in Perth on October 11. We are very proud to be considered among the finalists and look forward to opportunities to continue to profile and promote marine research in the region as a result. Thank you to all our KMRS friends for your ongoing support!

August 6-7: WA Department of Fisheries Marine Research team visits: Dr Justin McDonald and Sam Bridgwood recently visited KMRS to collect samples for a study on fouling ascidian species (sea squirts) found on aquaculture gear and to discuss biosecurity monitoring. Numerous samples were collected and the team were treated to a spectacle created by two humpback whales breaching as they cruised through the pearl farm lease. Thanks to Justin & Sam for taking the time to visit.



August 12: KMRS helps 'Celebrate the Bay' at Roebuck Bay, Broome: KMRS had the pleasure of contributing to the "Celebrate the Bay" festivities at Town Beach, Broome, on the shores of Roebuck Bay. The event was hosted by the Roebuck Bay Working Group as part of the National Science Week program to celebrate the amazing wildlife and cultural heritage the bay holds. The day included wonderful live music from Broome's own Steve Pigram and informative talks from the Yawuru Rangers, passionate locals and scientists all sharing their knowledge of Roebuck Bay. KMRS had a display stall on the day and Research Officer Ali spoke about current projects and the exciting role of

independent marine science in complementing and expanding our existing scientific, traditional cultural and community-based knowledge. Thanks & congrats to Kandy at Roebuck Bay Working Group for coordinating a great event.

August 22: Steve Blake & Sue Lyn Lim from WAMSI drop in: Dr Steve Blake & Sue-Lyn Lim dropped in to KMRS whilst waiting for early sea fog to rise on the western coast of the Peninsula where they were based to coordinate WAMSI's 4th year of humpback whale surveys from [Two Moons Whale Research Base](#) at Pender Bay. At Cygnet Bay, conditions were magnificent (see image at top of page) and the team spent the morning exploring some of the hugely diverse coral communities exposed at spring low tide. Thanks Steve & Sue for the visit.

August 31: UWA PhD candidates Sana Dandan & Lucy Georgiou arrive at KMRS: Sana & Lucy have arrived at KMRS for an intensive 8 day stint in the field focusing on coral reef studies. Sana has been conducting research at KMRS since 2010 while this is Lucy's first visit. Conditions are shaping up to be great and we look forward to a busy week ahead!



Croc at seeding shed (J Brown)

What's been happening in the water lately?

The seasons are changing at Cygnet Bay with the wet season prevailing westerly winds kicking in intermittently throughout the month. Ambient temperature has shot up to mid 30s and underwater visibility has been magnificent. As such, it has been a busy and exciting month for life in and on the water in August.

Pearl harvest finished up early on in the month and the pearling team were treated to a rare show as two Humpback whales (photographed below)

breached and frolicked directly in front of the seeding shed on the very last day of harvest. Whales have been seen throughout the farm lease on multiple occasions during the month. A small 1.5m croc has also made an appearance on numerous occasions around the Bay, including at the seeding shed (photo left). Likewise, the pair of false killer whales which featured in the April newsletter has been spotted again in the Bay this month. A not so common sighting, the group or "fever" of sting rays photographed right was spotted congregating off a rocky headland at the Bay and were observed in this formation for many minutes before scattering.



Sting ray congregation (T Cockram)




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Photo of the month

Humpback Whales
(*Megaptera novaeangliae*) at Shenton Bluff, Cygnet Bay

C. Adam
7 August 2012

Numerous whales visit the Bay at the end of the dry season each year as they head south from their Kimberley calving grounds to Antarctic waters.

What's ahead at KMRS?

- PhD candidates Sana Dandan and Lucy Georgiou from the University of WA will be continuing current studies on local coral species.
- Murdoch University Cetacean Research Unit PhD candidate Alex Brown will be returning to KMRS with a team of volunteers to continue survey work on Kimberley dolphins.
- PhD candidate Bonnie Laverock from UWA will be coming to KMRS for the first time to study bioturbation and sedimentation.
- With the predicted spring coral spawning period fast approaching, KMRS staff are monitoring coral species for gamete development in the lead up to a potential spawning. Stay posted for updates!

Infrastructure progress at KMRS



Work is underway on the **new hatchery and research labs** being constructed adjacent to the existing boatshed on Cygnet Bay's front beach. The facility will operate as a pearl oyster hatchery during the season (Oct - Apr) and double up as both wet and dry laboratory space for KMRS research teams. Including a range of holding tanks with ocean-fed through flow water systems, as well as an algal culture lab and microscope areas, the facility represents an ideal workspace for scientists operating out of the station. Due to be **operational for 2013**, we welcome feedback from anyone who has expertise in sourcing

lab-ware or knows of any gear that could be attained for the facility. Please [contact us](#) to discuss further.

We are also pleased to announce that the *Escapade*, our 12m catamaran (Seawind 2005), will now be **based permanently at the Bay**, operating in local waters year-round. As such, the *Escapade* is now available for charter in Kimberley waters in the shoulder seasons and the wet, making it the ideal live-aboard for studying patterns and shifts associated with the Kimberley's dramatic seasonal changes. We welcome any enquiries for research hire, particularly during the "off-season" (Oct-Apr), as the vessel is currently heavily utilized for tourism during the dry (Mar-Sept). Please [contact us](#) for further information on the vessel and research charter packages.



HAPPY 1st BIRTHDAY! It is now a year since the first KMRS newsletter was published in August 2011. All previous editions of the KMRS news are available for download off our [website](#).

For the latest news and happenings at KMRS and along the Kimberley coast, please follow our online news feed
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