



KIMBERLEY MARINE

RESEARCH STATION • CYGNET BAY

MARCH

2012

THE CORAL ISSUE

What's been happening at KMRS in March?

March 7 -16: UWA PhD candidate Sana Dandan returns to KMRS: Sana Dandan from the UWA Ocean's Institute & School of Earth & Environment returned to KMRS for her 4th trip to the Station as part of her PhD study on coral growth. With TC Lua approaching the Kimberley/Pilbara coast and weather conditions quickly deteriorating at Cygnet Bay, Sana still managed to fit in a highly productive and exciting week both in and on the water. Thank you Sana for another great week at the Bay, we look forward to seeing you again soon.



March 10-11: AIMS Researcher Dr Andrew Heyward visits KMRS: KMRS had the pleasure of hosting Dr Andrew Heyward from the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) briefly to study near-shore coral colonies in the lead up to a predicted spawning event. Observations on gamete development were made for a number of common species as Dr Heyward kindly shared his expertise with the KMRS team, enabling them to continue with on-going observations of this nature. KMRS extends a huge thank you to Andrew for visiting and sharing his wealth of knowledge with us.



March 10-14: Broome nature photographer Peter Strain returns to KMRS: Local Broome-based nature photographer Peter Strain (Giant Tides Photography) returned to KMRS to spend time photographing the intertidal coral reef habitat around Cygnet Bay. Peter managed to compile some great macro footage of mature gametes in corals soon to spawn as well as remarkable time-lapse footage of Shell Island disappearing underwater with the spring tides. Thank you Peter for sharing your talents and flair with us once again. To check out Peter's work, please visit <http://gianttides.com.au/site/>.



Storm over Shenton Bluff,

Wednesday 14/3/12

Tropical cyclone Lua: TC Lua made landfall at Pardoo (450km south of Broome) on Saturday March 17, 2012 as a severe category 4 cyclone. TC Lua brought hurricane force winds and heavy rain to the north-west in the lead up, with conditions at Cygnet Bay worsening during the week including heavy rain (180mm between Thurs-Sat) and strong winds. With Broome on cyclone (yellow) alert, businesses shut as winds exceeded 90km/h. Fortunately, with only a skeleton crew remaining on-site, KMRS remained relatively unscathed by the wild weather with no damage to infrastructure or injury to personnel.



Photo of the month

Nudibranch pair,
Shell Island reef,
Cygnet Bay
C Adam
20.03.12



Photos 1 & 2: gametes ready for spawning (P Strain); 3 & 4: corals during spawning (T Cockram)

CORAL SPAWNING Saturday March 17, 2012

A mass-spawning event was predicted for corals in the Kimberley region between March 15-17, 2012; 7-9 days after the full moon. With the expert guidance of AIMS scientist Dr Andrew Heyward, the team at KMRS was keen to observe and document any possible spawning activity on local coral reefs during this time. To do so, sample colonies of Faviid, Mussid and Acroporid corals at a near-shore reef close to the station were checked for gamete maturation in the field, with colonies exhibiting mature gametes collected and set up in tanks at KMRS.

On the evening of Saturday 17 March, 2012, in the midst of TC Lua, numerous Faviid, Mussid & Acroporid corals were observed spawning shortly after sunset as slicks of brightly coloured spawn filled tanks over the next hour.

We are very excited to have witnessed the event and look forward to tracking future spawning events for local coral species. This observation represents a positive start to on-going studies of near-shore spawning activity and is significant in that it represents the first time near-shore corals have been scientifically documented for spawning activity along the mainland Kimberley coastline.

The team at KMRS would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Dr Heyward for generously sharing his expertise with us. As always, huge thanks to the crew at Cygnet Bay for their assistance and ever-enduring encouragement of marine research ventures at the Bay.

What's ahead at KMRS?

April 2012 – a mass-spawning of corals is predicted to occur in mid-April throughout the Kimberley region following a minor event that occurred in March.

April 2012 – Murdoch University PhD candidate Alex Brown will be visiting KMRS for a month to begin studies on local near-shore dolphin species. This will be the first of 2 month-long trips to the station for Alex's team in 2012.

With Easter just around the corner, we would like to wish all our supporters a safe and enjoyable holiday.

For the latest news and happenings at KMRS and along the Kimberley coast, please follow our online news feed www.kmrs.com.au



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