



KIMBERLEY MARINE

RESEARCH STATION • CYGNET BAY

APRIL
2012

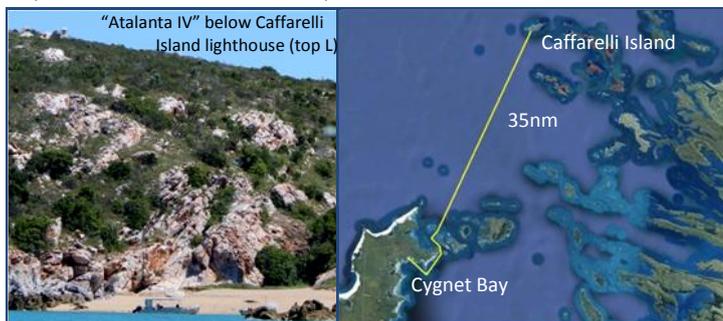
What's been happening at KMRS in April?

April 15 – May 14: Murdoch University inshore dolphin research team at KMRS: A team of researchers from the Murdoch University Cetacean Research Unit (MUCRU) has arrived at KMRS for the first of two month-long field trips to the area in 2012. Lead by PhD candidate Alex Brown aboard the Murdoch Uni research vessel “*Blue Steel*”, the team are surveying the coastline around the northern areas of the Dampier Peninsula over the month period, targeting Australian snubfin (*Orcaella heinsohnii*), Indo-Pacific humpback (*Sousa chinensis*) and bottlenose dolphins. Despite a windy patch, the team have had a productive time in the field to date, including multiple sightings of a pair of false killer whales (*Pseudorca crassidens*) at Cygnet Bay. We look forward to more exciting sightings in the second half of the trip! If you are keen to contribute to Alex's work, any sighting reports and/or footage of dolphins in the area are always welcome. Please email alex.brown@murdoch.edu.au or research@cygnetbaypearls.com.au for a sightings report sheet and further information. Follow Alex's online field blog by clicking on this [link](#).



(Top – bottom): “Blue Steel” ready for launch; false killer whales at Cygnet Bay (Alex Brown, Murdoch Uni)

April 15: KMRS coordinates personnel transfer from Caffarelli Island:



The KMRS vessel “Atalanta IV” travelled to Caffarelli Island to assist with a personnel transfer from a Monash Uni/WA Department of Environment & Conservation seabird and rat survey at Adele Island. Once the surveys were completed at Adele Island, the DEC team member was transferred to Cygnet Bay before returning to Broome via road while the rest of the team were able to continue on to Browse Island for further seabird surveys. The 70nm return trip took four hours.

April 15–16: Soft coral spawning at Cygnet Bay:

A mass-spawning event was predicted for corals in the Kimberley region between April 14–16; 7 – 9 days after the full moon on April 7 and a month after the previous hard coral spawning event in mid March. With advice from AIMS coral expert Dr Andrew Heyward, the team at KMRS was keen to observe and document any possible spawning activity on local reefs during this time. To do so, hard and soft corals at 4 near-shore reefs close to the Station were checked for gamete maturation. Colonies exhibiting mature gametes were collected and set up in tanks at KMRS for observation over the predicted spawning period. Interestingly, it was the soft corals (order *Alyconacea*) rather than the hard corals (order *Scleractinia*) which looked most likely to spawn. On the evenings of Sunday 15th & Monday 16th April, soft corals were observed spawning shortly after sunset as slicks of spawn floated to the water's surface over the next hour. We are excited to have observed this event after the hard coral spawning that took place in March. We look forward to tracking future spawning events for local coral species and adding to the current knowledge base on reproductive patterns of Kimberley corals. KMRS would once again like to extend our sincere thanks to Dr Heyward for generously sharing his expertise with us and to the crew at Cygnet Bay for their on-going support and assistance.



Soft corals during spawning in tanks at KMRS, April 15–16, 2012 (A McCarthy)

What's been happening in the water lately?



False killer whale, Cygnet Bay
Alex Brown, Murdoch Uni

With the soft coral spawning occurring mid-month, life on the reef has been a hive of activity. A solitary manta ray created quite a spectacle as it fed on the water's surface each afternoon during the spawning period. The pair of false killer whales has been spotted on three separate occasions around the Bay during the month, including a surprise appearance which thrilled punters on a pearl farm patrol tour.

April has been a month of changing seasons with the dry season prevailing south-easterly winds now set in. The water temperature is dropping and nights are cooling off with ambient temperatures as low as 14°C.



Manta ray feeding at Cygnet Bay
Eric Teichrib



Photo of the month

Juvenile barramundi cod
(*Cromileptes altivelis*)
Riddell Point reef, Cygnet Bay

Tony Cockram
April 14, 2012

What's ahead at KMRS?

April - May 2012 - Murdoch University PhD candidate Alex Brown will continue studies on local near-shore dolphin species before heading to the Cambridge Gulf in mid-May. Alex will be back at KMRS again later in the year to continue studies.

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

www.kmrs.com.au



KIMBERLEY MARINE
RESEARCH STATION • CYGNET BAY

+61 8 9192 4999 +61 8 9192 4810

✉ research@cygnetbaypearls.com.au

www.kmrs.com.au