



waves

Newsletter of the Reef HQ Volunteers Association Vol 26, No 3, April 2012



"Big girl" released & transmitting

Follow her movements at www.seaturtle.org

The Great Reef-urbishment

Reef HQ Aquarium is currently investing significant funds in building new exhibits and upgrading existing exhibits to enhance visitor satisfaction and provide visitors with a better understanding of the efforts being made by GBRMPA and other agencies to protect the Reef.

A 25% discount on admission is proposed for the length of the construction period which could be 12 weeks, i.e. early April to the end of June. By providing visitors with an advertised up-front entry discount and advising them at point of entry about the construction works and tunnel closure, we will minimise the number of disgruntled guests. The discounted entry would include all general admission levels but there will be no discount on members' entry, however, as our members' rates are already so heavily discounted. Stay tuned for further information!

Rainforest Tree exhibit

A large Rainforest Tree is under construction as part of the Wetlands exhibit near the Waterview Cafe. The exhibit will highlight the connections between the terrestrial environment and the wetlands adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef. We anticipate that the construction will be completed in late April and the exhibit will be fully stocked soon afterwards.

Conservation of the Reef starts right at the heads of the rivers, in our rainforests and hinterlands. Conserving habitats and biodiversity in these regions and all the way down the waterways to the reefs is integral to preserving the health of the reef.

Continued on page 7

Roving Reef HQ

Julie Spencer

Hello volunteers,

The **volunteer training course** has begun with 44 new recruits in training. The course is running along nicely, thanks to the enthusiastic band of volunteers that come along each night to help. You may notice some new faces around Reef HQ Aquarium as the new recruits come in to complete their passports and worksheets. Please make them feel welcome.

It has been a very busy **cruise ship season** with numerous large group tours coming in. Thank you to everyone who has given extra of their time to provide tours and assistance. It is lovely to have volunteers come in on these busy days to share their knowledge, enthusiasm and customer service with our visitors.

Things are ramping up in the public area. Work has commenced on the colours tank exhibit and on the rainforest exhibit. This month maintenance works will commence on the tunnel. See the article in this issue of Waves for more information. By the middle of this year, we will have some exciting new displays to be able to show to our visitors.

At our last volunteer monthly meeting on Tuesday 6 March, Fiona Merida who is the Industry Engagement Manager for the GBRMPA Tourism and Recreation Group gave a very informative presentation on the **Eye on the Reef** program. Thanks, Fiona, for sharing your enthusiasm with us.

The next **volunteer monthly meeting** is on Tuesday 3 April at 7.00pm. Our guest speaker is GBRMPA Chief Scientist David Wachenfeld. David will be speaking about his recent visits to remote Raine Island. Hope to see you there!

We have **released a number of green sea turtles** from our Turtle Hospital this month including the large female affectionately known as "**Big Girl**". Big girl has been fitted with a satellite transmitter and you can follow

her movements at

http://www.seaturtle.org/tracking/index.shtml?tag_id=108471

The **school holidays** are nearly upon us again. The team from "Hands-On Wildlife" will be joining us once again and will be bringing some of the rainforest's most spectacular animals to Reef HQ Aquarium including a bright green tree python, cute and cuddly gliders and Australia's longest snake, the Scrub python. Both Rainforests and Reefs face many of the same threats from human activities and during the program we will be explore how we can protect these two very important ecosystems and the connections between them.

We will also be running our Sharks and Rays school holiday program. We will have a trail around Reef HQ Aquarium, and craft activities will include making a hammerhead shark hat, a stingray, a sawfish and a shovel-nose ray. The activities will run from Saturday 31 March to Sunday 15 April from 10.00am to 12.00pm daily in the conference and training centre. We would love the assistance of volunteers with the kids' activities. Please sign up on the whiteboard if you are able to help.

Julie

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

'Happy Birthday' to the following volunteers who will be celebrating during April – **Dorothy Baillie, Victoria Bradford, Roslyn Browne, Peter Chambers, Alison Downes, Karen Green, Paula Greenslade, Lyn Hastings, Michelle Keyes-Methering, Taylah Locastro, Jo Lockwood, Cecelia Slade, Julie Spencer, Malcolm Tattersall, Alexandra Ullrich and Brendan Walsh.**

To anyone we may have missed and to all celebrating during April, 'Have a wonderful day followed by a wonderful year.'

Save these dates!!

Reef HQ Volunteers' 25th Anniversary Celebrations **14th-16th September 2012**

This year the Reef HQ Volunteer's Association turns 25 years old. To celebrate, we are planning a weekend of activities:

Friday 14th September - Evening Event: Volunteer 25th Anniversary Cocktail Function

Saturday 15th September - Day Excursion: Snorkelling & Reef Walk at Magnetic Island

Sunday 16th September - Volunteer Annual General Meeting and Workshops

We are currently working out the details of costs and venues and will provide this information as soon as it becomes available. In the meantime we wanted to advise volunteers of this weekend so that you can block it out in your diaries.

Wanted: Historical Photo's of Volunteer Events. We are planning to have a display of photographs of volunteers in action from various events. If you have any that you could provide copies of please give them to Julie with labels if possible of when and where they were taken and what the event was (electronic copies preferred).

Wanted: Old styles of volunteer shirts & volunteers to model volunteer uniforms in a "Uniform Parade" Do you have any of the older uniforms of the Volunteer's Association? In the past we have had several uniform shirts from the dark green version of the early years, to the dark blue version of the nineties, to the two-tone blue of the early 2000's to our current shirt. We are looking for these shirts and for volunteers to model these shirts as part of a "Volunteer Parade" which is being planned as part of the activities for the Friday evening event on the 14 September.

Are you an amateur film maker? Do you have video editing skills? We are seeking the assistance of someone to help us to put together a collation of movies that have been filmed of volunteer activities at the Aquarium. We are hoping to play this at the volunteer event on Friday 14th September.

If you would like to help with any of the above, see Julie or a member of the Volunteer Management Committee for more information.

Volunteer Monthly Meeting - Tuesday 3 April @ 7.00pm

Guest presenter:

David Wachenfeld of GBRMPA on his experiences at Raine Island

Raine Island is a coral cay located about 620km North West of Cairns, off the Cape York Peninsula. It is the largest known rookery for green sea turtles and is also a significant rookery for seabirds. Raine Island is a National Park and due to its ecological significance, is not accessible by the general public.

David Wachenfeld is the Chief Scientist for GBRMPA and the Director of the Communications and Policy Coordination, Science Coordination Group. David has been fortunate to have visited Raine Island twice last year. At this monthly meeting he will be sharing his experiences, and some wonderful photography, of the island with us.

President's report



Hi, everyone,

As you can see this is a cross section of the new volunteers - and what a great group. As you may not know but we had to cancel our meeting on Tuesday night due to the weather so there is not a lot to report.

This year is our 25yr celebration so planning is underway so watch this space. Work is about to start on the tunnel so we may have to explain what is going on. Also the colours tank is being rebuilt with a snorkel platform for looking from above - look at the signs it will tell all, also look for our tree going up near the wetlands so all is going ahead.

Well that's it from me - yours in volunteering,

- Ian

Making waves

You know you are always welcome at Reef HQ but if you want to spend some spare time elsewhere you could consider an Earthwatch expedition like the one described on this page, or a trip to Borneo like the one Krystal has just returned from (yes, I'm envious!) or, much closer and easier, a look at the temporary show at the Museum next door. 'The Butterfly Man of Kuranda' showcases the spectacular insects collected by FP Dodd between Townsville and Cairns a century ago. Even if you think you know our insects you will be amazed.

Across town, you could visit *The Coral*

Triangle, an exhibition by Jürgen Freund who is a wildlife photojournalist based in Cairns and works with his wife Stella.

In May 2009, the duo set out on an 18-month photographic expedition for World Wildlife Fund (WWF) across the Coral Triangle, visiting some of the most remote and breathtaking habitats on earth. It's at the School of Creative Arts e-Merge Media Space, Main Campus, CU, from April 10 to May 4 (8.30am – 4pm Mon – Fri).

Always lots to do – enjoy it!

- Malcolm

Earthwatch Daintree Expedition

Covering over 1200 square kilometres, the Daintree is one of the most unique areas in the world, where two World Heritage Sites intersect – the Great Barrier Reef and the Daintree Rainforest.

Mangroves protect coral reefs by filtering runoff from storms and floods and absorbing a vast amount of greenhouse. Sadly, they are now among the most threatened habitats in the world. Volunteers are needed to help scientists collect information that will be used to effectively manage these ecosystems.

Exploring the river by boat and on foot, volunteers will film the shoreline, measuring habitats and conducting field biomass assessments. During the trip, volunteers will also meet with the Kuku Yalanji people at Mossman Gorge, who will describe traditional uses of rainforest plants and explain the history and significance of cave paintings.

The Daintree's Hidden Coastline expedition is running its **first ever team on 25 May**.

Total cost for the ten days is \$2,200 which covers all food, accommodation, activities and a contribution to funding the research. To book or make an enquiry, please contact Kirsty Richardson at krichardson@earthwatch.org.au or visit earthwatch.org.au

Not shivering now

Malcolm Tattersall



An audience-eye view of Karina in action

Anyone who has met Karina de Luca, our new Reef Guide/Education Officer, will have noticed her accent and it was the first thing I asked her about when we spoke last week. She is from Canada, she said - Montreal, in fact. Her surname is courtesy of an ancestor, three or four generations back, who emigrated from Italy to the USA and then moved North, while the form of his name (the 'De') suggests a connection, now sadly lost, to royalty or the nobility.

Karina completed a degree in Agricultural and Environmental Science in Montreal, majoring in wildlife biology, and worked with whales and songbirds in Canada and the US for a couple of years before coming to Australia for a Master's in Environmental Science in Lismore, NSW. Her special projects there were on the sightings, strandings and nesting sites of sea turtles in NSW, and whale entanglement on the East coast of Australia.

She obtained her permanent residency after completing a Grad Dip in science education, then spent two and a half years with

Australian Seabird Rescue at Ballina and two years relief teaching in schools while waiting, she says, for a job exactly like the one she has at Reef HQ.

We talked about our likes and dislikes in the teaching situation. I admitted to loathing PowerPoints, as a presenter, as much as audience members do. In turn, Karina admitted to a dislike of microphones and cameras, which makes her willingness to let me and my camera join her Turtle Tour a very generous act.

Is she happy? "Of course: ideal job." And doesn't miss the Canadian climate? "You've got to be kidding! I came to Australia just to get away from the cold!" Or words very much to that effect.

"The things that I do miss," she added, "are my family and friends and downhill skiing. I also came to Australia extend my education and to find work in my field, which I am very passionate about.

"I would love to spend the rest of my life working with marine life and teaching people, especially my son, all about the beauty of the ocean. I can already see his interest and excitement, especially when it comes to turtles (just like his mommy!!!)."

Keeping an Eye on the Reef

The latest Current Conditions update (6 March 2012) is now available on the GBRMPA [website](#):

In brief, Summer conditions have been relatively mild. During the second half of February, sea temperatures rose above average monthly temperatures throughout most of Great Barrier Reef but so far they have remained below levels known to trigger widespread coral bleaching.

No cyclones have yet crossed the Great Barrier Reef region, and observed flood plumes have been relatively minor.

Accordingly, participants in our [early warning system](#) have not reported any significant incidences of bleaching, disease or other symptoms of widespread coral stress.

Forecasts of conditions for the Great Barrier Reef provided by the [Bureau of Meteorology](#) indicate that the risk of a widespread and severe coral bleaching event is relatively low. While [La Niña](#) conditions are starting to

weaken, they are forecast to prevail for the duration of summer. Under these conditions, BoM advise a moderate increase in the likelihood of above-average rainfall and cyclone activity.

If you have any questions please contact us at eyeonthereef@gbrmpa.gov.au or Ph: (07) 47500762

Leopard Shark mid-March update

Emily Bone, Aquarist



It's a boy! 4/29 soon after hatching

Whew! It's been a very busy six weeks but all our eggs have hatched and we now have seven little pups eating well and growing like crazy. They are all getting about 3cm longer every week and most of them have started to develop spots. It's really quite amazing how fast they change colour. They will be big enough to go in the Discovery Lagoon in about a month's time.

The two new pups are 4/24 and 4/29. 4/24 is another female who got off to a slow, shy start but is now racing after food when she smells it. She looks almost the same as 4/19 but has longer stripes on her pectoral fins. Our last pup to hatch was 4/29 and much to our delight it's a boy! He has a funny curly moustache pattern and a set of three spots down his back. These new pups will be off display in their incubation tank until they are big enough to put in the Discovery Lagoon. If you'd like to see them I'd be more than happy to give you a tour.

I have had to move the two one-year-olds out of the Discovery Lagoon. It seems that one day a switch flips in their heads and they realise they can eat their tank-mates, which was rather unfortunate for the blue spot lagoon rays and shovelnose rays. The shovelnoses didn't get too badly beaten up so they are still on display, but the lagoon rays are having a little holiday in the CRE refugia on the roof while they heal up. I expect that I'll be able to put them back in two or three weeks. They don't seem to be fazed by their injuries and continue life as usual, chasing each other round and round in circles at the slightest provocation.

Back to the one-year-old leopard sharks: 3/1 (male) is in the CRE and 3/10 (female) is off display in the Predator Tank refugia on the roof. Keep an eye on 3/1 because his colour will change quite a bit over the coming weeks. Because of the lighting in the Discovery Lagoon he is very pale – compared with big 1/3 in the CRE he looks like a little ghost! Exposure to natural sunlight will make him darken up substantially. The plan is to keep him at Reef HQ and send off both one-year-old females (3/2, in Shards, and 3/10). This will probably happen in the next couple of months.

This year will certainly be a challenge – looking after seven pups will keep me very busy!

Reef-urbishment, *continued from page 1*

The Rainforest Tree exhibit will house a number of new frog species and a beautiful Green Tree Python. The Green Tree Pythons are a mainly-arboreal species found in the top part of Queensland and also in Indonesia. They are popular in captivity because of their striking green colour as an adult.

Tunnel Repair

After 25 years, one of the acrylic sections in our unique viewing tunnel has started to relax in the middle and is losing its nice curve. It therefore needs to be replaced and, because it is not possible to drain our main coral reef exhibit, a large dam called a "Coffer Dam" has to be constructed to hold the water back during the process. This is a very complex engineering operation and will take the skills of a number of specialised contractors, structural engineers, commercial divers and an acrylic installer.



Photos from our 2002 refurbishment showing coffer dams in place

It has taken years of planning and coordination to bring together the highly specialised professionals and products from

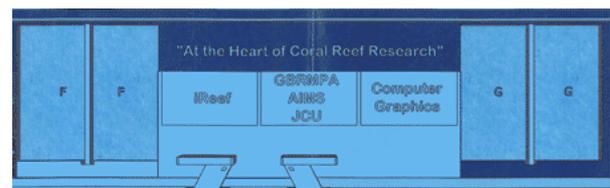
all around the world. The acrylic is moulded in Thailand and the special sealant comes from Japan. There are very few contractors in the world who have the skills to install large aquarium panels but, luckily for us, one of those few people is from Australia.

While this complex process takes place, the viewing tunnel will have to be closed. The project is expected to commence on the 10th April with the tunnel closure expected to take place on the 23rd April for a short period of time.

Please note: more accurate dates will be provided closer to the commencement date.

The project is expected to be completed by the end of June/early July 2012.

Reef Research exhibit



A collaborative project between Australian Institute of Marine Science, James Cook University and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority that will showcase the latest in Reef Research. Due for completion by 30 June 2012.

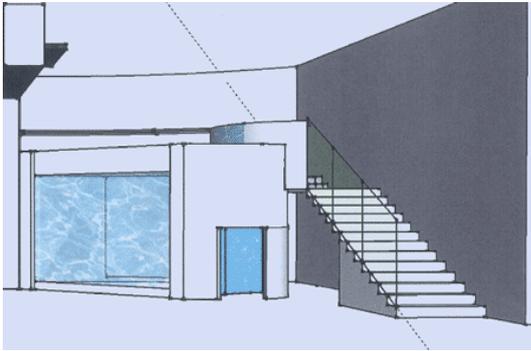
Solar Power project

Work on one of the county's biggest commercial solar power projects will soon commence at Reef HQ Aquarium. The 153kw peak photovoltaic system, nearly 100 times the size of a typical domestic installation, will produce an average of 706 kWh/day and an estimated total of 258 MWh/yr. The installation will be on the roof of Reef HQ Aquarium and neither construction nor operation will affect our visitors. The project is expected to be completed by May 2012.

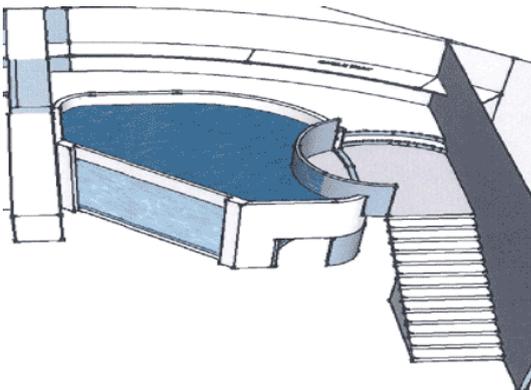
New Colours exhibit

Our exciting new "Colours" exhibit is designed to showcase the beautiful colours of the corals and reef fish that attract people to

visit the Great Barrier Reef. This larger and improved exhibit will have a wide viewing window to provide a better view of the beautiful corals and fish housed within.



The exhibit will include a view of the behind-the-scenes plant room, a staircase taking visitors to an elevated viewing platform for a "snorkellers' view" and a crawl-through tunnel that will allow children to have their very own viewing window. This project is expected to be completed by the end of June 2012.



Time-lapse cameras

Jim Tregonning, our Exhibits Officer, thought that it would be good to record the progress of our major works and has installed time-lapse cameras where feasible - one in the tunnel and one on the roof to track the window replacement, one above the mural behind the freshwater tank to follow the construction of the rainforest display, and one on the wall looking towards the old colours tank.

These three shots are from that last camera and show a little of what has been happening behind the blank plywood wall.

The camera output can be presented as stills, as here, or as (very jerky) movies. We are hoping to be able to use it to show visitors the progress of our refurbishments.



Removing the base of the old colours tank



Heavy equipment removing the old floor



Laying new concrete on the new, stronger, foundations.

Visitors' comments February - March

Again the superlatives flowed with the words 'beautiful' and 'friendly' being commonly used. Some of the creatures singled out for special mention were the sharks, octopus (one person wanting more of them), crayfish, wrasse, 'blue fish with the orange tail' and of course the turtles. Some people were just content to comment on the 'fantastic variety of fish'.

Some of the countries visitors came from included the USA, Ireland, Canada, Germany, Peru, New Zealand, Scotland; Netherlands, Norway, England, Thailand, Austria, Fiji, France, Vienna and Finland.

- 10/02/12 Good to come back after many years. Thanks to the staff for the information and friendliness.
- 11/02/12 It was the most awesome aquarium I've ever been to in my life!
- 13/02/12 Beautiful place with very nice staff. Thanks.
- 15/02/12 Spell binding, thank you to friendly, informative volunteers and staff.
- 15/02/12 Playground b*** brilliant (in large block type).
- 17/02/12 Needs more hands-on things but otherwise still amazing.
- 18/02/12 Loved it ... but an octopus in a big tank would be good.
- 18/02/12 Awesome! The fish projection on the carpet was cool.
- 20/02/12 Such strange and beautiful specimens!
- 22/02/12 It was great – proud to be a Townsvillian.
- 25/02/12 I liked the underwater camera.
- 25/02/12 Great to see feeding time.
- 25/02/12 It was awesome, like so totally dude the situation!
- 26/02/12 Exceptional – all the better for the expertise, knowledge and energy of our terrific guide Lyn.
- 29/02/12 Fantastic Day. The speaker at the predator show (10.30am) was awesome! As was the diver. Thank you for a brilliant day ☺
- 02/03/12 An excellent experience to equal any aquarium in California.
- 02/03/12 Words cannot explain how wonderful this place is. We will definitely be coming back.
- 06/03/12 A group of Townsville students attended here. We as a group enjoyed this amazing experience. Thank you ☺ TGS
- 9/3/12 Is my friend Annika's birthday. Weren't just happy about concession for german student cards but also about the birthday song during the "Turtle Talk"! It was great, thanks!
- 11/3/12 My son enjoyed himself – very educational and entertaining. Great work!!
- 15/3/12 Fantastic work with the sea turtles. Liked the leopard sharks and all the other fish.
- 17/3/12 Wow – best display I have seen. The kids were mesmerized. Thank you for ending our holiday on a high note. Kate, Aaron, Ebony & Tristan.
- 19/3/12 Very informative and great set up. Volunteers you do a great job. Thank you!

What's Happening in April

Day	Date	Event	Time
Tuesday	3 April	Volunteer Monthly Meeting: David Wachenfeld talking about Raine Island	7pm
Wednesday	4	Volunteer Training #5 – Discover Invertebrates	5.30pm (set up) 6pm – 9pm
Friday – Monday	6 - 9	EASTER	
Sunday	8	School Group: Mt Isa Flexible LC *15 High School: Intro to GBR	11am – 12.30pm
Wednesday	11	Volunteer Training #6 – Discover Marine Reptiles	5.30pm (set up) 6pm – 9pm
Friday	13	School Group: Good Start Vacation Care *20	9.30am – 10.30am
Saturday	14	Group: Frontiers *10 +1 (No tour required)	10.30pm – 11.30pm
Wednesday	18	Videoconference to Burlington School District *100 Year 6	9am – 10am
Wednesday	18	Volunteer Training #7 – Communication & the Audience	5.30pm (set up) 6pm – 9pm
Thursday	19	School Group: Longreach School of Distance Ed *15 +2 Year 5: General Tour + Food Chains	9am – 10.30am
Thursday	19	Videoconference to a school in Seoul, Korea	12noon – 12.30pm
Friday	20	Videoconference to Carter County Schools *80 (Parent Teacher Night): Intro to GBR	8am – 9am
Saturday	21	Videoconference to Nth Carolina: Intro to GBR	9am – 10am
Wednesday	25	ANZAC DAY	
Thursday	26	Videoconference to Malaysia	11am – 11.30am
Thursday	26	Videoconference to Malaysia	1pm – 1.30pm
Monday	30	Sleepover: Southern Cross *24+3 <i>TBC</i>	7pm – 8.30am (Tues)
Tuesday	1 May	Videoconference to Brady PS, Nebraska: Intro to HS Science	10am – 11am
Tuesday	1	Volunteer Monthly Meeting- Krystal Huff Aquarist	7pm
Tuesday	1	Sleepover: Southern Cross *28+3 <i>TBC</i>	7pm – 8.30am (Wed)
Wednesday	2	Volunteer Specialist Training in Interpretation & Education #1	5.30pm (set up) 6pm – 9pm
Thursday	3	Sleepover: Southern Cross *28+3 <i>TBC</i>	7pm – 8.30am (Fri)