Project Seahorse
ADVANCING MARINE CONSERVATION

PSNews

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Kids can make a difference, too!

Some of the most heartwarming stories at Project Seahorse involve kids from around the world. In both recognition and thanks, we would like to share these special stories with you.

Tessa Exley, age 11, is one of our most dedicated supporters. She has been raising money since the age of five for her annual donation.

This summer Tessa is proudly coming to visit Project Seahorse, as this year marks her target goal of $1,000 over the years. Tessa has also donated her beautiful artwork, featured on our 2006 holiday card. Kudos, Tessa, for many years of support and generosity!

Khushi Kapoor has been raising money and producing artwork for Project Seahorse .

With Khushi Kapoor, it all started with a box of Guylian Chocolates that her aunt sent to her in India. While enjoying the seahorse-shaped chocolates, Khushi noticed the conservation message on the box.

With the help of her family, classmates and teacher she raised a great donation to the Project Seahorse Foundation in the Philippines. With Khushi's support, the Philippines team hopes to start an education program for children.

Each week we receive many beautiful drawings and thoughtful letters from children who are saddened or worried by the continuing endangerment of seahorses.

The Project Seahorse team thanks each individual who has made their own special contribution in protecting the future of seahorses.

The latest addition to the team

We are delighted to announce that Amanda Vincent, co-founder and director of Project Seahorse, has adopted a beautiful Chinese girl, Andaya Yulei Jane Vincent.

In early July, Amanda traveled to China to meet Andaya, and they are now beginning their life together in Vancouver. A heartfelt congratulations from all of us, Amanda and Andaya!

Amanda is currently enjoying her parental leave with Andaya and will be coming back to work later in the year.

Andaya with her new mother and grandmother on the Great Wall of China.

Farewell, Keith

After almost seven years with Project Seahorse, Keith Martin-Smith left in June to take up a position as Antarctic Marine Conservation Scientist with the Australian Antarctic Division.

Keith has been a tremendous asset to Project Seahorse. Let us take stock of the state of the Australian syngnathid conservation and some significant achievements over Keith's period with us:

- Syngnathids are now fully protected in all Commonwealth waters and in four states.
- We completed and published a systematic survey of syngnathid trade showing that the only significant international trade was in dried pipehorses and live seadragons.
- Specific measures were introduced in Queensland to address pipehorse bycatch in shrimp trawls.
- We developed and validated a method of tagging and identifying seahorses and seadragons, and used it successfully to determine life-history parameters for a number of species.
- We conducted long-term population monitoring of two species of seahorse in Tasmania and New South Wales. We showed significant declines in some local populations in Tasmania unrelated to direct human exploitation suggesting that some species may undergo "boom and bust" cycles.
- We provided assessments of the impacts of fisheries and aquaculture on wild syngnathid populations to state and federal governments.
- We used genetic techniques to demonstrate genetic monogamy in a seahorse with social polygamy.

All-in-all, the conservation situation for syngnathids in Australia is positive, providing an excellent example of how flagship species can affect marine conservation in general.

We thank Keith for all his hard work, and wish him the best of luck in his new position.

New PS Publications

Curtis, J.M.R. 2006. A case of mistaken identity: skin filaments are unreliable for identifying *Hippocampus guttulatus* and *Hippocampus hippocampus*. *Journal of Fish Biology* 69(6):1855-1859.

Vincent, A.C.J., and H.J. Koldewey. 2006. An uncertain future for seahorse aquaculture in conservation and economic contexts. Pages 71-84 in Primavera, J.H., E.T. Quimitio, and M.R.R. Eguia (Editors). *Proceedings of the Regional Technical Consultation on Stock Enhancement of Species Under International Concern*. Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center. 13-15 July 2005. Iloilo, Panay, Philippines.

Curtis, J.M.R., J. Ribeiro, K. Erzini, and A.C. J. Vincent. 2007. A conservation trade-off? Interspecific differences in seahorse responses to experimental changes in fishing effort. *Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems* 17(5): 468-484.

Samoilys, M.A., K.M. Martin-Smith, B.G. Giles, B. Cabrera, J.A. Anticamara, E.O. Brunio and A.C.J. Vincent. 2007. Effectiveness of five small Philippines' coral reef reserves for fish populations depends on site-specific factors, particularly enforcement history. *Biological Conservation* 136(4):584-601.

Wilson, A.B. and K.M. Martin-Smith. 2007. Genetic monogamy despite social promiscuity in the pot-bellied seahorse (Hippocampus abdominalis). *Molecular Ecology* 16(11):2345-2352.

Comings & goings

Comings...

Marine Medicinal Conservation Officer **Joy TL Lam** manages Project Seahorse's Hong Kong program on fostering marine conservation in traditional Chinese medicine. Joy holds a BSc in earth sciences from Hong Kong University, and an MSc in biodiversity, conservation, and management from the University of Oxford. Joy is based at Hong Kong University.

Genevieve Layton-Cartier, an undergraduate student in natural resources conservation at UBC, is joining Project Seahorse for the summer with an NSERC Undergraduate Summer Research Award. She is assisting PhD candidate Natalie Ban with mapping marine human stressors in British Columbia.

Goings...

Jade Barnaby finished her work with the UBC Sustainable Seafood program.

After having completed her PhD with Project Seahorse and working with us as a research associate, **Janelle Curtis** is now a research scientist with Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Congratulations, Janelle!

Jeffrey Wielgus, former research associate with Project Seahorse, has moved on to work with the Sea Around Us Project.

Lana Gunnlaugson is wrapping up her administrative assistant duties this summer. She will be working as the assistant for the Marine Conservation Program at the David Suzuki Foundation.

After almost five years with Project Seahorse, operations assistant **Shannon Charney** is leaving us in September to start a new position with the University of British Columbia's human resources department. Good luck, Shannon!

Other announcements

Congratulations, **Sara Lourie**, for bringing into this world a healthy baby boy, Oliver Rowan Laxer.

Small-scale fishers adopt agenda to save reef in central Philippines

Sixty representatives of small-scale fishers from several municipalities met for the first time in May to discuss conservation and sustainable management of the Danajon Bank. While most of these fishers share common traditional fishing grounds, never before had they tried to build consensus to address challenges affecting both the Danajon Bank and the fishers who depend on it.

The delegates urged national and local policy-makers to enact laws that ban the transport, possession, and sale of fertilizers and other agro-chemical products that contain nitrate in granular form.

Nitrate is the main raw material in improvised dynamite used by blast fishers. Such laws will help eliminate blast fishing, which remains rampant on the Danajon Bank.

The small-scale fishers also called on all local governments within the Danajon Bank to provide regular financial and technical support to strengthen the management of existing marine protected areas (MPAs) in the region.

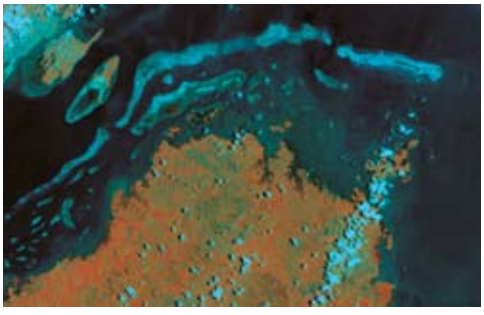
Danajon Bank fishers have long shared a common natural resource. Now they share a political agenda as well.

With technical assistance from the Project Seahorse Foundation for Marine Conservation, the Kapunongan sa mga Mananagat sa Danajon (KAMADA) facilitated the agenda-building exercise through a series of consultative workshops with fishers.

In 2006, the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund named KAMADA a Conservation Hero (see story in PS *News* Vol. 4 No. 1).

Danajon Bank MPA managers conference

Marine protected area (MPA) managers from 13 community-based MPAs on the Danajon Bank met in June 2007, facilitated by the Project Seahorse Foundation for Marine Conservation in the Philippines.



The Danajon Bank

At the conference, MPA managers shared experiences working with effective management strategies. They identified key solutions to tough issues of operations and sustainability of community-based MPAs. Together with representatives from local governments and key provincial and national officials, the participants forged a commitment to sustain partnerships and cooperation to advance MPAs in the Danajon Bank.

Participants agreed to meet again in August 2007 to identify concrete collaborative actions towards MPA management.

Traditional Chinese medicine outreach project

Project Seahorse's marine medicinal conservation officer, Joy Lam, is now working on a collaborative project with the Ocean Park Conservation Foundation, Hong Kong. The outreach program will engage the public in appreciating use of marine species in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). The program educates participants on the source of TCM, and which marine animal sources are vulnerable to over-consumption. The program also provides information and display materials to several key stakeholders, including traders, and academic departments.

This autumn, trained narrators will visit schools and community centres in Hong Kong to deliver interactive talks. They will have display boards, specimens, information booklets, and a video of the process of making marine species into TCM.

"The program is designed to encourage participants to make informed decisions when consuming TCM," says Joy, "and to spread the message of marine conservation to the wider public."

Chocolates and seahorses together at ZSL London Zoo

Exploring the Guylian seahorse exhibit.

Guylian, the World's Favourite Belgian Chocolates, sponsored an exhibition at ZSL London Zoo from April 2 to June 1. The exhibition showcases the 13 best images from the "Seahorses of the World" photo competition, illustrating the beauty of these extraordinary animals.

Amateur and professional photographers from around the world contributed images of seahorses in their natural habitat. This exhibition will travel to aquariums in Europe and North America over the forthcoming year.

In other Guylian news...

Heather Koldewey, Lucy Woodall, Iain Caldwell and his assistant Blake McDonald provided the Guylian annual sales conference with a unique underwater experience. Held in Faro, Portugal, about 30 Guylian staff from Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand had the opportunity to snorkel with seahorses in the Ria Formosa lagoon. Unfortunately, only one pregnant male seahorse was found, showing some of the challenges of working with these animals!

And Whitbread plc is holding its annual headquarters' staff event for 1200 people in September. Staff will be receiving a box of Guylian chocolates and after hearing about the relationship with Project Seahorse, Whitbread is producing cards to promote our marine conservation work as part of the event.

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Snake pipefish numbers explode in NE Atlantic

Project Seahorse PhD student Louise Blight recently flew to Scotland, with the help of British Airways, for a symposium on pipefish, prompted by unusually high numbers of pipefish in the northeast Atlantic and North Sea since 2004. Reports abound of seabird chicks choking on bony pipefish or starving in nests littered with pipefish carcasses. The meeting produced a set of research questions focused on identifying the causes of the explosion.

Life at sea in Mexico

UBC-based PhD candidate Sarah Foster has returned from her nine-month field season in Mexico. Sarah's study of the Mexican shrimp trawl fishery in the Gulf of California, will help to determine impact of non-selective fisheries on small fish species, and develop tools to reduce the impacts. In Mexico, Sarah worked onboard commercial shrimp trawlers to collect the information needed for her PhD.

Sarah loved life at sea, and was overwhelmed by the generous hospitality of the fishers. It was challenging, however, to observe first-hand the incredible diversity of marine life brought up with the shrimp – ranging from hundreds of small fish species, to sharks, rays and sea turtles.

The experience strengthened her resolve to find pragmatic solutions for this fishery, one of great economic importance to Mexico. Stay tuned for an update on Sarah's work in a future issue of PS *News*.