



KIMBERLEY MARINE

RESEARCH STATION • CYGNET BAY

AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2020



Cygnet Bay from a helicopter!

IN THIS EDITION...

We have had an exciting few months with a trip from AIMS, Harvest Party and a busy few weeks working on the CRC, coral and rock oyster projects. The weather is starting to heat up but tourism remains as busy as ever.

STAFF NEWS

Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm has had a busy few months of tourism with people flooding in from all around WA. In mid September we celebrated our annual Harvest Party which brings all staff and visitors together for a fun weekend. Stranded in Style was a massive success, with all guests loving the opportunity to wear some very special pearls in Cockle Cove. Saturday night saw live music, dancing, an oyster eating competition and great food prepared by our chefs.

Welcome Hamish and Emily!

As we say goodbye to Lizzy and Lily, we welcome Hamish and Emily to the team! Lizzy is heading to Port Hedland to work for the Care for Hedland program and Lily is off to Byron Bay to complete her Divemaster. Both Hamish and Emily are from Western Australia and studied in Perth. Hamish has recently graduated from Edith Cowan University with a Bachelor of Science majoring in Marine Science and Environmental Management. Whilst at KMRS, he would like to broaden his research skills and knowledge of the aquaculture industry as well as use this opportunity to explore the Kimberley. Emily completed an Bachelors degree in Marine Science and Conservation Biology at the University of Western Australia then went on to complete a Masters of Marine Biological Sciences at UWA looking at intertidal reef communities. She is looking forward to learning more about the tropical marine environments of the Kimberley.



Lizzy and Liam getting into the water to retrieve and replace the coral tiles at Catamaran Bay

NEWS FROM THE RESEARCH STATION

Coral monitoring

The interns have conducted the field work and analysis for both our current coral monitoring programs- coral frames and coral transects. The coral frames aim to identify where coral polyp recruitment is the most successful across four different sites within the bay whilst comparing seasonal recruitment. The September coral recruitment was found to be relatively similar to August and the overall recruitment at this time of the year is reasonably low.

The coral transects decipher significant changes that occur within our local intertidal zone by taking photos along three transects monthly. This program has been running over several years and allows us to see whether the environment is changing dramatically.



Lizzy looking at a quadrat for the plastic survey (left), and a coral polyp as part of the ongoing coral frame monitoring (right).

Rock Oyster Recruitment

The interns have just completed the monthly rock oyster recruitment project which compares three different sites along the intertidal zone at Cygnet Bay front beach and their recruitment success throughout the months. September saw very little recruitment with only barnacles and limpets found on tiles which had been out for three months.

Annual Plastic Survey

In August, we did the annual plastic survey which looks at three different sites and the debris build up over a year at these sites. Luckily, we found very few plastic with only part of a panel, a hand fishing line and a perfume bottle retrieved.

Monthly Sampling

The monthly sampling in August saw an increase of 1.3°C on average water temperature across all sites compared to this time last year. This great difference from last year reflects the warmth of the past couple of months compared to usual. Average turbidity has increased since last month but remains on par with 2019 data. One of our sites, South West Mooring was found to have quite significant differences to other sites when it came to temperature, pH and turbidity.

Oyster health in August saw a variety of characteristics with some exhibiting severe health concerns and others being very healthy.



The items we found during the annual plastic survey

AROUND THE FARM

Spawning & hatchery operations

For the past month, our interns and technician, Garata have been busy with first operations of the CRC cohort from 2018. We are collecting a variety of data on this group of oysters to determine what saibo is favourable for pearl development.



Lizzy working on one of the coral frames to retrieve the tiles



The site of the coral transects

A trip from AIMS!

The Australian Institute of Marine Science came to visit us for a week during September. KMRS were lucky to have a day out on the water with them to learn about their research and be involved in their field work.

AIMS were doing two major projects with us which consisted of transects using cameras along the reef in Catamaran Bay and a fish biomass study. It was an incredible opportunity to gain an insight into AIMS field techniques and learn about the variety of projects they are currently working on.

Weather

We have had a very hot couple of months at the farm! September has seen most days reaching highs of 35°C or above which is quite a bit warmer than usual at this time of the year. The humidity is starting to settle in but we are yet to see rain.

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Kimberley Marine Research Station



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Mangroves at Catamaran Bay