



# KIMBERLEY MARINE

RESEARCH STATION • CYGNET BAY

**JUNE – JULY 2020**



A classic sunset shot from the Lookout!

## IN THIS EDITION...

Tourism begins to pick up again after the COVID-19 lockdowns, we welcome new interns and continue with our research projects, whilst looking forward to doing some more coral monitoring and begin the seeding of pearls in the coming weeks.

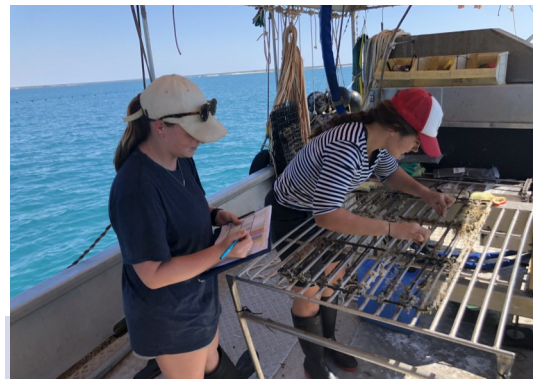
## STAFF NEWS

After a few quiet months during the COVID-19 lockdown, the Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm is finally reopened to the public and guests. Although there are less staff than usual, we are happily running tours and our restaurant and accommodation is once again open!

In early June, we had a pregnant Humpback whale and 5 pilot whales come into the bay for a visit and another humpback and calf were spotted in late July.

### ***Hello to our new interns!***

We also welcome two new interns, Lily and Lizzy, who have both come from the East Coast of Australia! Lily majored in Marine Biology at the University of Melbourne. She is excited to learn more about tropical marine environments, after mainly focusing on temperate marine environments in chilly Melbourne. Lizzy also studied Marine Science at Griffith University in the Gold Coast. She is a passionate scuba diver and keen to explore the remote and tropical environment of the Kimberley.



Our newest interns, counting oyster spat!

# NEWS FROM THE RESEARCH STATION

## *Coral monitoring*

The ongoing coral monitoring projects continue. Our recent analysis of our coral recruitment tiles showed less recruits found, possibly due to the cooler water temperatures. In August, we will be conducting coral transect surveys and hope to see some healthy corals around our survey sites!

These studies create baseline data to monitor changes in health in relation to season, ocean temperatures and weather events.



Lily, working hard to clean a rock oyster stand (left), and a coral recruit tile as part of ongoing coral monitoring (right).

## *Rock Oyster Recruitment*

Our interns are currently in the process of collecting data for our monthly analysis of our rock oyster program! As well as giving the project a clean up, we have seen fewer recruitments this month, which could be due to cooler water temperatures, similar to our coral monitoring program.

## AROUND THE FARM

### *Spawning & hatchery operations*

Throughout July, our technicians have begun seeding both wild shell and our oysters from the March 2018 spawning! Our team is busy picking up oysters from the farm and dropping them back off after the seeding operations. We continue to monitor the health of the oysters, post-operation, for sickness indicators. At the end of July/beginning of August, we begin virgin operations and seed new oysters! Hopefully we have success and see some beautiful pearls come out of this season.

### **Monthly Sampling**

Our interns conducted the monthly sampling which looks both at the water conditions and oyster development at different growth stages.

We have found that there is less phytoplankton diversity and yield compared to earlier in the year. This could be due to the change in water temperature and stronger winds at the moment resulting in higher turbidity.

The water temperature has consistently been decreasing since January as expected in the cooler months. The water temperature currently is an average of 25.5 degrees compared to its peak of 31 degrees in February.



Oysters in the hatchery, ready to be pegged and operated on.



# MORE AROUND THE FARM

## *Weather*

The last 2 months have come with some very nice weather, with the nights getting down to as low as 11 degrees! The winds have picked up a bit over the last few weeks, making some days difficult to get out on the boats. Nonetheless, we have been enjoying this weather and the great water visibility that comes with it.



Wild flowers in the bush surrounding the farm.



One of our interns holding a harvested pearl. The oyster was re-seeded and taken back to the farm.

## *Tourism finally back on!*

Western Australia has done extremely well throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, meaning that the government has been able to ease restrictions and allow tourism to reopen, which is especially important in our Kimberley region!

We are excited to see more guests arriving more frequently and have been welcoming families on school holidays escape to the Kimberley's for some warm days and cool evenings under the stars.

We hope to see more people arriving over the rest of this season!

Pearls of Australia have also been posting various demonstrations on Thursdays @ 9am AWST! It's a great way to see how we operate and get an inside look into pearl farming and our surrounding operations! Check it out, FB: Pearls of Australia.

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Kimberley Marine Research Station



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One of the pearl farm boats in Cockle Cove.