



# REEF WATCH VICTORIA

## NEWSLETTER

November 2011

### NEWS

#### MAKING REEF WATCH NEWS THIS MONTH

Get ready to count fish.....the Great Victorian Fish Count is on again Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>.

- ▶ More details on page 2.

Northern Pacific seastars reported in Westernport and a New Zealand seastar found at Point Hicks Marine National Park

Divers please be on the lookout for these seastars...

- ▶ More details on page 3

#### Nature Notes:

The Piers are popular for Reef Watch divers

- ▶ More details on page 4&5

#### Notice Board:

AMSA presents a Sustainable Seafood Forum at Melbourne University...

- ▶ More details on page 4

### MYSTERY CREATURE

Mystery Creature no. 24



Photo: Julian Finn

**Clue:** A very boring mollusc. Mornington.

**Solution Mystery Creature 23**



Photo: Julian Finn

This is the claw from a Giant Spider Crab, *Leptomithrax gaimardii*

In older males, the claw fingers cross over rather than meet.

These crabs are normally found scattered throughout Port Phillip Bay in low numbers, as well as offshore in Bass Strait. From April to June, they gather together in large numbers for reasons that aren't exactly known, but it is likely to be related to breeding behaviour. Individually, the crabs have a body around 20cm long with legs up to 40cm long. The crawling carpet of crabs can reach up to one metre deep, in places being up to 10 crabs high.



Julian Finn with Spider Crabs in Port Phillip Bay

## FROM PAGE 1

## MAKING NEWS...

**The Great Victorian Fish Count is on again - Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>**

**Where will your club, friends group or school count fish in 2011?**



Photo: David Bryant ©

Last year, more than 400 volunteer divers and snorkelers from schools, marine community groups and dive clubs took part in the annual Reef Watch event.

The census aims to build long-term information on Victoria's temperate reef fish. In particular we are looking at the types and numbers of fish that are found in different marine habitats. We are also looking for

changes in species distributions over time and if some species are extending or changing their range.

An extra challenge this year will be to find the newly protected Blue Groper. Victoria is the only state that has both the Eastern and Western Blue Groper. Although the species is quite territorial and has a distinct home range, their numbers and distribution are poorly understood. It would be great to see divers putting more dots on the map for this iconic species during the count.

It will also be interesting to see if the Blue-Throat Wrasse can keep its top position as the most widely distributed and abundant fish in the count. It is closely challenged by the Six-spined Leatherjacket as the most sighted and abundant fish in the annual event.



Photo: Julian Finn: A male Blue Throat Wrasse and Old Wife.

With pressures on the marine environment continuing to build, the Great Victorian Fish Count is invaluable to building knowledge, awareness and understanding of changes occurring in the marine environment.

**To participate in the Great Victorian Fish Count please contact Wendy at [info@reefwatchvic.asn.au](mailto:info@reefwatchvic.asn.au) or a participating dive club operator or Friends Group.**

**Participating Groups details can be found at <http://www.reefwatchvic.asn.au/GVFC.htm>**

## Invasive seastars found in Victoria...

In recent weeks divers have reported the Northern Pacific Seastar, *Asterias amurensis* at San Remo and the New Zealand Seastar, *Astrostele scaber* at Point Hicks Marine National Park.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment have mobilised divers to remove the seastar at San Remo.

<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/about-dse/media-releases/northern-pacific-seastars-found-in-western-port>

It would appear the New Zealand 7 armed seastar *Astrostele scaber* (see image below) is on the increase in numbers, potentially competing with our native 11 armed seastar (*Coscinasterias muricata*) which looks quite similar in colour and size but is obviously distinguished by the number of arms. These also look very similar when smaller.

**If you see *Asterias amurensis* outside of Port Phillip or the NZ seastar in or close to a Marine Protected area please report it to Reef Watch and we will pass your report onto Parks Victoria and DSE. Please record the location, date, time and depth details and if possible take a photo.**



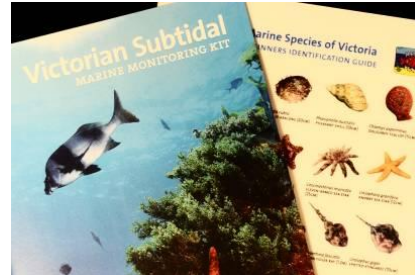
Photo: Don Love, *Astrostele scaber* . Point Hicks MNP

The new monitoring program 'Feral or In Peril' is now underway. If you would like to monitor for marine pests or species of

conservation concern then please contact Reef Watch to obtain a monitoring kit or for further information.



Or if you would like a Reef Watch monitoring kit to monitor species at your favourite dive site with your buddy or dive club please contact Reef Watch.



[info@reefwatchvic.asn.au](mailto:info@reefwatchvic.asn.au)

## NATURE NOTES SURVEYS

**David Brand**

Flinders Pier

26/09/2011

**AM: 10.16.(Scuba, 50mins).Temp: 13.  
Vis. 5m**

**Mammals:** Sub-adult Australian Fur Seal

**Fish Species:**

(1-5): Blue Weed Whiting, Magpie Perch, Rough Leatherjacket, (6-20) Bluethroat Wrasse (all female), Tasmanian Blennies, Juvenile Bullseyes.

**Inverts:** (1-5) Short-tailed Ceratosoma,

(6-20) Red Swimmer Crabs, Featherduster worm, 11 arm seastar, Red Tulip Sea squirt (>20) Blue Grape Seasquirt, Orange&White Anemone, Biscuit Seastar,  
**Marine Pests:** None Reported.

**Sylvia Buchanan**

Blairgowrie Yacht Squadron

20/10/2011

**Am: 9.00 (Scuba, 60mins)**

**Vis: 5m**

**Temp: 17**

**Fish Species:** (1-5): Pygmy Leatherjacket, Globefish, Pot Bellied Seahorse, Sparsely Spotted Stingaree, Southern Fidler Ray,  
**Inverts:** (1-5) Short-tailed Nudibranch, Made-up Phyllothemium, Decorator Crab, Red Bait Crab, Sand Crab, Biscuit Seastar, Knobby Seastar, Golf Ball Sponge, Rose Sponge, (6-20) Doughboy Scallop 11arm Seastar  
**Marine Pests:** Northern Pacific Seastar (10)

## NOTICEBOARD

**The Australian Marine Sciences Association presents a **free** public forum**

**What is Sustainable seafood?**

**Open to anyone with an interest in the future of our fisheries.**

**Time:** Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> Nov. 6:30-8pm

**Venue:** Sydney Myer Asia Centre

University of Melbourne.

Cnr Swanston st & Monash Rd.

Parkville.

**To register your interest visit**

<http://sustainableseafood.eventbrite.com>

Regards Victorian Committee AMSA.



**AMSA Victoria**  
The Australian Marine Sciences Association  
Victoria branch presents a free public forum:

### What is sustainable seafood?

Join us for an engaging discussion about the sustainability of your seafood.  
Open to anyone with an interest in the future of our fisheries.

Our panel includes:

**Dr Trevor Ward**  
*Fisheries scientist, Greenward Consulting*

**Greg Jenkins**  
*Director of Aquaculture Research and Development, Challenger Institute of Technology, WA*

**Renee Vajtauer**  
*Project Officer, Seafood Industry Victoria*

**Oliver Edwards**  
*Melbourne chef and co-creator of [www.goodfishbadfish.com.au](http://www.goodfishbadfish.com.au)*

**Venue:** Sidney Myer Asia Centre,  
University of Melbourne,  
cnr Swanston St and Monash Rd, Parkville

**Time:** Thursday, 10 November 2011,  
6.30 - 8.00 pm

Please register your interest at: <http://sustainableseafood.eventbrite.com>

You can also discover sustainable seafood choices via The Australian Marine Conservation Society iPhone App

[http://sustainableseafood.org.au/Sustainable-Seafood-Guide-Australia.asp?active\\_page\\_id=695](http://sustainableseafood.org.au/Sustainable-Seafood-Guide-Australia.asp?active_page_id=695)

## 'Beneath Our Bay' co- author, John Gaskell releases new Marine Id App. 'Sea Life Victoria'

John Gaskell, Co-author of the fabulous book 'Beneath our Bay', has released a new Iphone/Ipad application to assist you to identify our marine species.

Sea Life Victoria is an informative guide to over 200 of the marine animals that live in Victoria's southern habitats. This application includes a collection of beautiful wild animal photographs all captured in their natural environment. Features Include:-High quality professional photographs of over 200 species in their natural environment. Tap to view in full screen.-Informative text on each species relating to size, description, habitat, and interesting facts.-Ability to swipe through each species.-Browse function to view species in their animal groups.-A slide show accompanied by animal common names and scientific names. © 2011 John Gaskell



Link: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sea-life-victoria-marine-identification/id451465175?ls=1&mt=8#>

### New Website:

#### Explore Underwater Victoria

Dive in to Explore Underwater Victoria to discover what lies beneath the waves of our magnificent marine waters, without leaving home.

The **Explore Underwater Victoria website** features a great collection of underwater photographs, videos, educational resources and group contacts.

Explore hidden underwater wonderlands of brilliantly coloured sponge gardens, rich forests of seaweed, sunlit seagrass meadows and sandy underwater plains.

Meet some of the 12,000+ different types of plants and animals that make their home along our coast, from the cool, nutrient-rich waters of the south-west to the warmer waters of the east.

Explore Underwater Victoria is an initiative of the Victorian National Parks Association with support from Reef Watch Victoria and Museum Victoria.

*It's funded by the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country, Coast Action/Coastcare, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority.*



#### Explore Underwater Victoria

<http://www.exploreunderwatervictoria.org.au/>

**Request:** We would love to hear from you if you would like to contribute images and/or footage to the Explore Underwater Victoria website.

We are especially interested in obtaining underwater and coastal images from areas in the far east and west of Victoria.

Please contact Wendy @ [info@reefwatchvic.asn.au](mailto:info@reefwatchvic.asn.au)