The Gippsland Lakes

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What Lies Beneath



Our 'Friends' group has a long association with both marine managers, agencies and other interest groups.

Evé Our Lakes Gippsland Lakes

We have developed a partnership with the East Gippsland CMA through the 'Love Our Lakes' program, which has allowed us to under-take a Citizen Science initiative over the past two years. *The project is funded by the Victorian Government for the health of the Gippsland Lakes.* Our aim is to catalogue the marine life of the Gippsland Lakes.



The Gippsland Lakes is one of the largest coastal lagoon systems in Australia, consisting of three main lakes.



Lake Victoria - covering 114 square k.m.'s.



The vast majority of 'locals' & visitors, see only what is above the surface when observing the Lakes'.





Our Group is looking at what lies beneath.

Being a series of lakes, that is fast changing to a saltwater system, we had only a basic idea of what we would find.

Juv. Eastern Blue Groper -Achoerodus viridis

Common Stinkfish - Foetorepus calauropomus

To date we have catalogued 127 fish species that reside part or full-time in the Gippsland Lakes.

Juv. Snapper - Pagrus auratus

Red Morwong - Cheilodactylus fuscus

In Winter when the temperature gets below 10 degrees the fish life in the Lakes' disappears. But other life still goes on. Smooth Toadfish - Tetractenos

Pot Belly Seahorse - Hippocampus abdominalis

The only hardy species observed in the upper-reaches of the Lakes' are the PotbellySeahorse, Smooth Toadfish and Pipefish.

Spotted Pipefish - Stigmatopora argus glaber

But as the Lakes' waters warm-up everything changes.

Not only the fish but also the invertebrates, seem to cover all available space. To date we have catalogued in excess of 250 invertebrates.

Pink Hydroid - Pinauay crocea

Bryzoan - Bugula dentata

Many of them are small but colourful.

Southern Baeolidia - Baeolidia australis

New Zealand Placida Placida aoteana

We are finding that our all-year round surveying is paying off. As many of the species we are recording may only appear for a short duration of time.

Ascidian - Ciona intestinalis

Codium - Codium fragile

There are two un-foreseen observations that we have recorded. The first being the common occurrence of marine pest animals & plants.

Luckily most of them seem to be rather benign in their impacts on the Lakes'.

Boodlea's Sea Slug - Ercolanid boodleae

Asian Date Mussel - Musculista senhousia

HOWEVER

There is one species that has a potential to seriously affect the Gippsland Lakes.

The Northern Pacific seastar -Asterias amurensis, has previously shown in Port Phillip, what damage it can inflict.

We feel that this could be devastating for the bio-diversity of the Gippsland Lakes.

At least on this occasion we are now 'older & wiser' so with on-going monitoring and early action, the Port Phillip experience can be minimised.

The second group of 'new' residents, is what we believe is a result of climate change. These new-comers are termed, 'out- of-range' species.

Exquisite Sand Goby - Favonigobius exquisites

Blacksaddle Goatfish - Parupeneus spilurus

Stripey - Microcanthus strigatus A number of species we were surprised to discover in the Gippsland Lakes, as they were well out of their range.

Striped Sea Pike - Sphyraena obtusata

Gunther's Butterflyfish -Chaetodon guentheri

Blue-lined Philinopsis - Philinopsis speciosa

These species and some others we have found, come from areas to the far north of their 'new' home in the Gippsland Lakes.

It could be concluded that our own Gippsland Lakes are a bellwether, for a more dynamic shift in our marine environment.