



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Heritage

# Oceans Action Bulletin

**An Update from the Marine Division of the  
Department of the Environment and Heritage**

**24 March 2006**

This Bulletin updates you on Australian Government activities in the marine environment. Please forward to any interested parties. For further information or to unsubscribe from this Bulletin, please email [samantha.meyer@oceans.gov.au](mailto:samantha.meyer@oceans.gov.au)

## **Australian Marine Data Contributions Growing**

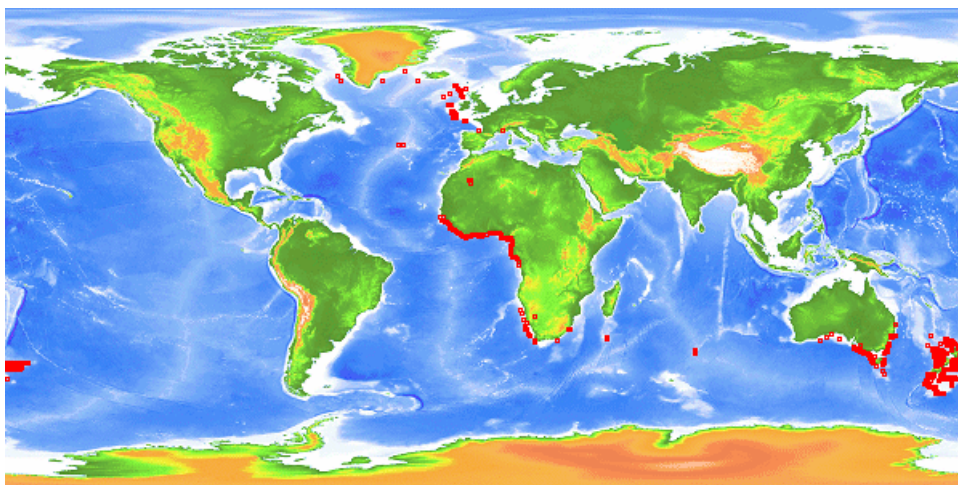
Australia's link to a worldwide database of marine species and their distributions has been boosted with the commitment of data from two major organisations.

Australian Antarctic Division and Museum Victoria have agreed to contribute their data to the Ocean Biogeographical Information System (OBIS), the online data tool that supports the global Census of Marine Life project.

Information provided by these two organisations includes distribution of whales, penguins, micro-organisms and seabirds. Their involvement in OBIS follows a recent call for expressions of interest to Australian data custodians to contribute their data to the network.

OBIS contains information on marine species and where the species have been reliably sighted. Globally, OBIS now links 97 databases containing 9.2 million taxonomic records (species, date, latitude, longitude, and depth found).

OBIS enables users to bring together data on marine species from a range of sources to gain a picture of global marine species distribution.



*Sample species distribution map, from the OBIS Australia website*

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An Australian OBIS node was launched late last year, a partnership of the Department of the Environment and Heritage (through the National Oceans Office) and the CSIRO, which hosts the network at its Marine and Atmospheric Research laboratories in Hobart.

*The Australian OBIS node is online at: <http://www.obis.org.au/>  
More information on the international Census of Marine Life is available at:  
<http://www.coml.org/>*

### **Marine Protected Areas Consultation Extended**

Developing the final boundaries and zoning for a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the south-east Marine Region is progressing well with a range of formal and informal submissions received by the Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell.

The proposed areas to be protected were released publicly for consultation in December 2005.

The commercial fishing industry, the conservation sector, coastal communities, recreational fishermen and the oil and gas industries were all represented in submissions.

"I'm impressed by the way stakeholders have been working to advise the Government on options for a final network of Marine Protected Areas that protect biodiversity with the least possible impact on industry," he said.

The fishing industry has developed its own recommendation for change.

Senator Campbell said there had also been a strong commitment to change and a positive contribution from stakeholders.

"Our key industry stakeholders, including the fishing industry and the oil and gas industries, have been constructive participants in the consultation process to find ways of reducing industry impacts without taking away from conservation outcomes," he said.

"To allow the process with stakeholders to reach a conclusion, I am extending the consultation timeframe by two weeks."

Senator Campbell said the MPA network would be finalised in time to fit with the structural adjustment process for Commonwealth fisheries reforms in the region, which would begin with a licence buyout that covered the impacts of the south-east MPAs and fisheries reforms.

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“By finalising the network by mid-April, those affected will have sufficient time to consider both the fisheries reforms and the marine protected areas in deciding whether they will participate in the licence buyout,” he said.

Following the release of the final proposed network, a formal public consultation will commence as the Government moves to declare the MPAs as Commonwealth reserves under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

For more information on the candidate network, including the ASIC map, or to download submissions, visit <http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/southeast/index.html>

### **From ship to shore – celebrating Australia's coastal and maritime heritage**

Australia's maritime history will be the focus of a \$495 000 campaign to mark the significant heritage places that dot our coastline and tell the story of Australia's early history.

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, said the coastal and maritime theme would highlight Australia's affinity with the ocean and encourage a better appreciation of Australia's early maritime heritage links.

“Australia's 25 000 kilometre coastline is rich in natural, historic and Indigenous heritage treasures yet its heritage values are not widely known,” Senator Campbell said.

A key component of the focus on coastal and maritime heritage is the Australian Government's sponsorship for the *Duyfken* replica voyage around Australia, which will give Australians a once in a lifetime opportunity to experience a working 16th century vessel.



*The replica “Duyfken”*

For further information on Australia's heritage, visit [www.heritage.gov.au](http://www.heritage.gov.au)

### **Shark Bay World Heritage Centre**

A visitor centre, which opened this month, will provide insights into the values of one of Australia's marine-focused World Heritage Areas.

The Shark Bay Interpretive Centre was developed in partnership between the Australian and Western Australian Governments.

The Shark Bay World Heritage Area has played a significant role in the development of our nation, associated with almost four hundred years of charted exploration of our coastline.

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The site is even more significant from an international perspective, as a hotspot of biological diversity that reveals information about the earth's evolution, through the site's extraordinary 'living fossils' - the stromatolites of Hamelin Pools that represent the first forms of complex life on earth.

Without the stromatolites that formed more than 3 500 million years ago, life on earth as we know it, could never have existed. The stromatolites excreted oxygen into the otherwise lethal atmospheric mix of methane, nitrogen and carbon dioxide.

Today Shark Bay is home to some of the world's best examples of biodiversity, including dugongs, several turtle species, humpback whales and the world's most diverse range of seagrasses.

Australia has a total of 16 places on the World Heritage List. For more information go to <http://www.deh.gov.au/heritage/worldheritage>

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