

In this issue:

- [MANGROVES MAY HAVE BUFFERED EFFECTS OF CYCLONE](#)
- [INDIA'S FIRST MARINE RESERVE](#)
- [FISHING BOATS SUBSIDIZED FOR VIETNAM'S STRUGGLING FISHERY](#)
- [SEA CUCUMBER POACHING ON THE RISE IN TORRES STRAIT](#)
- [ENDANGERED SEA BIRDS UNABLE TO FIND MATES](#)
- [MEDIA REVIEWS](#)
- [UPCOMING EVENTS](#)

MANGROVES MAY HAVE BUFFERED EFFECTS OF CYCLONE

Cyclone Nargis tore across the Irrawaddy Delta in Myanmar (also known as Burma) on May 2 and 3. With 120-mph sustained winds, the canal waters whipped into a 12-foot wave that surged 25 miles (40.2 kilometers) inland and left approximately 2.4 million people badly affected, according to the United Nations.

The official death toll stands at 77,738 dead, with 55,917 missing. Humanitarian and aid agencies are deeply concerned that death tolls could rise exponentially as many of the victims still do not have adequate food, water, shelter and medicines.

Almost 95 percent of houses and buildings in seven townships near the delta were destroyed when the cyclone made landfall the evening of May 2. Ken Reeves, director of forecasting for AccuWeather.com said, "The Irrawaddy Delta is huge, and the interaction of water and land lying right at sea level allowed the tidal surge to deliver maximum penetration of sea water over land."

Besides being a low-lying area close to the sea, a majority of the land along the delta has been cleared of mangroves and converted into rice paddies and shrimp farms during the past decade. This industrial development has removed what scientists say could be nature's best defense against storm surges.

"If you look at the path of the [cyclone] that hit Myanmar, it hit exactly where it was going to do the most damage, and it's doing the most damage because much of the protective vegetation was cleared," Jeff McNeely, chief scientist for the International Union for Conservation of Nature, told the Associated Press.

"It's an expensive lesson, but it has been one taught repeatedly," McNeely said. "You just wonder why governments don't get on this."

Source: National Geographic News/ Associated Press

Read More:

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2008/05/080508-AP-the-perfect_2.html

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/12/world/asia/12myanmar.html>

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/UKNews1/idUKBKK14044220080506>

INDIA'S FIRST MARINE RESERVE

Collaborative research between Mumbai-based scientists and local community leaders will result in the first co-managed Marine Protected Area (MPA) in India, according to a Hindustan Times story that ran May 6. The site will be located at the Agatti atoll, the westernmost island in the Lakshadweep archipelago, approximately 311 miles (500 kilometers) from mainland India.

Research efforts at the site began in 2005 to preserve the giant clam, a globally threatened invertebrate found in the waters near the atoll, and have since expanded to include conservation for baitfish and coral reefs.

Deepak Apte, principal scientist and head of conservation at Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), said, "We explained to the community, who are all fisher folk, the importance of conservation from the point of view of their livelihoods."

Now, three years later, the Agatti leaders are the reserves biggest proponents.

India's Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is finalizing the details of the MPA, but the organization assured a Hindustan Times reporter that they are deeply committed to pursuing the management plan submitted by the Agatti community.

Source: Hindustan Times

Read More:

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/StoryPage.aspx?id=f13eeb91-92ab-47c9-8059-8e1cab54023f>

FISHING BOATS SUBSIDIZED FOR VIETNAM'S STRUGGLING FISHERY

Amidst high fuel prices and nearshore fishery collapses, the Vietnamese government has said they will subsidize fishermen who buy new boats.

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture Nguyen Viet Thang told reporters the subsidies will only apply to deep-sea fishing boats with engines greater than 90-horsepower, to encourage fishers to move beyond near coastal areas where fish stocks are the most depleted. Boats that meet the government criteria can receive \$90 million dong or approximately \$5,600 US in subsidies.

"The aim is to encourage fishermen to upgrade their equipment for offshore fishing," Thang said. "The second objective is to help fishermen to overcome the rising price of fuel."

Interestingly, the Vietnamese government's 2006 to 2010 plan calls for a reduction in its fishing fleet by 40,000 boats. But the new subsidies appear to run counter to that objective.

Michael Akester, an advisor with Denmark's government aid organization who helped Vietnam develop its coastal management strategy, said the easiest short-term reaction is subsidies. Akester continues, "But the long-term effects of that are that you will be artificially keeping people in a business that is no longer viable."

Source: Deutsche Presse-Agentur

Read More:

http://www.scandasia.com/viewNews.php?coun_code=vn&news_id=4225

<http://voanews.com/english/2008-05-08-voa15.cfm>

SEA CUCUMBER POACHING ON THE RISE IN TORRES STRAIT

Illegal fishing in the Torres Strait, the body of water between Australia and Papua New Guinea, has skyrocketed from three boats apprehended in 2007 to 15 this year, the Australian government said.

Australian Fisheries minister Tony Burke said 10 of the 15 boats were illegally harvesting sea cucumbers, a slow moving, cylindrical invertebrate prized in Asian cultures as a delicacy food and natural remedy.

The vulnerability of the sea cucumbers and poaching threats were discussed when Burke made a two-day visit to Thursday Island earlier this month. Both Australian and PNG fishing authorities have agreed to hold five coordinated marine patrols this year to help enforce fisheries regulations.

Source: Asia Pulse

Read More:

<http://www.nit.com.au/breakingNews/story.aspx?id=14750>

ENDANGERED SEA BIRDS UNABLE TO FIND MATES

In an effort to rescue one of the world's most endangered seabirds from extinction, scientists are working to establish a breeding colony for the magenta petrel.

The rapidly dwindling species has only eight to 15 known breeding pairs left on the planet. This is an 80 percent decrease in population during the past 25 years. To increase population and density scientists are breeding the rare petrels and transporting them to a reserve on New Zealand's Chatham Island.

The magenta petrel was rediscovered on Catham Island in 1978, 111 years after it was first collected at sea.

Source: Indo-Asian News Service

Read More:

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Earth/Seabirds_mateless/articleshow/2995081.cms

http://in.news.yahoo.com/indiaabroad/20080429/r_t_ians_sc/tsc-critically-endangered-seabirds-unabl-1bdf89b.html

MEDIA REVIEWS

Sharks of the Open Ocean: Biology, Fisheries and Conservation

By **Merry Camhi, Ellen K. Pikitch, Elizabeth A. Babcock, 2008**

For the first time, a single volume explores the numerous threats facing one of the world's most illusive apex predators, the pelagic (open ocean) shark. The book details the large threats of commercial fishing bycatch (unintended) catch and the more targeted fishing practice of shark finning, while offering a large dose of cutting-edge science and outlining policy goals to help these imperiled species. A must-have for the serious shark enthusiast and any student embarking into the field of shark biology.

The Wild Ocean: America's Parks Under the Sea

By **Sylvia A. Earle and Wolcott Henry, 1999**

Explore America's most spectacular marine reserves and natural heritage sites under the sea with renowned marine biologist and author Sylvia Earle as your guide. Join Earle and her colleagues on a submarine ride throughout 12 of America's undersea preserves.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 8, 2008. World Ocean Day. Join the Ocean Project and 750 partners in 70 countries in spreading the word about our ocean's health. This year's theme is "Helping Our Climate, Helping Our Ocean." For more information, please see:

- <http://www.WorldOceanDay.org>
- <http://www.theoceanproject.org/wod/2008events.php>

July 7-11, 2008. The 11th International Coral Reef Symposium in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, United States. For more information, please see:

- <http://www.nova.edu/ncri/11icrs>

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