



Ben's Bites!

Welcome to all 'i sea, i care' Ambassadors for 2010



My name is Ben and this is the first of many newsletters you will receive this year. Our aim is to spread the stories of Victoria's coast!

In this edition we focus on our magnificent marine mammals.

Victorian's tend to know about marine mammals such as whales, dolphins and seals, but do they live around here???

Most of us would be left gob smacked by the amazing animals swimming along our coast at the moment.

So take the time to read the stories of our coast, There are surprises in every edition.

See you in the sea!

Ben

Stop Press

Ben has just taken leave due to the birth of his first child!

He thanks you for your well wishes and understanding in his absence.

No food for blues

Every summer Victoria's coast plays host to an extraordinary event, and this year is no different.

Around November each year blue whales, the biggest animals to have ever lived on the planet, start arriving off our coast. They first show up in places like Port Fairy, Portland and Cape Bridgwater.

So why do these ocean travelers visit Victoria?

Each summer the water of the deep southern ocean starts flowing from Antarctica, making it's way to our coast. It travels thousands of kilometers and picks up nutrients and bits of food along the way.

As the current nears Victoria it is forced upwards by enormous underwater sea cliffs and canyons, bringing the food to the surface.

Tiny animals feed on this banquet and the population of animals like krill explodes.

Birds, fish, dolphins and whales all follow as the



Photo - Pete Gill

amount of food increases.

The current, called the Bonney Upwelling lasts from November until around Easter. However this season the current seems to have slowed.

When the current is not pushing into the vast underwater sea cliffs the food does not come to the

surface and the krill don't multiply. No krill means no food for blue whales.

The lack of flow in the upwelling was worrying scientists.

Blue whale researcher Pete Gill recently phoned the Dolphin Research Institute with a sighting of a blue whale in early Feb 2010 giving hope that the upwelling is gaining momentum.

As the upwelling picks up we expect to see the blue whales feeding near Cape Otway, Torquay and as far east as Cape

Schank.

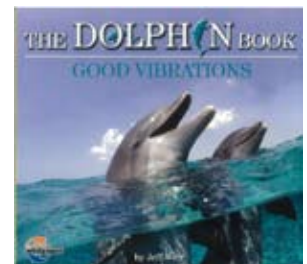
CHECK IT OUT!

There are some brilliant underwater animations of the Bonny upwelling at www.environment.gov.au/coasts/discovery/flythrough/index.html



A great **new book** by Institute Director Jeff Weir has just been released. It contains beautiful images and great information. Proceeds go towards our research and education. The perfect gift for young marine enthusiasts.

Only \$17 Call 1300 130 949 to order your copy today!



ISIC TV - Secret life of seals!
 Episode 6 of 'i sea, i care' T.V is now on the web at:
www.dolphinresearch.org.au

Our Creek

By students of Baxter P.S. Environmental Science Group.

Watson Creek runs through Baxter and Somerville all the way to Western Port Bay. It was named after John Watson, a pastoralist who owned much of the land when it was first settled over 100 years ago.

The Baxter P.S. Environmental Science Group have been going down to Watson Creek to learn about water quality.

After testing the water we found that phosphate levels were too high. This can cause aquatic plants and animals to die.

Sometimes chemicals and fertilisers accidentally go into the creek. The water can get so bad that blue green algae blooms occur.

Despite this, there are two sets of platypus reported to be living in the creek, and a swamp skink once thought to be extinct was also found living near the Watson Creek area.



You can help creeks and their plants and animals if you put papers and rubbish in bins, keep cars free from oil leaks, pick up dog droppings, think before using dangerous chemicals, fence off livestock, remove weeds and plant more indigenous trees and grasses along the banks.



www.waterwatchmelbourne.org.au

Where do Victoria's Orcas come from?

In early February 2010 while SCUBA diving near seal rocks, Damien Thorn and friends were alerted to splashing and black shapes in the distance. As they curiously moved closer, they came across the unmistakable sight of 3 orcas (killer whales).

Dolphin Research Institute field officer and orca researcher David Donnelly is starting to piece together the movements of these black and white hunters.



Image - Damien Thorn
Male orca have huge dorsal fins that can reach around 1.8m tall, females are smaller.

By recording markings on the orca's fins he can start to recognise individual animals.

Some fins are pointy, some have cuts and scratches and some bare the marks of boat strike.



Image - Damien Thorn
Dave has started to find that one week an orca might be swimming in NSW and the next week it might be in Warnambool!

Get involved!

The key to it all is having good pictures of their fins for Dave to identify them. If you see an orca make sure you try to take a close up picture of the fin and email it to:

research@dolphinresearch.org.au

To find out more about orca's around our coast visit:

www.dolphinresearch.org.au

'i sea, i care Awards! - 2009

Congratulations to Chloe Shadwell from Heany Park Primary School.

Chloe entered the 2009 'i sea, i care' awards and received the "Ambassador of the Year Award" for her great work, at a presentation last December.



To enter the awards for 'i sea, i care' Ambassador of the year and/or school of the year start collecting images and stories of the great work you are doing to help spread the stories and protect Victoria's marine treasures.

An entry form will be sent out in Term 3 with the winners announced during Coastcare Week in the first week of December 2010.



Will it be you this year?