

SFI NEWSLETTER

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www.seadragonfoundation.org

Experience the sustainable management of the Leafy Seadragon through the Seadragon Foundation Inc. tailored for the conservation challenges of the 21st century.

INDEPENDENCE, TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY

The SFI considers that these maxims are essential to the development of the sustainable management of the marine environment.

The SFI has progressed to the stage of having its first Management Board e-meeting and will be now registering as an environmental not-for-profit organisation.



A rare image of a beautifully camouflaged Knifefnout pipefish (*Hypsolegnathus rostratus*), a close relative of the Leafy Seadragon, taken by David Muirhead at Normanville Beach. Read full article "[THE KNIVES ARE IN AT NORMY HOTSPOT](#)" in this newsletter.

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SEADRAGON FOUNDATION INC. REPORT

Hi SFI members

The SFI is proud to announce that it has more than the 50 paid members needed to register as an environmental not-for-profit organization. The first Management Board e-meeting was held successfully through a simple email system over several days in January. As the SFI develops we will progress to more sophisticated forms of e-meetings.

The essence of the e-meeting involved the management of funds, our officers, membership categories and fees, and future projects. Of particular interest to members is motion 4: That in consideration of their faith in the SFI and its values and objectives that the first 60 Members of the SFI are accepted as permanent financial members at \$1.00 per year for the duration of their initial fees. (see Management Board First Meeting, next article this newsletter).

During the e-meeting it was emphasised that the SFI should concentrate on the conservation and perpetuation of the Leafy Seadragon, in consideration of the global conservation crisis. Consequently we have initiated a campaign to protect the seagrass habitat of the Leafy Seadragon in South Australia.

There has been massive and continuing loss of seagrass habitat of the Leafy Seadragon in both South Australian gulfs and in northern Kangaroo Island. This loss is mainly currently associated with poor and often unexplained management. Much of this poor management is associated with decisions that are not transparent and accountable; either in the context of sustainable management of the Leafy Seadragon's habitat, of our precious fresh water resources, or financially responsible management of South Australia.

A blue ring octopus from northern Kangaroo Island. Recent molecular studies have shown that there are many previously unknown species of blue rings. Image David Muirhead.



At present these issues mainly concern the loss of seagrass off Adelaide due to silt and pollution from stormwater runoff. These issues include Cheltenham Racecourse development being used for storm water reclamation, and the diversion of some resources from the proposed Adelaide desalination plant into water reclamation as an alternate 'drought proofing and pollution reduction measure'.

The deteriorations of the seagrass beds around Kingscote on Kangaroo Island are a disgrace. We will be encouraging a campaign to reduce pollution levels in the Kingscote region to background levels.

Any increased production from agriculture from methods that result in the wastage of agricultural chemicals through runoff, cannot be tolerated if it destroys Leafy Seadragon habitat, or diminishes the tourist potential of Kangaroo Island.

As we move toward our higher status as a tax exempt environmental association we decided to begin our drive toward engaging the establishment of a world class aquarium and marine conservation facility in South Australia.

MANAGEMENT BOARD FIRST MEETING FEBRUARY 2007

THE FIRST MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING VOTED THAT:

Due to his need to support the IUCN Amphibian Ark, Robert Browne will resign as SFI Public Officer. We welcome Jasmine Stewart as SFI Public Officer. Jasmine is a responsible and talented young woman with considerable training and experience in finance and politics. Robert Browne will take on the role of treasurer, and in our first overseas office accountant Robert Taylor, USA, will audit out accounts.

New membership categories retrospective for family and associate memberships were approved, and Karen's suggestion for a low income concession of \$8 Full Membership and \$5 Supporter Membership. (low income to be specified at next meeting by Karen Whitford). We also voted that in consideration of their faith in the SFI and its values and objectives that the first 60 Members of the SFI are accepted as permanent financial members at \$1.00 per year for the duration of their initial fees. That is 20 years for Full members, 25 years for Family Full Members, and 10 years for Supporter members.

The SFI officially accepts the community association Friends of Gulf St Vincent and their affiliated organisations as an SFI Associate Member.

In light of our long term goal Robert Browne establishes a Seadragon Aquarium Panel for development of concept of an aquarium and conservation facility in South Australia.

That the SFI moves to register the SFI as a not for profit tax exempt environmental association. To comply with federal regulations, the SFI forms a Public Fund Board in accordance with the requirements for a not for profit tax exempt environmental association. The Public Fund Board members must be 'responsible persons' under the act – ie. Public servants for more than 5 years, doctors, JP's etc), and Karen Whitford and Dr Robert Browne agreed to occupy positions on the board.

To facilitate management we decided that:

1. Regular Management Board meetings are held if possible on the third Sunday of each month.
2. Financial report monthly is mandatory by the Treasurer.
3. Electronic access to the Seadragon Foundation Inc., Bank South Australia bank account be authorised to the current signatories, Dr Robert Kenneth Browne (President) and Karen Whitford (Secretary).

FEBRUARY 2007 SFI FINANCIAL REPORT

Since the establishment of our Bank SA account in 25/6/2007 until this financial report for the 6/2/2008, our total credits were \$870, total debits \$438, and closing balance \$432. Total balance including outstanding (see calendars below) **\$460**.

The income from membership has been; Full Members \$380, Family Members \$250, Supporter members \$140. In addition we have received \$65 donations, and \$35 from sales of MLSSA calendars - \$28 for 4 calendars due. Our outgoings have totaled \$438; Lodgement fees \$152, PO Box 2007 hire \$70, HP Printer \$153, MLSSA Calendars \$63.

Indispensable for Karen's secretarial work, the SFI has purchased a "HP Photosmart C5 Photosmart Multifunction" printer/scanner from Office Works for \$153. This is a very good machine that was on special from \$290 and should suffice for some time.

THE KNIVES ARE IN AT NORMY HOTSPOT

David Muirhead, Image on front page this newsletter

On the seventh of February Graham Short and I revisited this popular pipefish site for another photographic dive.

Visibility was exceptional for this site, doubtless because of the drought and its attendant minimal run off- but before we all get out hopes too high, let's not forget that unless we get very gentle breaking autumn rains that allow pasture regrowth to bind the catchment topsoil, much of which is currently bare dust or denuded rocky scree slopes with only a smattering of moisture -stressed plants (or for that matter the bitumen, patios and pavements with more than the usual share of dead leaves, dust, dung and assorted detritus poised to rush seawards), we can expect the visibility to plummet back to those comparatively dismal pre-drought levels, which will of course mean that in the long run nothing much will have changed apart from the commendable and increasing inroads made into catchment care by the local community landcare groups.

That's enough preaching for now folks: we had a wonderful shore dive in glassy warm sunny conditions and low tide.

Within minutes of submerging Graham had found his first ever pugnose pipefish, and he was naturally very chuffed! I on the other hand was somewhat peeved by this, having told him I myself personally should easily be able to locate one or two of these fish for him to photograph, and fully expecting that I would be the first one to do so on this dive, having seen them quite often here before!

During the remainder of the dive we encountered plenty of the usual syngnathids found here ie rhino, Briggs crested, Port Philip and stigmatopora spp. pipefish, all of which were particularly relaxed and generally unfussed about having their picture taken, to our considerable advantage.

Graham was the first to leave the water, and on the way back in, still with a few exposures left on my roll of film and hunting for a last-minute gem to finish this great dive off with, I couldn't believe my luck when I came across what I first thought was an injured brushtail pipefish, looking like something bigger must have bitten its tail off, parked very quietly and cryptically in a small Posidonia seagrass outlier in barely 1.4 m depth, probably only another 30 metres in and I would have been high and dry!

I used up my last few shots, rather hurriedly it turns out because the fish did not try to flee: if it had indeed been a brushtail it probably would have made a run for it, but I did notice at the time that it had a rather unusual snout, and when I got my slides developed I was thrilled to see that it clearly was my first ever KNIFESNOUT PIPEFISH!

This species does get reasonably big, but not as big as the biggest of them all, the brushtail, which can apparently reach 65 cm!

The brushtail is quite common in Gulf St Vincent, including further out off the Normy hotspot site usually in water three or more metres deep, but I have yet to see one mingling with the usual pipefish as mentioned above in the very shallow parts of this bay.

So now we can add the knifesnout to the ever-increasing list of pipefish found at this hotspot.

Who knows what else we'll see there in the exciting months and years ahead!

OPEN LETTER BY JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU

Prelude by Robert Browne

What has the Seadragon Foundation Inc. got to do with the amphibian conservation and the Amphibian Ark? What have marine conservationists got to do with amphibian conservation? For one see the letter below by Jean-Michel Cousteau the son of ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau and founder of the Oceans Future Society.

For the SFI, well first of all, amphibians are facing the greatest extinction crisis of any group of backboned animals. The second group is freshwater fish, and the way things are going shortly inshore fish like the Leafy Seadragon. As amphibians spend part of their life in water and are closely related to fish there is going to be a lot to learn from the successes, and failures, of the Amphibian Ark.

Secondly, I am going to work as research officer for the amphibian ark, so will be right in the action to learn to help the Leafy Seadragon, and other inshore marine and freshwater fish. Why freshwater fish? The well being of inshore waters and freshwaters are intertwined. Bad freshwater management equals bad coastal management.

Please contribute to the Amphibian Ark, and later we may well be asking these guys to send out letters asking for contributions to the SFI conservation effort.

OPEN LETTER BY JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU.

Thank you for recently joining thousands around the world who are petitioning our governments to take actions to save amphibians. I don't need to tell you that frogs, salamanders, and other amphibians are facing the most significant mass extinction since the dinosaurs.

I'm Jean-Michel Cousteau, and I am writing to you on behalf of Amphibian Ark, the global nonprofit organization that is coordinating the emergency rescue of the most threatened amphibian species. I am joining Sir David Attenborough, Jeff Corwin, and thousands of zoos, aquaria, and conservation organizations to support Amphibian Ark in rallying our planet to avert this mass extinction.



I write this to you on the eve of Feb. 29, 2008, which is called Leap Day in the United States and, in this special "Year of the Frog," is being called the International Day of the Frog.

The fire salamander Salamandra salamandra is the best known salamander in Europe. Many races of even this once common species is currently in danger of extinction.

Our collective success will come down to the money that is raised – from companies, and governments, and individuals like you and me. I am heartened at hearing stories of grade school children asking their birthday party guests to make donations to Amphibian Ark in lieu of a gift; and a British Isles couple that asked for donations to Amphibian Ark instead of wedding presents.

This indeed is a cause where small donations can add up to the saving of an endangered species. The physical plan for rescuing the most critically threatened amphibians involves converting trailer-sized containers into breeding centers, and training people to oversee the species' return to healthy populations. The cost of saving an entire species under this plan is \$100,000 – compared to other wildlife rescue, this is an amazingly efficient plan.



You are among the thousands who are the first to "jump in" to the amphibian issue. We are counting on you to multiply this number. Here's what I am asking you to consider:

- Forward this email to 10 people you respect and will thoughtfully consider joining us on what may be considered, years from now, the greatest wildlife "save" in history. Ask them to visit www.amphibianark.org, learn more about the pending crisis -- and they can sign the petition on that Web site.
- Make a donation, large or small, to Amphibian Ark through its Web site (www.amphibianark.org). Or mail a check to the address at the bottom of this email.

Frogs are a crucial part of the ecosystem, and they act as indicators to the environment's health. These remarkable creatures may hold the key to unlocking diseases such as depression, stroke, seizures, Alzheimer's and cancer. It is imperative that we preserve these creatures for ourselves and future generations.

A Surinam toad Pipa pipa filmed from below. This aquatic species carries its eggs attached to the males back.

Thank you for being a part of the solution. Through an active dialogue we can generate awareness and education about this issue. Visit www.amphibianark.org for donation and sponsorship information.

Sincerely, Jean-Michel Cousteau

P.S. The Amphibian Ark mailing address is:

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