

# MEDIA RELEASE

## NEWS FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR MARINE AND ANTARCTIC STUDIES

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

### **Redmap Australia - the ultimate in crowd sourcing - launches today**

With the launch today (**Thursday 13 December 2012**) of the Redmap Australia website, the community is being asked to be on the lookout for unusual occurrences of species in the seas around Australia.

Redmap encourages fishers and divers to report sightings and upload photos of marine life that aren't usually found at their local fishing, diving and swimming spots. These community sightings will help reveal if fish are 'shifting their range' in search of their optimal water temperatures, as seas generally warm in a changing climate.

The website, also known as the Range Extension Database and Mapping project, started in Tasmania in 2009. Since then Tasmanian fishers and divers have logged hundreds of unusual sightings, including eastern rock lobster, southern Maori wrasse and King George whiting, all spotted farther south than their usual home waters.

Redmap Australia takes this concept nationally from today, with a large collaborative project led by the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) at the University of Tasmania. Given that up to four million Australians go fishing or diving at least once a year, Redmap will tap into the observations of a vast pool of 'citizen scientists'.

"It is the ultimate in crowd sourcing," said Redmap founder Dr Gretta Pecl, a senior marine scientist at IMAS. "It taps into the knowledge - and eyes - of thousands of fishers, divers and swimmers to track changes in fish distributions in Australia's vast coastal waters."

Redmap is interested in reports of any marine life deemed uncommon along a particular stretch of the coast, and not just fish, but also turtles, rays, lobsters, corals, seaweeds, urchins and prawns. A network of marine scientists around the country will review the sighting photos to verify the species' identity and ensure high-quality data.

Redmap aims to become not only a continental-scale monitoring program along Australia's vast coastline to help track marine range shifts, but also to engage Australians with marine issues using their own data.

"We hope to create a network of fishers and divers that are driven to finding out how fish are impacted by changing conditions, such as ocean warming, by contributing to this knowledge," said Dr Pecl.

The Redmap website encourages members to share photos and anecdotes. It also has information and news on fishing, diving and the marine environment. Everyone can comment on the latest sightings of creatures spotted away from their usual marine habitats; and a smart phone application will be up and running in 2013 to make logging an unusual fish that much easier.

Redmap supports, and is supported by, the Australian Government's Inspiring Australia strategy, which aims to boost science literacy and teach the value of science in caring for our environment. For marine ecosystems, this encourages the healthy use of our seas so we may all continue to enjoy the marine environment and marine recreational activities.

Each Redmap sighting is a piece of a puzzle that over time will reveal to the community, scientists and industry which species or regions may be experiencing greater changes in marine distributions. The sooner Australian fishers, divers and the public help gather this information, the better. Some seas along the coast of Australia are warming at three to four times the global average. Turning up the heat tends to stress marine ecosystems and species, and can affect fish growth, reproduction and behaviour.

Associate Professor Natalie Moltschaniwskyj, a marine ecologist in the School of Environmental and Life Sciences at the University of Newcastle, coordinates Redmap NSW.

"We're predicting a mixed reaction to warming seas," Associate Professor Moltschaniwskyj said. "While some species may adapt to the balmy new conditions, others will shift into new areas in search of their preferred marine climate or may disappear from an area."

Already anecdotal evidence from fishers and divers has pointed to some range shifts. Associate Professor Moltschaniwskyj said they're hearing about more tropical fish venturing into Sydney Harbour, such as damselfish and angelfish species.

Professor Colin Buxton, Director of the IMAS Fisheries, Aquaculture and Coasts Centre, said Redmap was a wonderful example of how the community and scientists can work together to understand how climate change is affecting our oceans and to help manage this uncertain future.

"This information will allow some communities to take advantage of new fish arrivals and will help others minimise risks such as the introduction of pest species for those

fisheries or regions that may be more impacted by species on the move,” Professor Buxton said.

All Australians can get involved by becoming a Redmap member, signing up for the quarterly newsletter, liking Redmap on Facebook, and logging unusual marine animals at [www.redmap.org.au](http://www.redmap.org.au).

### **Who is Redmap Australia?**

Redmap is a large collaborative project led by IMAS, and involves the University of Newcastle, James Cook University, Primary Industries and Regions SA, Museum Victoria, Department of Fisheries Western Australia, the University of Adelaide and the South East Australia Program. The expansion of Redmap nationally was made possible with an Inspiring Australia grant, the Australian National Data Service and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Redmap also receives support from Mures Tasmania and many fishing, diving and community groups around the country, building on the support from Redmap’s original funder the Tasmanian Community Fund.



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