Shellfish Reefs Report
The Nature Conservancy

Port Phillip Bay Shellfish Reef Restoration Project Update 2020

Another season has passed, so this 'Summer in Review' edition of Reef Brief provides an update about the last three months and future activities. The highlights include a bold commitment to lead Australia's largest marine restoration initiative, new funding to begin to expand shellfish reef restoration in Port Phillip Bay, and upcoming volunteer opportunities.

Please feel free to share this Reef Brief with your friends and networks.

60 Shellfish Reefs Over 6 Years

Over the next six years, together with governments, businesses and the community, The Nature Conservancy aims to protect and restore 60 shellfish reefs across Australia, making Australia the first nation in the world to recover a critically endangered marine ecosystem.

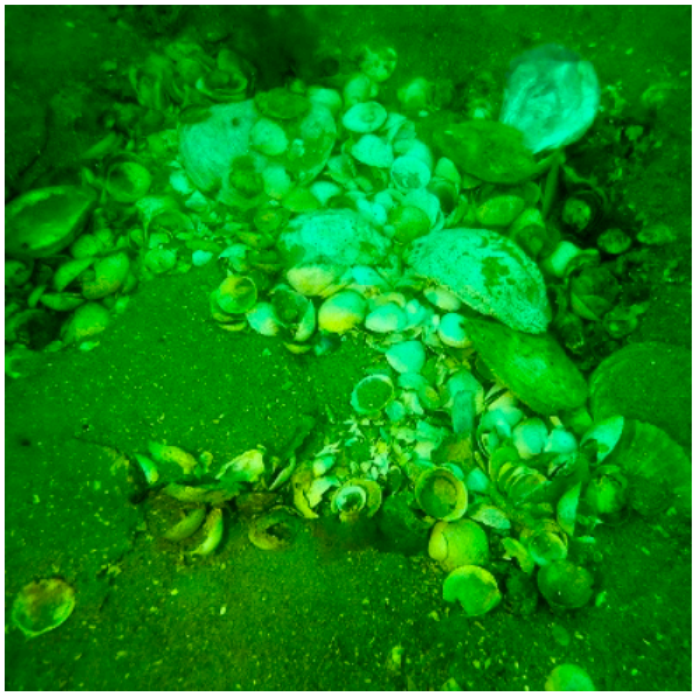
We have demonstrated through our work in Port Phillip Bay and in other Australian States (e.g. Windara Reef and Oyster Harbour) that shellfish reefs can be restored at scale, and their benefits returned. For more information about this exciting initiative see this ABC News report and our website.

Pinkie snapper at Margaret's Reef in Hobsons Bay by Jarrod Boord

New Reefs In Port Phillip Bay

Funding has been secured to begin to expand the current 2.5 hectares of shellfish reefs in Port Phillip Bay in 2020, with planning underway to rebuild more reefs in the current sites of Wilson Spit, in Geelong Outer Harbour, and Margaret's Reef in Hobsons Bay, off St Kilda. Two new sites are also being added, which are 9ft Bank near Geelong, and Dromana. All restoration works will be subject to the relevant permits and other legislative requirements.

9ft Bank is an old degraded shellfish reef, with small dispersed clumps of Australian flat oysters rather than a consolidated reef in 3 to 4 metres of water.



Dromana baseline dive - Simon Branigan

We have conducted many observational dives over the years, and this site was mapped by Deakin University in 2018 using multi-beam, and towed video surveys. With 9ft Bank still having a remnant population of oysters, we are planning a 'light touch' restoration approach by strategically deploying recycled shell substrate in the gaps between the oyster clumps in October or November, before spawning occurs, to allow for natural recruitment. Over time the plan is to restore this shellfish to its former glory.

The new site at Dromana has been chosen based on previous exploration work, and habitat suitability modelling, which included historical records about