

In brief...

Farmed bluff oysters on sale

Farmed Bluff oysters will go into selected shops around New Zealand this year.

Stewart Island marine farmers started cultivating the oysters about six years ago but, until now, the farmed variety have only been available on the island.

Following poor returns from mussels, Maas Mussels Ltd owners Jim and Hilli Maas-Barrett, decided to take up farming the highly prized oyster after making discoveries about their spawning habits, which have enabled them to produce the prized oyster in commercial quantities.

Their product will be marketed under the Southern Glory Stewart Island Oyster brand which so far, has only been available on Stewart Island.

The company has been working to this point for a number of years according to Mr Maas-Barrett who says Bluff oysters are not easy to farm.

Award applauded

The Paua Industry Council has applauded North and South's choice of an under cover fisheries officer as a New Zealander of the Year for 2007.

The magazine made the announcement as part of the environmental section of its awards and, says the council, is a clear reflection of how seriously the country views fish poaching.

"The Paua Industry applauds North and South's choice of New Zealander of the year and welcomes it as a measure of how seriously such environment crimes are now taken," the council announced.

In early 2007, Operation Paid dealt a major blow to organised illegal paua fishing in the North Island.

The use of an undercover enforcement officer to penetrate the diver gangs and marketing networks proved a powerful weapon for the Ministry of Fisheries, the council said.

The officer concerned has not been identified because of the involvement of gangs in the bust. Operation Paid caught a large number of offenders, some of whom received prison sentences.



CRANE MARKS MILESTONE

DUBAI'S MARITIME CITY witnessed another milestone with the successful load test on its massive new BHT 700/16 mobile boat hoist at the end of December. The hoist, which will be located within Dubai Maritime City's industrial precinct, comes at a cost of around \$7m NZD. Built in Italy, the hoist weighs 300 tonnes and is capable of lifting 720 tonne boats. It is expected to complement Dubai Maritime City's two ship lifts and will be focused on the handling of smaller craft, particularly super yachts.



Climate displacement concern

FUTURE CLIMATE CHANGE is expected to put increasing pressure on the Australian Government to control its borders.

In what's now being referred to as "the securitisation of climate change-related displacement" security specialists are beginning to focus on the problem of boat people in a new way.

Until now, the problem of boat people has been driven more by political and economic issues rather than a lack of land caused by rising tides.

Opposition leader, Malcolm

Turnbull, says Australians face a real problem with future border control. For people dislocated due to climate change, no international framework exists.

Though the world met in Poznan to discuss ways of averting climate change by curbing global greenhouse gas emissions, according to one commentator, there is now a need for the international community to develop appropriate legal, institutional and financial responses to the looming problem of climate change related displacement.

TRACTOR TROUBLE IN ABEL TASMAN PARK

THE NEW ZEALAND Recreational Fishing Council is fed up with problems caused by tractors on the Marahau beachfront in the Abel Tasman National Park.

"Locals and amateur fishers are sick and tired of the arrogance and duplicity displayed by tourism operators, the Tasman District Council (TDC) and the Department of Conservation (DOC) over damage caused by commercial tractor operations on the Marahau beachfront," says the council's president, Geoff Rowling.

He says that in spite of having years to address the problems created by the tractors they were still causing, "significant erosion, degradation of eel grass beds, flounder habitat and destruction of cockle beds."

He said that the TDC and DOC had apparently organised "a secret non notified consent on the eve of Christmas in a desperate attempt to fill in large holes in the tidal flats" so tour operators could continue to pull in money.

These operations, consisting of mainly water taxis and kayaks servicing the Abel Tasman National Park, have grown from a couple of tractor crossings a day to nearly a hundred a day during the busy season, Mr Rowling said.

"This is impacting on the inter-tidal zone and destroying fisheries and habitat. It is bizarre that DOC and the TDC are walking down the aisle together supporting and condoning this ongoing destruction while they so often stop others from doing even minor works. All this despite years of long and loud calls for action from the locals and fishers alike."

Regional fishing group TASFISH has raised the threats to fisheries posed by this activity several times over recent years with The Ministry of Fisheries (Mfish). They too have apparently ignored the pleas for action.

"An alternative access is possible but ostrich like behavior by the agencies concerned has so far stifled its development," Mr Rowling said.

Lifejackets could become mandatory

THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES District Council wants to make wearing lifejackets mandatory on Central Otago rivers and lakes after a summer of death on its waterways.

Council chief executive, Duncan Field, says the district faced the worst accident record on its waterways for 25 years.

In Marlborough a district council bylaw matches Maritime New Zealand rules that stipulate skippers must make sure there are enough lifejackets for every person on board. They must also fit each person correctly.

Those on board do not have to wear them, however the skipper is responsible for making sure people wear lifejackets at 'times of heightened risk', such as in rough seas or adverse visibility, or face a fine of \$100.

The move in Queenstown comes as Maritime New Zealand works to bring into law, mandatory lifejacket use for all people on board vessels less than six metres long, unless the skipper decides it is not necessary.

At least one regional council have already put changes in place and other councils are expected to follow depending on when their navigation safety bylaws are due for review.



DOLPHINS STILL UNDER THREAT

THE FOREST AND Bird Society has issued a call for a full nationwide ban on set nets following the discovery of a Hector's dolphin on Otago's Moeraki Beach on January 21.

The dolphin was found washed up with knife slash wounds and deaths from such injuries are part of an increasing trend, says Forest & Bird marine conservation advocate, Kirstie Knowles.

The discovery occurs as the society confirms that such finds are a continuing trend according to data it has obtained from the Department of Conservation under the Official Information Act.

Records show 36 cases of dolphins

found mutilated since 1980, including five cases from the 1980s, 14 cases from the 1990s and 17 cases since 2000. Forest & Bird wants a ban on set nets, which are used to catch fish in coastal waters where Hector's and Maui's dolphins live. The small dolphins get tangled in the nets and drown. Hector's dolphins are an endangered species. Maui dolphins, a sub species, number just 111 individuals and is critically endangered. Last May the government announced measures to protect Hector's and Maui's dolphins, including marine mammal sanctuaries and bans on set netting in the coastal waters where the dolphins are most often found.



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