



2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Nominee: Friends of Beware Reef, VIC

Category: Coastcare Award

Situated off Cape Conran in East Gippsland, the Beware Reef Marine Sanctuary is a 220-hectare sanctuary made up of a series of granite pinnacles rising 30 metres from the sea floor, with only two metres visible above sea level. The Reef is rich in marine life and habitat, with a unique mix of warmer and cooler temperate species.

Members of the Friends of Beware Reef (FoBR) have conducted underwater surveys of marine life in this territory for the last decade and a half. The Group's continued surveying of Beware Reef have contributed to scientific knowledge and helped the regional land manager, Parks Victoria, to protect the Reef's marine environment.

FoBR downloads its data into the Reef Life Survey data-base, helping to accumulate data on a scale impossible for other researchers and by photographing / filming around Beware Reef and other marine protected areas, including Wilsons Promontory, Point Hicks, Cape Howe and Port Phillip Heads. The Group's work has been shared with school groups, Summer by the Sea (tourists) and community groups along the Victorian coast.

The Group was among the first to flag the detrimental effects of overgrazing by the native black spined sea urchin, which has removed vast areas of marine life off the rocky reefs within the Marine Sanctuary. FoBR also carried out marine pest surveys on the Beware Reef and was the first to detect the Northern Pacific sea star within the Gippsland Lakes, leading to a co-ordinated removal program led by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

FoBR has contributed to collective knowledge of the Reef's ecology by recording the number of native plants, invertebrates, fish and mammals present within the Marine Sanctuary. The Group has also identified at least one new introduced species, the New Zealand Seven-armed seastar, as well as several species more typically found in warmer waters to the northeast – adding to the community's awareness of potential climate change effects. By sharing this information with communities across East Gippsland, FoBR has highlighted the need for regional communities to protect their marine environment from overfishing and other future threats.

Predicted climate-change effects on the marine environment of East Gippsland include increases in water temperature, altered currents, and changes in pH. Each of these factors can influence the migration of marine species from other regions into the area. Friends of Beware Reef has played a sentinel role in this area for over a decade, documenting changes at Beware Reef to better understand how climate shifts are likely to impact Victoria's marine environment more broadly. Our group has more recently partnered with the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to build up a fish and invertebrate data-base of marine life in the Gippsland Lakes.

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.





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Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2018 National Landcare finalists, visit www.landcareaustralia.org.au

Ends

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Web summary:

Members of the Friends of Beware Reef (FoBR) have conducted underwater surveys of marine life for the last decade and a half. The Group's boat trips have contributed to scientific knowledge and helped the regional land manager, Parks Victoria, to protect the Reef's marine environment. FoBR shares its data with the Reef Life Survey, gathering data on a scale impossible for other researchers by photographing and filming around Beware Reef and other marine protected areas, including Wilsons Promontory, Point Hicks, and Cape Howe. The Group's work has been shown to school groups, festivalgoers, and community groups along the Victorian coast.

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The Group was among the first to flag the detrimental effects of overgrazing by the native black spined sea urchin, which has removed vast areas of important kelp forest canopy within the Marine Sanctuary.

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