



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **MAPPING OUR COASTAL LIFE - LAUNCH**

A new project to survey the animals and plants of this remarkable coastal region will be launched at 2.30pm on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> August at Merimbula's Wharf Restaurant.

All interested community members are invited to come along and hear more about the Atlas of Life in the Coastal Wilderness project. The launch is part of this year's National Science Week, which runs from 13-21 August.

"If you like to observe and photograph nature, the Atlas of Life in the Coastal Wilderness (ALCW) is an exciting opportunity to join scientists in their efforts to learn and understand more about local coastal biodiversity, from Montague Island in NSW down to Mallacoota in Victoria." Project Director Libby Hepburn said.

"We hope many families, students, amateur naturalists, photographers and visitors will join in and help to build a record of life here by contributing sightings and photos to the ALCW website, currently being developed." Mrs Hepburn continued.

"We will start with shore and seaweed surveys and add other kinds of observations over time." Mrs Hepburn added.

"Local observations are particularly important because they can increase our understanding of how that species is distributed across the country. The species may not have been recorded before in that location, or its distribution may be changing. Importantly, the project will monitor changes in the presence and numbers of local wildlife as the climate and environment change." Mrs Hepburn said.

Data from the local project will contribute to the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA), a national initiative focused on making Australia's biodiversity information more accessible and useable online. The ALA is a partnership between the CSIRO; Australian museums, herbaria and other biological collections; the Australian Government and local communities (see [www.ala.org.au](http://www.ala.org.au)).

Mr Donald Hobern, Director of the ALA, will give an outline of the ALA at the launch.

"Now, with modern web-based technologies, enthusiasts can build and share information like never before, allowing us to better understand and monitor changes in species distribution, including invasive pests." Mr Hobern commented.

The Atlas of Life in the Coastal Wilderness Steering Group comprises representatives from the Sapphire Coast Marine Society, Office of Environment and Heritage (NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service), Bega Valley Shire Council, Auswide Projects, Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority and Landcare NSW. The project has support from the Australian Museum.

For interviews or further details, please contact Libby Hepburn on (02) 6495 0917 or 0458 798 990. High quality photos are also available.