

Jervis Bay Algal Bloom

Shoalhaven's magnificent Jervis Bay is home to many different species of wonderful native aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna.

*The green alga which has been washed ashore at Callala Bay and Callala Beach is called *Microdictyon umbilicatum*. It is an Australian species common to bays and estuaries and has been recorded in Jervis Bay since 1896.*

Huge abundances of the same algae also occurs at Merimbula, Tuggerah and Botany Bay.

It can grow attached to rocky reefs, or can also drift along the floor of shallow, sheltered areas – especially those with high water clarity like Jervis Bay, which enables good light penetration to the sea bed.

Is the alga harmful?

No the alga is not harmful. Although minor discomfort can be caused from the odour produced as the alga decays, at minor levels it is not toxic or harmful to humans.

While the odour, visual impact and physical barriers created by the alga may be a temporary nuisance, it is a really important ecological event that provides nutrients which filter into the ecosystem.



Contact

For further information on the alga, you can contact Council's **Natural Resources Area** on (02) 4429 3392 or the **Jervis Bay Marine Park** on (02) 4428 3000

For more information on tourist activities in and around Jervis Bay visit Council's internet site at

<http://www.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/region/visitors/default.htm>

Also our Tourist information centre on the Princes Highway Nowra has brochures on family activities in and around the Shoalhaven.

The NSW Office of Water also has information on algal blooms at <http://www.water.nsw.gov.au/Water-Management/Water-quality/Algae-information/default.aspx>.



**Marine Parks
Authority**

NEW SOUTH WALES

**Jervis Bay
Algal Bloom**

Jervis Bay Algal Bloom

What about the smell?

The decomposing alga on the beach produces Hydrogen Sulphide which is a colourless gas that has a distinctive smell of rotten eggs at low concentrations. At the low levels found in the environment, there is no documented evidence of adverse health effects.

Are blooms of algae common at Jervis Bay?

Blooms of drift algae are common with a series of several species of red algae blooming in various years. Fishery reports from as early as 1896 recorded prolific amounts of drift algae in the bay. Drift algae is usually found in the middle of Jervis Bay off Callala Beach and Huskisson and to the south of the bay of Blenheim and Greenfields beaches.

What has caused this bloom?

Because Jervis Bay is land-locked and relatively shallow, it provides ideal conditions for algae in spring. This season the bloom coincided with warmer water temperatures favourable to its growth. The bloom is not due to pollution and Jervis Bay continues to enjoy excellent water quality.

Why is it important for the environment?

While it is in the water algae provides food and habitat to a large number of invertebrates such as small bivalve shellfish and amphipods (prawn like animals). When the right currents or swell occur in the bay the drift algae can be driven up onto beaches, where it begins to decompose. This provides important nutrients in the surrounding sand and leads to increases in diversity and abundance of beach invertebrates such as beach worms and amphipods, which in turn provide food for many fishes and birds.

What is being done about it?

Removal of the alga is not practical as vast quantities are suspended in the water and will wash up onto the beach with the next high tide. The Marine Parks Authority and Shoalhaven City Council are working together to ensure that safe access is provided to important facilities such as Callala boat ramp.

Will it go away naturally?

Yes. As water conditions become less suitable for its growth the alga will disappear. The alga already on the beach will decompose and be returned to the sand.

Is it safe to swim?

The dominant species of alga accumulated at Callala Bay/Beach is non-toxic so Council recommends you use your own judgement. It is usually best to avoid swimming in areas of dense seaweed to minimise the risk of entanglement or skin irritation.

What can you do while the beach is not suitable for swimming?

Within this city there are 109 ocean, bay and lakeside beaches and more than 300,000 hectares of national parks and state forest.

Keen sailors, water-skiers and fishers can enjoy Shoalhaven's lakes, estuaries and waterways, in particular St Georges Basin near Jervis Bay, Sussex Inlet, Lake Conjola near Bendalong and Burrill Lake and Tabourie Lake, south of Ulladulla.

Other citizens and visitors may prefer to seek out a secluded picnic spot on the coast or within a park or forest. You could choose to undertake brief or lengthy bushwalks, go horse riding, bird watching or make a scenic tour by car to some of the city's outstanding lookouts. Visit the Council's Tourist Information Centre on the Princes Highway Nowra for more details.