

# OPERATION CRAYWEED

**PLANT** life beneath the waves is just as vital to the health of ecosystems as those on land, assisting with water purification as well as providing a home for fish, crustaceans and other marine species.

Sydney's reefs were decimated by pollution in the days before improved sewerage treatment and extended outfalls were put in place in the 1980s. Since then, water quality has greatly improved, however, seaweed forests do not return by themselves.

The Operation Crayweed Project, supported by the NSW Environmental Trust and Recreational Fishing Trust, was established to assist in the restoration of the 70kms of kelp forest that has simply vanished from Sydney's shores.

Eight sites had been successfully established around Sydney over the past few years, with offspring of planted crayweed patches encouragingly now found hundreds of

metres from the original site.

However, it is necessary to continue planting sites along the coastline to ensure a return of kelp forests of their former scale. The Rotary Club of Turramurra recently came on board to sponsor and assist on site with the establishment of a ninth seaweed forest off Mona Vale.

Fifteen healthy plants were collected and transported from a well-established reef south of Sydney. Rotarians were kept busy throughout the day gathering, measuring, weighing and recording the quality of marine life found on the individual kelp plants. Kelp plants were then placed in labelled green mesh bags, closed and fixed with cable ties, which were then floated out to a predetermined site.

Scuba diver volunteers from the University of NSW and Sydney Institute of Marine Sciences anchored the plants down to preplaced stainless-steel anchors. After repopulation of

the reef, the nets and anchors will be removed.

Periodic visits to the reef will take place to observe the progress of the forest. Over the coming years, the kelp will gradually take over the reef, attracting marine life to the area and restoring the natural underwater habitat lost in past years for future people to enjoy.

"We look forward to receiving the updates on the ongoing health of the forest," president elect Dr Parry Monckton said. "Only kelp planted as forests achieve true restoration, but individuals can contribute by sponsoring underwater trees individually. There is still plenty of shoreline reef off Sydney available for restoration – though similar activities can also be done anywhere else in the world where marine habitat has been lost."

For more information, visit [www.operationcrayweed.com](http://www.operationcrayweed.com) or contact [parry.monckton@bigpond.com](mailto:parry.monckton@bigpond.com) •

Members of the Rotary Club of Turramurra helped plant an "underwater forest" off Sydney's coast to rejuvenate reefs decimated by pollution in the 1980s.



(Photo: John Turnbull)

