Campaign to ‘get off the backs’ of wildlife

THE cute and cuddly approach to wildlife protection has proven ineffective so the message now is “Get off our backs”.

This week is Threatened Species Week and the Environment Protection Agency and the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, are attempting to make people aware that their own actions can threaten the lives of the State’s aquatic and coastal species.

An EPA spokesperson said some people did not seem to understand that careless use of the oceans, beaches and waterways had a direct impact on many threatened coastal and aquatic species.

“Slight changes in human behaviour can make a real difference to threatened species so Threatened Species Week aims to raise awareness about how people can help our coastal and aquatic wildlife,” the spokesperson said.

Threatened Species Week, from September 2-8 incorporates Threatened Species Day on Friday, the anniversary of the death of the last Tasmanian tiger in captivity.

The main themes are:

- Ensuring that the use of our bays, beaches and waterways does not impact on threatened species by promoting:
  - “Go slow for those below” with a focus on the threat of boat strike on dugong and turtles;
  - Responsible use and disposal of fishing gear to reduce entanglement and infection risk on threatened dugong, turtles, sharks and sting rays;
  - Responsible driving on beaches where shorebirds such as threatened little terns nest;
  - Raising awareness of the impact of collecting of native fish and water plants by aquarium hobbyists, and;
  - Raising awareness of the impact of releasing exotic fish and plants into waterways.

THIS turtle perished at the hands of boating on the bay. The propeller cuts can be clearly seen across its back. The message is clearly “Go slow for those below” and “Get off our backs”.

WHY WE GO SLOW FOR THOSE BELOW! DUGONG AND TURTLES

- BOTH turtles and dugong have two things in common that make them vulnerable to boat strike - they need to come to the surface for air and they like to feed in shallow water! Reducing speed by boat craft is important to avoid injuring and killing dugongs and turtles. Find out more about the work to protect these species in Queensland waters including why “Go slow” zones are so important.