

FATHOMS

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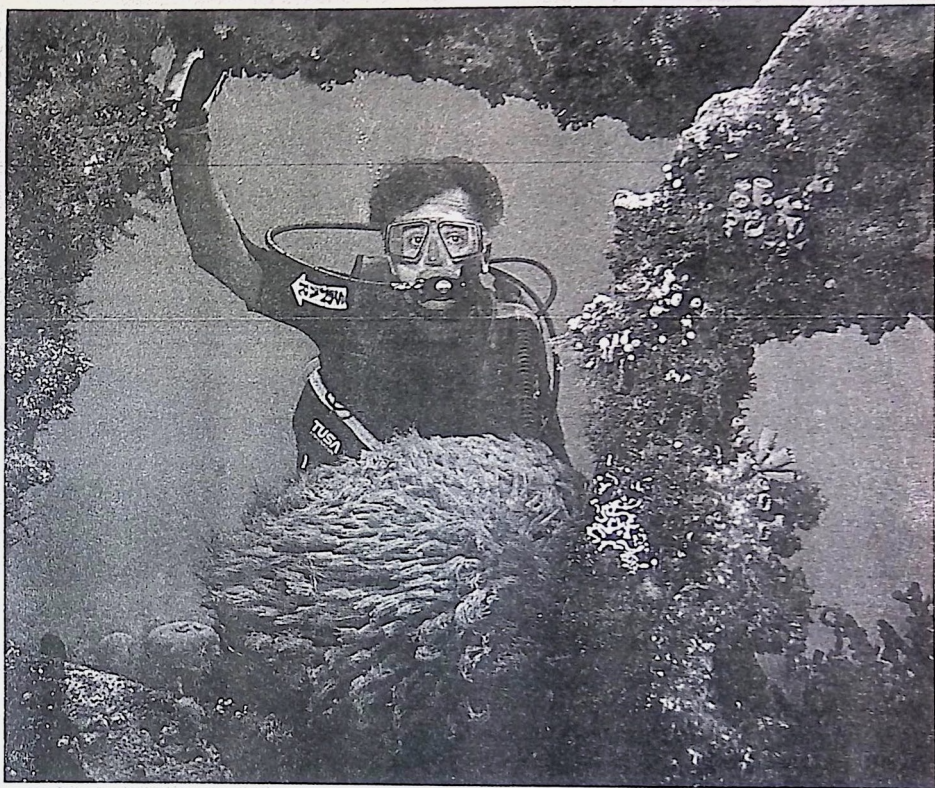
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VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

DEC - JAN
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FATHOMS

Official journal of the *Victorian Sub - Aqua Group*

In this issue:

DECEMBER 1999/JANUARY 2000

V.S.A.G. Committee Members		2
Editorial	Priya Cardinaletti	3
Yarra Valley Wine Tour	Judy Brincat	4
Dive Report Oct 17	Andy Mastrowicz	5
Melbourne Cup Results	Josie Mare	6
Lord John The Jolly	Anonymous	7
Fiji November	Peter Vleugel	9
Dive Report 28 November	John Lawler	13
Diving in Heaven	John Lawler	15
Aliens	Shane Martin	17
Marine Pest Day		19
Tuna Farm		20
Sunken Assets		21
Financial Report		23
Recreational Fishing	Priya Cardinaletti	34
Media Watch		35
Dive/Social Calendar		36
Tide Tables		38
Emergency Contact Information		40

Next General Meetings:

Bells Hotel
157 Moray Street (cnr. Coventry Street)
South Melbourne - 8pm sharp!
Thursday 16th December 1999 (Drinks)
Thursday 20th January 2000
Thursday 17th February 2000
Thursday 16th March 2000

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Thursday 13th January 2000
Thursday 10th February 2000
Thursday 9th March 2000

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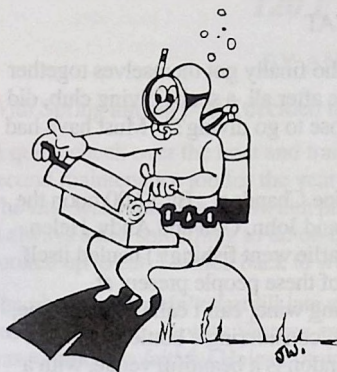
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EDITORIAL



We have another bumper issue with lots of dive reports, trip reports and social events. The Christmas dinner was held a little earlier this year, in late November and was another memorable VSAG night. It proved to be a great turnout of 65 people and a good time was had by all. Some VSAGers even booked rooms within 5 minutes walk of the venue and I'm sure, partied on there through the night.

The raffle was also a huge success. On behalf of the committee, thank you to all members who donated prizes. Also thank you to Nicole, Andy and Gail for the venue and looking after members on the night plus, Helen who put hampers together and organised raffles throughout the year which

also raised enough money for a prize on the night.

A special highlight on the night was a presentation of life membership to two members who have given significant contributions through consistent support and involvement to VSAG over the 20 or so years of their membership. Don is the keeper of these special medals and his surprised comment "these were in my desk drawer at home" gave a chuckle to the current committee! I hope both Don Abell and Mick Jeacle will still be happy to keep up their involvement with VSAG for many years to come.

Some areas of the new fishing regulations need highlighting or clarification and they have been covered also in the newsletter.

As you may have noticed, VSAG now has it's own web page. We have 5 megabytes of space in total. The pages have some basic information about VSAG and in time it should be a good reference tool for members, but needs everyone's feed back and contributions to do this. Any feedback, ideas, documents, etc. please let me know. Our web address is:
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~vsag/>

I hope everyone has a safe and happy christmas, lots of fantastic dives and a great new year ahead.

Editor - Priya Cardinaletti.

YARRA VALLEY WINE TOUR

BY JUDY BRINCAT

It was a small but dedicated group of wine lovers who finally got themselves together on Sunday 26th September. Now why, when we are after all, a scuba diving club, did a somewhat larger and more determined group choose to go diving?? Must have had something to do with the weather.

The prescribed time was 10.30am, the place Domaine Chandon. By 12.00 noon the group comprising Bob and June, newlyweds Priya and John, Gail and Andy, Helen and Ian and three quarters of the Brincat family(Charlie went fishing!!) hauled itself into shape. Now is it just coincidence, or were all of these people present at Beechworth in June? A glass of top quality sparkling wine(can't call it champagne, we're not in France) at \$5.00 a glass is superb value, considering a bottle of same is about \$26.00 at good liquor outlets. Domaine Chandon is a beautiful venue, with a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere. Under the experienced leadership of Helen and Ian, our tour had begun.

Our plan was for lunch at Eyton on Yarra, but due to unforeseen delays at Domaine Chandon, when we got there we couldn't get a table until 2.00pm. Now, those of you who know Chrissy and Jane will be aware that as the two darlings get hungrier their behaviour becomes exponentially more outrageous (and they'd eaten all the food I'd brought with us). So, like all good VSAG events, plan B swung into action, and we headed to the Yarra Glen pub for lunch, and a mighty fine lunch it was, too. Looking at the selection of wines available here, we could have conducted the winery tour right there. However, as I said, we are dedicated, so, after lunch it was plan C, and on to Yering Station. Here, we actually engaged in a spot of wine tasting, and tasted some lovely wines. Some of the history of the local aboriginals, from the Wurrundjeri tribe, is incorporated in the labelling of the wine from Yering Station. The facilities here are outstanding, and include a separate tasting room, as well as a wine bar and restaurant, function rooms and expansive gardens and lawns. Well worth a visit.

The sun was setting in the west as we made our way home after a very pleasant day. I can thoroughly recommend a trip to the Yarra Valley as a great way to spend a Sunday. Maybe next time we'll see plan A through to the end and visit Eyton on Yarra and Coldstream Hills, and all the others I haven't even mentioned.

DIVE REPORT - OCTOBER 17 1999

120 FT SUBMARINE

BY ANDY MASTROWICZ

With Spring almost over I decided it was time to get the Southwind out of mothballs.

A quick check over the boat and trailer found the trailer lights weren't working, so the second maintenance job for the year was replacing the damaged cabling on the trailer. The first was replacing the switch panel after last Xmas's drowning at Narooma. There is always a last something to do on the boat. This done, dive gear packed and boat hooked up to car, I settled back to wait for calls.

The phone calls didn't start till late and it looked like I was going to struggle to fill my boat - let alone 5. Neville Viapree and John Lawler had booked in early, however John was without his faithful Haines (it was in the workshop having a service). Peter Vleugel and Mick Jeacle rang in with boats. Leo Maybus rang in with a late start and was bringing his Dad's boat. So by 6.30 p.m. I had 5 boats and 10 divers. It was going to be fun splitting 2 divers per boat. However, the VSAG club did not disappoint, by 8.30 p.m. I had 21 divers - what a great show for a change.

Well, on Sunday Gail and I even managed to get to Sorrento before 9.00 a.m., and all boats were on the water by 9.30 a.m., which was pretty good considering past efforts. I knew this was too good to be true as I looked across to see Mick's engine cowl off and jumper leads snaking across to Peter Vleugel's boat! A bit of on-the-water currency exchange - and I wasn't sure who was charging who.

Anyway, we were soon heading towards the Heads into a stiff North-Wester, the worst wind you could hope for coming round the point, and we did get rather wet on the way down. It did not look good for going outside the Heads - that is until we got nearer Point Nepean and found a totally different picture. The Heads and Rip area were flat with little or no swell. So we headed on out through the middle, and 10 minutes later Mick did it again by dropping the buoy anchor on top of the 120 ft Sub! It wasn't long before there were 3 empty boats, with Gail, Martin and myself, Leo and his Dad, all taking in the sun while we waited for divers to surface.

Poor old Leo did it again - always something else going wrong with his "Michelin Man" suit - this time his inflator valve packed it in - he does have some bad luck. As

the divers started popping to the surface all you could hear was what a great dive and wasn't the visibility great. Two new-comers to the Club - Sarah and Roger - were most impressed with the dive (will expect a report from you Sarah). Once back aboard we headed back to Pt. Lonsdale for lunch and a spot of fishing for Leo and Mick (again after the elusive squid). Good to hear you got one in without messing up the boat. The day just seemed to get better and better with no wind and slack water about 1.00 p.m.

The second dive split the boats between Point Nepean and Queenscliff. Martin Talliana and myself decided that a drift across Point Nepean was the go. We hopped in when we came across a school of Salmon churning the surface in a feeding frenzy over the reef. Unfortunately the school was gone before we could spot them again under water. We spent the first 20 minutes scooting over a weedy crater ridden bottom - not unlike the back beaches - for the next 20 mins we were joined by Lauren Maybus and Andrew Marshall. The dive was not as interesting as I expected, as we drifted around the point and onto larger sandy patches. Next time a couple of hundred metres further out into the Rip might be the go.

Sarah and Roger had their second dive on Mick's favourite reef drift just off Queenscliff. The smile on their faces after a 40 minute drift said it all, and no they didn't spot the 10 pounder they were shown the week before. A pleasant trip back to Sorrento was followed by an even more pleasant and refreshing sojourn at Tony's Bar & Grill, where VSAG managed to take up every chair and table available, almost drink all the beer and eat most of the available chips.

A great day, and thanks to all the boat owners and divers for making this a truly fun day.

MELBOURNE CUP 1999

by Josie Mare

Melbourne cup sweep results for 1999,
held at Wilson's Prom dive weekend are as follows:

First Prize:	Lauren Maybus \$28.00
Second Prize:	John Lawler \$12.00
Third Prize:	Darren Pearce and Josie Mare \$8.00 (\$4.00 each)

LORD JOHN THE JOLLY AND THE BEAUTIFUL YOUNG PRINCESS

BY ANONYMOUS

(loosely based on a true story of a Melbourne Cup Weekend at Wilsons' Prom)

Once upon a time, a very, very long time ago, in a remote and picturesque land, there lived a beautiful young princess called Princess Lauralei and her father, King Leo the Lizardheart.

The realm of King Leo the Lizardheart was known as Victorious and at it's heart was the thriving village of Stillborne. As much as King Leo the Lizardheart loved the hustle and bustle of Stillborne, he also enjoyed relaxing at his seaside castle, known affectionately as Wishing Point.

Whenever the opportunity arose, King Leo the Lizardheart would take Princess Lauralei to Wishing Point so that she too could share in the grandeur of this unique area of the kingdom. He also revelled in instructing her in the numerous pastimes that he and the select members of the Victorious Sages And Gurus club considered essential to a happy and congenial lifestyle.

One of the activities the old king and his VSAG club enjoyed most was setting sail on the high seas in their trusty craft and steering through all the obstacles and hazards the sea had to offer until they found a safe harbour. Once there, they would settle for their midday repast, some ribald banter and some very tall tales.

One fine and sunny day, King Leo the Lizardheart decided to indulge himself in a little relaxation and set sail with some of his most trusted friends, Lord Andrew the All-powerful, Lord John the Jolly, Lord John the Junior, Lord Roger the Rascal, Lady Sarah the Serene, Lord Darren the Desperate, Lady Josie the Jezebel, and Lady Fanny (don't even think about it!).

They set sail early and as the craft bobbed around in the water, all were enjoying their repast, the tales and their day on the high seas. Princess Lauralei decided it was time to learn some new skills and she was especially keen to learn the art of seamanship so as to impress her doting father. With that aim in mind, she coaxed Lord Andrew the All-powerful to instruct her in the finer points of sailing a craft. Lord Andrew was more

than happy to indulge the lovely young Princess whom he had known all her life and cherished as he would his own child. However, being the shrewd and cunning person he was, he instantly saw a wonderful opportunity to ingratiate himself further into the King's favour. He was however, suitably impressed at how quickly the young Princess learned and as the sea was relatively calm, he allowed her to steer his beloved craft towards home knowing full well that if she ran aground, King Leo the Lizardheart would replace his craft with a bigger, better one. He wasn't called Lord Andrew the All-powerful without good reason!

Upon seeing the young Princess at the helm, Lord John the Jolly, called a challenge from his boat to race him to the shore. The exuberant young Princess eagerly accepted and the race was on. Lord John had no doubts about his ability to outrun the novice or he never would have issued the challenge in the first place. He was soon severely distressed though, for try as he might, he couldn't catch up with the young Princess. Even with a novice at the helm, he was unable to keep pace and was unashamedly outclassed. He never in his wildest nightmares thought the young Princess would run "full steam ahead" as she did. What thoughts of disaster must have been going through Lord Andrew the All-powerful's mind at the time. Lord John the Jolly could only imagine!!

The outcome of the race was, of course, the source of much joshing amongst the Kingdom as Lord John the Jolly was a fine old sailor and had captained many a vessel in his day. He was considered by all in the kingdom to be a fine sailor and to be outdone by a young upstart was such a cruel and savage blow to his ego. However, as the upstart was King Leo the Lizardheart's favourite daughter, none of Lord John the Jolly's bruised feelings could ever be exposed. He would have to "grin and bear it" for the sake of his loyalty to the King and his position within the court and the Victorious Sages And Gurus club

If Lord John the Jolly had ever thought the sea could be a cruel and savage mistress, he was about to discover that living in a kingdom with a snotty-nosed Princess who thought she was better, smarter and more daring than those who were older and wiser, was much, much worse.

Life at court for the old sailor became miserable. His friends continued their sneering and derisive remarks. Even those aboard his craft on that fateful day could not be trusted to remain loyal. He would have to find some way to remedy this situation and save his reputation. The young princess would have to be taught a lesson - soon!

(to be continued)

(maybe)

FIJI - NOVEMBER 1999

BY PETER VLEUGEL

Having gone to the 1998 VSAG Christmas Dinner , and enjoyed our meal, an auction was conducted for two tickets to Fiji. Bidding was fierce and frantic but our last bid was the winning bid. This trip was donated to the club, by Air Nauru and John Goulding. As a club we are very lucky to have people like John in our midst , who are kind enough to organise such a wonderful donation.

Leaving Melbourne on the Wednesday before Cup weekend, the flight to Fiji was scheduled to leave at 10pm. We had both planned our day to the last minute with lots to organise as we were leaving our business for the two weeks. Earlier that morning, John phoned and suggested that the plane would be leaving at 7pm....3 hours early. That threw our day into utter chaos. We boarded the plane and headed for Brisbane for a short stop over and then to Nauru again for a short time. Our next stop was a small island known as Tarowa, a tiny coral atoll in the middle of nowhere, then a further 3hrs flight to Fiji . We propped at a nearby hotel for the night enabling us to catch an early morning flight to Savu Savu in the north island of Vanua Levu, which was about 1 hrs flight in a twin otter.

Arriving at Savu Savu, we were greeted by Frank from the Jean Michel Cousteau Resort. This was about 30 mins drive from the airport. This resort is on a small peninsula set in tropical gardens, 25 thatched bures with first-class amenities, even a double hammock just outside the front door which was used extensively. We settled in but it only took 2hrs to get the itches... the diving itches that is. So we checked out the dive shop which was owned by an Aussie named Garry Alford who originally came from Townsville and has been in Fiji for about 6 years. A terrific bloke and a good diver, he has about 10 local lads working for him as guides, drivers and helpers. One of the dive masters, a big burly Fijian bloke, with a beard by the name of Esra suggested that they must take me out for the check-out dive but I said well that's OK but who is checking who out? He said... we'll see how much air you use. He couldn't stop laughing every time he signed me OK? Under the water, I handed him my reg from my mouth

suggesting he could be short of air. That broke the ice between us and immediately we became quite good friends. We both came up with an equal amount of air.

On our trips out to dive sites, he and I would sit at the front of the boat and have quite in-depth conversations about his time in the army and extensive world travels to all the trouble spots where he has served.

The type of dive resort that this is, caters for the once a year diver -typical resort diving, nothing over 20m in depth. I soon sorted that out when I told them all I wanted to dive on , were vertical walls with no bottom in sight. The first real dive was a site called Hole in the Wall, a bommie at 10m to 100m plus. There was a slight current running and lots of feeding large tuna, spanish mackerel, spotted sweetlips, and barracuda with bronze whalers in the depths. I managed to sneak down to 48m for a bit of a cruise, there was lots to see as the viz was about 100m.... fantastic. Each time when I got back on board the boat, they would ask me how deep, and how long. The answer was always 20m. until they spotted my computer read out. Every second dive of the day was relatively shallow as they were quite conservative on depth because the nearest chamber is in Suva. They were generally reef, reef, and more reef dives, but still very enjoyable.

The next world class site was a dive site called Dream House, a feeding station when the current was running. The first time we dove that, it was extremely strong and all the big fish were there in good numbers. There were about 35 reef sharks swimming around us all the time we were on the bottom. My dive buddy was the dive boss Garry, we slipped down to 45m and sat there for a while hoping that we would pick up a hammerhead shark or two but it wasn't to be. It was a very exciting dive.

One day, we ventured to an island called Namenalala Island which was 1hr 45mins by boat. This was the place to see the big fish cruise in from the depths of the Koro Sea, barracuda, spanish mackerel, dog tooth tuna, mantas and large sharks - saw them all. Great day's diving.

On the last dive day, Esra told me he would take me to a dive site that would knock my socks off. It was called the Big Blue - a wall that went from 5m and

they suggested that the bottom of it was on the Barrier Reef. Gin clear water, this wall was one of the best I had seen. I cruised along it at 62m on my own as all the other divers figured 20m was deep enough, extremely large gorgonian fans about every 2m along this wall and crevasses that went from the top to as far as you could see below. There were a few large fish cruising by which was a bonus, probably one of the nicest dives that I have done on reef.

The dive boat that took us out was an 11m fly bridge twin engine reasonably fast boat with all the creature comforts catering for 12 divers, and extremely well set up. On every dive, we were accompanied by a videographer, a young Brazilian with a great sense of humour and a very entertaining person. Each evening before dinner, they would show the days diving on the TV at the bar, which was nice to see. We also had a marine biologist diving with us each day, who explained the technical side of the ecology. I did 18 dives for the time we were away, we both had a very enjoyable and relaxing holiday and it was extremely difficult to say goodbye to all the staff at the resort whom we had got to know quite well. We also met a huge amount of great people from all over the world.

Sincere thanks to John Goulding and Air Nauru for their generosity and arranging the flights. Ra Ra..

NOTICE

On behalf of the V.S.A.G. Committee and Members, I would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals and companies for their generous support of VSAG's Annual Raffle that was held during the 1999 VSAG Christmas party at The Ivy on Friday, 26th November.

The evening was a huge success, and enjoyed by a total of 65 attendees.

A big thank you to all who came along and joined in the festivities and celebrations – I hope you all enjoyed yourselves as much as Gail and I did, and it certainly was a great celebration to mark the end of, and say goodbye to, 1999 – our next Christmas party will be held in the new millennium !

Contributions generously donated by :

Bob Scott	Wetsuit
Dive Experience, Williamstown	\$50 Gift Voucher
Peter Jones	2 x Magnums Wine
	2 x \$40 Meal Vouchers to Monash
	Family Bistro / Doolies Irish Bar
Helen Fryday	Cool-Pack from Corporate
	Nike Wetbag
John Lawler	1.2 Kg Tasmanian Smoked Salmon
VSAG Committee Members	2 x Xmas Hampers
Robin Woods, Alwoods	4 x Tank Tests
Josie Mare	Electric Toothbrush
Chris Llewellyn	Dryzabone / Leather Goods
Big Shot Bins	3 x ESKI Fridges

And, of course, VSAG generously donated an overnight accommodation package including a bottle of wine on arrival and a cooked breakfast for 2 at the Mercure Hotel, as well as a 65 litre Cooler Pack from the proceeds of the VSAG monthly raffle.

Thank you, and have a very Merry Christmas and a very safe and Happy New Year for the Year 2000 !

Andrew Mastrowicz President

DIVE REPORT 28TH NOVEMBER

BY JOHN LAWLER DIVE CAPTAIN

It was anybody's guess just what the weather was going to do on Sunday 28th, as the report on the Saturday night was giving all sorts of messages, but sufficient enough to cancel the scheduled dive at Flinders. Four boats arrived at Sorrento for the rescheduled venue. All the boats - Mick Jeacle, Andy Mastrowicz, Peter Vleugel and mine had full crews, a great sight it was to see us all powering down the bay to the heads.

The back beaches looked ok for some crayfish hunting, whilst there was some hesitation just out from the rip where the swells were up a bit, we found the conditions improved as we moved down the back beaches.

One week prior to this dive, Robert Birtles found some exciting territory around 2 kms past London Bridge, this was the spot we headed for. Mick and Peter stopped well before this on their chosen patch of sea, but my crew and Andy took the plunge on our new found area.

Don Abell was my dive buddy for this dive and it was great to have this (new) Life Member, not only out on a dive, but diving from my boat. Don's work pressures and other activities don't allow much local diving these days so it was good to see him out for the day. We had reasonably good cray territory and we covered what seemed many hectares of ocean bottom, but the spiny creatures were not for us today in this area.

Andy and Joe however were having better luck. Joe spotted a large cray and left to the skills of Andy the crustacean was bagged. But who's cray is this, was the question put Andy. Spotted by Joe, bagged by Andy?? A diplomatic response came back that "we'll all have a share over the Christmas Table".

Back to Peter and his crew who were also crying empty catch bags but were full of optimism for their territory and were about to have a second hunt. By this time Mick had gone back into the quieter waters of the bay.

We waited for these divers to finish and alas, when the team surfaced, their bags were again empty of crays.

We returned to the area off Queenscliff as Don and I decided to do a drift dive, what a dive it was. The current was running at a pace not too hard to handle and fast enough to allow for maximum territory coverage. We surveyed many ledges and holes but still no crays. Next came an amazing sight. Thousands of Spiny crabs heaped on top of each other in a most bizarre mating ritual. Heaped five or more on top of each facing North, this line was around ten or twelve metres long. This was a sight put on by nature that I have never seen in such a large group although I have seen some groups of ten or so mating.

For some reason, (what is it about diving that signals "something's up"?) I stopped and had cause to look around. Right above me was a huge and I mean huge, Sting ray just moving very slowly over this spectacle. The ray was soon gone but it did get my heart pumping and it was really a motion of beauty as it disappeared into the distance.

Time to pack up the gear and head back to Sorrento. What a great day we had and a lot of fun in the true VSAG style.

Thanks to all who came out for the day and on behalf the divers on the day, thanks to the generosity of the boat owners for making it all possible.

DIVING IN HEAVEN

BY JOHN LAWLER

On Sunday 5th, December the VSAG club dive was moved from the Uralba/Plane Wreck site at Patterson River to Sorrento, due to the muddy conditions from the weeks big winds.

It was decided by our Dive Captain, Shane Martin, to do a quick wreck dive and get back into the bay for the slack water flood at around 12.30. The wreck of the Coogee was chosen and very soon after arrival at the area the wreck was located. I stayed up for this dive as I was keen to do the slack water dive with as much time and energy as possible. The bay on a slack flood holds up the some of the best diving to be had in our waters, with the exception of (in my humble opinion) Wilson's Prom.

The day was quickly turning into a magical sunny day, the earlier clouds had all but gone and it was bright blue sky all around and best of all the wind had dropped to almost zero.

This produced the classic diving day and conditions for the bay, to top the situation off no shipping movement to be seen!

Into the Sonar semi dry, on with the tank and over the side with my safety line in hand. My computer was registering just ten feet when immediately below the beauty of the bottom at sixty five feet was visible in all directions. This is one of those sights that once seen is never forgotten. The vivid masses of differing colour offerings was over all the territory and I had just landed gently into a area full of rocky outcrops, drop-offs and ledges.

The slack water was right on time for me as there was no movement at all so no pulling on the line to make the dive hard. The hardest decision I had to make every few minutes was where to go as in every direction there was unbelievable offerings of bommies, drop-offs and exciting areas of dark caverns and holes. So clear was the water that I could secure the pick and swim to any area for an investigation doing so with great freedom, as the line was generally always visible. This made for very safe diving as with no current and clear vis the line

was always in sight and reach. I covered a lot of beautiful and very exciting territory under these conditions. Along the deep ledges were all manner of fish dozing and not too concerned about this strange thing arriving at their shelter.

The most interesting, yet disappointing note to this dive was the fact that I am diving in what avid cray hunters would call, the most ideal locations for the cray. After some forty five minutes in these ideal conditions I did not see one rock lobster!!? The dive computer is telling me it really is time to go and probably detects that I am being a bit stubborn as I really did not want to leave. And why not. After all, this dive I just completed was as close as one could get to "diving in heaven".

One final observation on the condition of our bay in this area is that with all the fish life around and in the reefs, it would seem to this diver that the bay at the Southern end seems to be in really good shape. The plant life looks healthy and the coral outcrops quite strong and plentiful.

THE ALIENS'S HAVE HIT PLAGUE PROPORTIONS

BY SHANE MARTIN
(MARINE AWARENESS PROGRAMS)

Some came to Port Phillip Bay secretly hiding in the dark places of ships. The more mature of the species clung on like limpets placed on World War ships during the dark times of war and crossed the seas. Slowly did they slip away into the dirtiest and darkest parts of the bay, until their numbers started to grow. The larger individuals laid up to 19 million eggs.. The fertilised eggs then drifted in the under sea winds with the other plankton for up to three months before swimming to the bottom and metamorphosing into immature invaders. Juveniles reached sexual maturity in a year and now the cycle continues. The creatures like the cold waters of the bay as it reminds them of their ancestors homes around the coasts of Russia, China, Korea, Japan and as far north as the Bering Straits. The invaders of course are the, **“Northern Pacific Sea Stars”** *Asterias Amurensis*.

They were first reported in Port Phillip Bay in late 1995 but were considered a couple of isolated cases. Time has rolled on, with only minor inroads and expense spared by the government to understand and ascertain the destructive potential of this invader. Now in 1999 I am sad to say that in some areas they are reaching plague proportions. The busy Patterson River which bustles with fish life is one such location now suffering under the load of the invader. Other locations are reporting increased sightings from Dromana to the City. The spawning time is quickly approaching, thought to coincide with the rise in temperature of the water after winter. In my opinion they choose the time when the bay is at its coolest and closer to the temperature of it's ancestral home. It is regarded as one of the most near shore voracious predators eating Mussels, Scallops, Clams, Sea Stars, Worms, Dead fish, Fish waste, etc. They can sense a feed over a fair distance and can dig shallow holes to obtain it.

Well this was the bad news being heralded across the land that the dreaded sea star would reek havoc and leave a trail of destruction across our beloved bay. I included thought that dire times were around the corner for the bay.

I am now happy to paint another scenario where mother nature has taken a hand. Flushes of fresh water in the rivers definitely seems to upset the sea stars apple-cart causing huge loss of life , as has been observed in Patterson River. Some of the survivors were washed out into the bay to be met by a local mob of angry , hungry eleven armed sea stars, [*Coscinasterias muricata*]. These creatures prefer cleaner waters where there is a more abundance of food. The equally active and voracious eleven armed sea stars numbers are kept in check by the availability of the food source which predominantly is molluscs, (Mussels , Oysters , Scallops , Snails , etc.). In my opinion and from my observations, I believe that North Pacific Sea Star is definitely on the menu. Where you get a bloom of food, you get a bloom of predators. So as a conclusion I believe a balance will be reached and there may even be an upside to the North Pacific invaders in that they live and clean up areas where nothing else will . We all are responsible for their continued success as we are the ones who pollute and dirty up coastal regions which drives out the locals and creates a predator free zone for them to get an arm hold. They are also very good at cleaning up left-over food in fish tanks which can, if left un-checked, pollute the water .

MARINE PEST DAY

SUNDAY 20th February 2000

Our Bay is being invaded

What if:

600 divers and 400 boats got together to clean up a
Northern area of Port Phillip Bay?

Ballast water from visiting ships has discharged into the bay.
With it come foreign marine pests such as Japanese Kelp,
Giant Sea Worms and Northern Pacific Seastar.

Something needs to be done.

Collection, surveillance and research.

Calling all boat owners, divers & helpers

We need you!

Show you care for the future of the bay.

On 20/02/2000 Environment Bay Day, divers will gather to collect
marine pests. Boat owners can facilitate by taking divers out to the
selected location.

Cetec and 3AK are coordinating this first time action.

For registration of interest please contact Cetec on

Ph: (03) 9544 0111 or Fax: (03) 9544 9122 or

Emaail: cetec@031.aone.net.au



TUNA FARM DIVING STARTS/DIVE ACCIDENTS INCREASE

SPUMS Journal Volume 29 No. 2 June 1999

This edition contains several articles on submarine escape techniques, covering the development over time of suitable escapes procedures, from the earliest attempts in the mid 1800s to the latest methods used with the Collins class submarines. All are very interesting and well worth a read.

However this month's article review covers the introduction of tuna farm diving in South Australia in the early 1990s, and the problems encountered which led to an abnormally high incidence of dive related accidents. The authors of the article are *David Doolette* and *Derek Craig*.

In response to a 67% reduction in catch quotas in the early 1990s, the tuna fishing industry in Port Lincoln, SA, began "farming" as a means of value adding to the fish. The tuna are caught each year in the Great Australian Bight, and herded in to semi-rigid tow cages, which are then towed at approximately one knot towards Port Lincoln. Tows can last two to three weeks. The tuna are then transferred to stationary pens in the coastal waters near Port Lincoln. They are fed on pilchards and during the next one to eight months the fish are carefully hand harvested to avoid damage to the flesh.

Divers are used to examine, construct and repair tow cages, stationary pens and moorings. Divers also monitor the herding and feeding of the tuna and remove any dead fish from the enclosures. Harvesting is carried out by surface swimmers and divers.

The diving is typically very strenuous, involving blue water diving from boats in the open ocean in adverse sea conditions. Potentially dangerous equipment is always involved (nets, cranes, pumps etc). The dives usually are repetitive and multi-day exposures.

By 1995, the Department for Industrial Affairs had raised concerns regarding dive operations within the tuna farming industry. Workcover Corporation had received claims for 39 diving related injuries (at a total cost to date of over A\$1.5M) and 17 divers had been treated for decompression illness.

The main reason for these types of figures is that the tuna farming industry was initially developed by fisherman with little knowledge of safe working diving procedures. Recreational divers were mainly used for the work, and procedures were developed without due consideration being given to diving exposure, often resulting in risky dive profiles with unnecessary multiple ascents. No secondary nor emergency air supplies were used, despite the significant danger of entrapment in nets.

This situation has been reversed, and the tuna farm diving industry can now only use divers with occupational training. A Code of Practice for Tuna Farm Diving has been implemented, and diving practices now involve the use of positive pressure full face masks, voice communications, surface supplied bottled gas (instead of petrol driven compressors) with backup supply and bail out air.

Diver health surveys have also been carried out in a research project investigating decompression risk and tuna farm diving. The results of these surveys will hopefully provide valuable information to be used for all aquaculture industries.

VICTORIAN SUB AQUA GROUP**A.C.N. 004 591 575****STATEMENT BY DIRECTORS**

1. In the opinion of the directors of Victorian Sub Aqua Group:
 - (a) the company is not a reporting entity;
 - (b) the financial statements are drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of the results of the company for the financial year ended 30th June 1999, and the state of affairs of the company at 30th June 1999 in accordance with the basis of accounting described in Note 1; and
 - (c) as at the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.
2. The company's accounts have been made out in accordance with applicable approved accounting standards and Australian Accounting Standards.

By Order of the Board

A. Mastrowicz - Director

J Lawler - Director

Melbourne,
November, 1999