



Fathoms

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2016

*Grey Nurse Shark at the rear entrance to
Fish Rock Cave, South West Rocks, N.S.W.*

Photo by Charmaine Alford



*MORE REVISED SAFETY GUIDELINES
SOUTH AFRICAN TRIP - PART 2
BRYOZOA
PLANNED VSAG TRIP TO VANUATU*

Postal Address:

VSAG, 139 Overport Rd, Frankston South VIC 3199

www.vsag.org.au



MARCH 22ND - 6.15PM OR 6.45PM AT VILLAGE CROWN CINEMAS

MARCH 23RD - 7PM AT THE ASTOR THEATRE, ST. KILDA

There is still time to book tickets and join us for the Ocean Film Festival. We have a small group booked for the first session at Crown on 22nd March. If you would like to join us then please book tickets <http://oceanfilmfestivalaustralia.com.au/tour-dates.html>

For those who can't make it on the 22nd, or for those who just want to go again, there's a session at the Astor the following night <http://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/ocean-film-festival-australia-melbourne-astor-23-march-2016-tickets-19739341903?aff=erelexpcat>

This year's films feature captivating cinematography, complete with awe-inspiring underwater scenes and fast-paced wave sequences that have been captured from unbelievable vantage points. Mesmerising images of schooling fish, colourful coral gardens and jellyfish blooms are complemented with up-close footage of curious marine creatures such as seals, dolphins, turtles and whales.

In 2016 we are once again proud to be supporting **ProjectAWARE**. **\$1 from every ticket sold will be donated to ProjectAWARE** to support the important work they do protecting our ocean environment and the marine animals that call our oceans home.

DIVE RIGHT IN... BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW...



Fathoms

Est. 1954 Official Journal of the Victorian Sub-Aqua Group, Inc.

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NOTICES

VSAG Committee meets at 8 p.m. every 2nd Tuesday of the month
(except in January)

All Members Welcome

The Water Rat Hotel, 256 Moray St, South Melbourne VIC 3205



**VSAG Monthly meetings are at 8 p.m. on the
3rd TUESDAY of each month**

at THE WATER RAT HOTEL

256 MORAY ST, SOUTH MELBOURNE

All are welcome to join us for a meal at 7 p.m.
before the meeting.

VSAG on Facebook

Did you know VSAG now has a
Facebook page? Check it out at
[https://www.facebook.com/
vsag.divers](https://www.facebook.com/vsag.divers) and 'Like' us.



VSAG Dive Equipment Box

VSAG now has a private transient equipment box located at:

The Scuba Doctor dive shop, 1/49 Peninsula Avenue, Rye VIC 3941.

Equipment that is not in-use by VSAG divers and boat owners can now be
held in our black storage box. Currently: 2 x Oxygen kits, 1 x DAN first aid

kit, plus 1 x Boat Ramp Permit. Please use this facility responsibly. ❖



Your New VSAG Committee 2015–2016

To email all VSAG committee members: committee@vsag.org.au

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REVISED CLUB SAFETY GUIDELINES

The next in the series from the Committee regarding VSAG's revised safety procedures

MARINE RADIO OPERATION

An essential skill for all sea divers.

If you haven't yet got your VHF operators licence do so now, you never know when you are going to need it. Oh! and learn the phonetic Alphabet ASAP.

You should also download and read Marine Safety Victoria's Marine Radio Communications flyer, June 2004.

Marine Radios

VHF Marine Radios are a great asset to all who use them. They are not chat lines however, and should be used for working messages only. Misuse of the equipment could disrupt other users within the area. All VHF radio users are legally required to hold an operators licence and the vessel to which the radio is fitted must have a ship radio licence. A 'station' is a term for a VHF Radio. As a general rule listen to the channel for 30 seconds before transmitting to ensure it is not already in use.



Channels

Channel	Purpose
16	International Distress, safety and calling
6	Primary Inter ship
8, 72, 77	Inter ship
12, 14	Port Operations
67	Small Craft safety
M, M2	Marina Special Licence
2, 24, 26, 28	Ship to shore (public correspondence)
6, 67, 73	Search And Rescue Co-ordination

VHF Signals

The range of VHF is line of sight and has an Inter-ship range of 25-40 kilometres. Ship to shore range is about 50 kilometres. The dual watch (D/W) facility allows you to monitor two channels via switching. **Do not transmit on dual watch.** Digital selective calling uses CRS but requires an additional kit for the radio set.

The capture effect is when a receiver within range of two stations will receive only the more powerful or closer signal; the other signal will be lost.

Aerials

Aerial should be high and upright and clear of other aerials by at least 1 metre. An emergency aerial should also be carried.

Control of Communication

Ship to shore - coast radio station

Inter-ship - station calling

Search and Rescue - Vessel in distress, relay station, Coastguard, on scene vessel / aircraft

Duration of Calls

Test Call / Radio Check - 10 sec

Calling on Channel 16 - 1 min

Calling again on Channel 16 - 3 min

Listen on channel before calling - 30 sec

Distress Calls

Coast Radio Melbourne and some volunteer services monitor VHF Channel 16. Each station has an obligation to respond to a distress call: write down time, name, position, nature of distress, no. of people on board and additional information.

If monitoring service says 'wait' this means they will respond within 10 min's. Any longer than that should be given a reason prior. Only repeat things three times if it is a distress call. Other wise use their name once and your name twice.

Distress calls should make the following 7 points in order :

1. Distress call
2. Identity
3. Position (Note that the position is given in geographical area as distance 'from object' not 'to object' when working out bearing. Otherwise use Lat. and Long.)
4. Nature of distress
5. Information for search and rescue
6. Invitation to reply



Message	Meaning
<p>Mayday (Distress)</p>	<p>Definition: When a vessel or person is in grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance. fire, accident damage, lee shore situation (under lee shore is when you are sheltered by the shore), diver not surfaced, man lost overboard, person is gravely ill.</p> <p>Example: MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY. This is Evelyn Rose, Evelyn Rose, Evelyn Rose MAYDAY Evelyn Rose.</p> <p>My position is: 180 degrees, one mile from buoy number 1. I am sinking and require immediate assistance Four crew members on board, all safety equipment and EPIRB at 406 MHz</p>
<p>Mayday Relay</p>	<p>Mayday relays are transmitted when the station in distress cannot itself transmit a distress signal or when, although not in a position to assist a distress message is heard that has not been acknowledged.</p> <p>Example: MAYDAY RELAY, MAYDAY RELAY, MAYDAY RELAY. This is Boat Fulmar, Boat Fulmar, Boat Fulmar MAYDAY Evelyn Rose.</p> <p>Position is: 180 degrees, one mile from buoy number 1. Boat sinking and requires immediate assistance Four crew members on board, all safety equipment and EPIRB at 406 MHz</p>
<p>Pan Pan</p> <p>Note : Pan Pan Medico no longer exists. Just use PAN PAN</p>	<p>Definition: When a station has a very urgent message to transmit concerning safety of a ship, aircraft or person.</p> <p>Example: PAN PAN, PAN PAN, PAN PAN Hello all stations, Hello all stations, Hello all stations This is Evelyn Rose, Evelyn Rose, Evelyn Rose My position is: 180 degrees, one mile from buoy number 1. I have been in a collision and require assistance of a tug</p>
<p>Seelonce Mayday</p>	<p>Radio Silence Definition. Imposing radio silence by controlling station</p>
<p>Seelonce Distress</p>	<p>Radio Silence Definition. Issued by other station</p> <p>Example: MAYDAY - SEELONCE MAYDAY, SEELONCE MAYDAY, SEELONCE</p>
<p>Securite</p>	<p>Security, Security, Security Hello all stations, Hello all stations, Hello all stations This is Evelyn Rose, Evelyn Rose, Evelyn Rose My position is: 180 degrees, one mile from buoy number 1. My engine has broken down and I am anchoring in a southbound traffic lane, Request ships keep clear, over.</p>

NAME OF SHIP.....
CALL SIGN.....

DISTRESS TRANSMITTING PROCEDURES
(For use only when Immediate Assistance required)

1. Ensure transmitter is switched to VHF Channel 16.
2. If possible **transmit two tone Alarm Signal for 1/2 to 1 minute.**
3. Then say:

MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY
THIS IS..... (Ship's name or call sign 3 times)..... MAYDAY
followed by ship's name or call sign

POSITION.....

Nature of distress.....

Aid required..... OVER

4. **Listen** for a reply and if none, repeat above procedure, particularly during the 3-minute silence period commencing at each hour and half-hour.

Example -

If possible, Alarm Signal followed by:
MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY.
This is EVELYN ROSE, EVELYN ROSE, EVELYN ROSE
MAYDAY, EVELYN ROSE

Position: 54 24 north 018 33 West.
I am on fire and require immediate assistance. OVER.



Common Terminology

All after - used after the pro-word 'SAY AGAIN' to request a repetition of a portion of a message.

All before - used after the pro-word 'SAY AGAIN' to request a repetition of a portion of a message.

Correct - reply to repetition of a message that has been preceded by the pro-word's 'READ BACK FORCHECK' when it has been correctly repeated.

Correction - spoken during the transmission of a message means - An error has been made in this transmission. Cancel the last word or group. The correct word or group follows.

In Figures - The following numeral or group of numerals are to be written as figures.

In Letters - The following numeral or group of numerals are to be written in letters as spoken.

I Read Back - If the receiving station is doubtful about the accuracy of the whole or any part of a message it may repeat it back to the sending station, preceding the repetition with the pro-word's 'I READ BACK'

I Say Again - I am repeating transmission or portion indicated.

I Spell - I shall spell the next word or group of letters phonetically.

Out - This is the end of working to you. The end of work between two stations is indicated by each station adding the word 'OUT' at the end of the last reply.

Over - The invitation to reply. **Note that the phrase 'OVER AND OUT' is never used.**

Radio Check - Please tell me the strength and the clarity of my transmission.

Received - Used to acknowledge receipt of a message, i.e., YOUR NUMBER...RECEIVED. In cases of language difficulties, the word 'ROMEO' is used.

Say Again - Repeat your message or portion referred to i.e., SAY AGAIN ALL AFTER... SAY AGAIN ADDRESS etc. (Note: -This is typical of the need to memorise all these 'catch phrases'. To use the word REPEAT would be wrong, REPEAT is used to emphasize something).

Station Calling - Used when a station receives a call, which is intended for it, but is uncertain of the identification of the calling station.

This Is - This transmission is from the station whose call sign immediately follows. In cases of language difficulties the abbreviation DE spoken as DELTA ECHO is used.

Wait - If a called station is unable to accept traffic immediately it will reply to you with the pro-word 'WAIT'....

Minutes - If the probable duration of the waiting time exceeds 10 minutes the reason for the delay should be given.

Word After or Word Before - Used after the pro-word 'SAY'.

Again - to request repetition of a portion of a radiogram or message.

Wrong - Reply to a repetition of a radio telegram that has been preceded by the pro-word's 'I READ BACK', when it has been incorrectly repeated.

Other Points

Do :

- Practise your procedure drills
- Practise the Phonetic Alphabet

Don't :

- Transmit messages not authorised by the master (skipper)
- Operate a radio without a licence
- Transmit false or deceptive messages
- Transmit without an ID name or call sign
- Close down station
- Broadcast a message without expecting a reply
- Broadcast unnecessarily
- Communicate without using coast radio station

The Phonetic Alphabet

Letter	Channel	Pronunciation
A	Alpha	AL FAH
B	Bravo	BRAH VO
C	Charlie	CHAR LEE
D	Delta	DELL TAH
E	Echo	ECK OH
F	Foxtrot	FOKS TROT
G	Golf	GOLF
H	Hotel	HOH TELL
I	India	IN DEE AH
J	Juliet	JEW LEE ETT
K	Kilo	KEY LOH
L	Lima	LEE MAH
M	Mike	MIKE
N	November	NO VEM BER
O	Oscar	OSS CAH
P	Papa	PAH PAH
Q	Quebec	KEH BECK
R	Romeo	ROW ME OH
S	Sierra	SEE AIR RAH
T	Tango	TANG GO
U	Uniform	YOU NEE FORM
V	Victor	VIK TAH
W	Whiskey	WISS KEY
X	X-ray	ECKS RAY
Y	Yankee	YANG KEY
Z	Zulu	ZOO LOO

Home: Covered

Car: Covered

Are You?

DAN
ASIA • PACIFIC
Divers Alert Network

Can You Afford Not to be a DAN Member?

DAN Membership Costs Less than AUD\$6* per month
Be Prepared. Join the Experts in Dive Accident Management.

www.danasiapacific.org

*DAN Membership provides up to US\$150,000 Worldwide Emergency Evacuation Coverage. DAN Dive Injury Insurance is additional.

VSAG SCUBA DIVING HOLIDAY

Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu 16th-29th August 2016

Scuba Dive the SS President Coolidge, Million Dollar Reef, local reefs, USS Tucker, Tui Tawate and 2 plane wrecks.



SS President Coolidge http://www.google.com.au/imgres?imgurl=https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/d/db/The_Beached_Transport_SS_President_Coolidge%25E2%2580%2594October_1942.jpg&imgrefurl=https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_President_Coolidge&h=768&w=1024&tbnid=aMqLYm4qUDPcsM:&tbnh=150&tbnw=200&docid=C_zP7RkxRP6Y3M&itg=1&usq=kWNovc6QU1raPxQp6HhTbwSpAmw=

SS President Coolidge was a US luxury ocean liner that was completed in 1931. She was operated by Dollar Steamship Lines until 1938, and then by American President Lines until 1941. Length: 199 m. The wreck starts at approximately 20 metres and goes down to 70 metres. The luxury ocean liner was full of American troops during the Second World War when it hit a mine and sank. It is now one of the most amazing and accessible wrecks for divers.

During the Pacific Campaign of WWII over 100,000 allied troops and support staff were stationed on Santo and the time they spent there is still evident today. Other wrecks and remains from the war lie below the surface of the clear blue waters.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

How many VSAG divers may book on the trip?

8-10 divers and as many non-divers

When will I need to make a decision regarding booking on the trip?

Confirmation of numbers is due by 1st March and the deposit is due soon after

How experienced do I need to be?

Deep Diving qualifications (<40 metres) or equivalent experience is recommended. The depths on the SS President Coolidge are from 20-60 metres.

What scuba gear will I need?

Hire gear is available. Some divers bring their own dive gear and hire tanks and weight belts. 3mm steamers all year round

How many dives can you do on the Coolidge and other sites?

As there is so much to see on the Coolidge, divers do anything from a couple of dives to packages of ten or more - on the Coolidge alone. Other dive sites are very popular including Million Dollar Point

How many dives can we do a day?

Due to the depths of the dives on the Coolidge, divers do no more than two dives per day. Stops are conservative; your dive guide will inform you what stops are required for your particular dive. If divers have a maximum depth that they are comfortable with that may be accommodated.

What is the water temperature?

Varies with the season, between 26 and 32 degrees C

What sort of climate does Vanuatu have?

The climate ranges from oceanic tropical to sub-tropical in south; November to April hot and wet, with occasional hurricanes; temperature range 26 to 33 degrees Celsius; and, average rainfall ranges from 225 centimetres in south to 387.5 centimetres in north.

What languages do the locals (Ni-Vanuatu) speak?

Bislama (a type of pigeon English), French and English

Is there anything for the non-divers to do?

The scuba diving will be finished for the day by early afternoon leaving time to explore Aore Island or to take a ferry across to Santo to explore the tourist attractions. These include: **Millennium Cave, Blue Hole, Aore Island Plantation, Aore Island Cave to name a few**

COST (Please note that these prices may be subject to change and do not include transfers)

Air Travel:

Air Vanuatu 10/05/2016 – 18/05/2016
\$935.00pp

Accommodation:

Aore Island Resort 10/05/2016 – 18/05/2016 \$1,268.00pp

(Continental breakfast included)

Scuba:

Aore Adventure Sports & Lodge \$895.00pp

(10 dive package 69000vt plus any hire gear needed)

TOTAL:

Divers - \$3,098.00pp

Non Divers - \$2,203.00pp

VSAG Contact:

Benita McDonough

Email: benita@mcdonough.name

Mobile: 0419 399 000

Please confirm your interest by 1st March 2016 via email or mobile

Aore Island Resort

ESPIRITU SANTO

Accommodation:



Aore Island Resort is a boutique beachfront resort set on a private island only a 15 minute ferry ride from the main town of Luganville, Espiritu Santo. The resort is on a sandy beach with a backdrop of coconut palms and tropical rainforest. It has a unique Melanesian style restaurant offering terrace dining with views across the water to the distant mountains and town of Luganville. Enjoy a cocktail at sunset; dine on the famous Santo Beef or fresh Seafood and be entertained by local music. At night the lights reflect across the water creating a special ambiance.

The resort has 18 private well-appointed bungalows. There is a choice of Studio Beachfront Bungalows, ideal for couples, or spacious One Bedroom Beachfront and One Bedroom Gardenview Bungalows, perfect for families. The Beachfront Bungalows are on the water's edge - only a few steps across the sand to crystal blue water and amazing snorkelling.

Sitting on the balcony of your bungalow, relaxing and taking in the views is a pleasant way to pass a few hours, as is relaxing around the pool or enjoying a Melanesian massage.

For the active and adventurous, explore the island by kayaks or bike. Join a plantation walk, take a tour, or go fishing, trekking or caving.

From the Melanesian style architecture to the local string band and friendly staff, Aore Island Resort is more than a holiday it is a Vanuatu experience.



Scuba Diving:

There is no easier way to dive Santo than with Aore Adventure Sports & Lodge boat, "Full Boar", loading right out front of the beach house. We have a full wash and storage area for dive gear.

"Full Boar" is an 8m Stabicraft in survey for 12 and crew. We carry a remote area 1st aid and Dan O2 kit as well as a defibrillator (the only dive operator in town with one). My Dive Master / guide is Alfred Niko, AKA Alfred #1, the most experienced dive guide in Santo with over 13500+ dives on the Coolidge. I personally supervise all the dives, so we can cater for any type of experience with dive groups and tailor dive plans to suit.



Alfred (dive master) can show your divers things on the wreck that only he knows about, giving them a very unique experience. We also dive all local reefs, USS Tucker, Tui Tawate and 2 plane wrecks, plus spots that no one else has access to.

Our private beach is perfect for snorkelling and swimming. It has a sandy bottom with coral bombies scattered around and has a gradual slope from around 6m down to approx. 50m. All our dive equipment including 3 compressors are top of the range, 12ltr aluminum tanks with din/k valves and high end reg sets with computers and bcd's if required for hire. (We have both ladies and men's BCD's all with weight integration, safety marker buoys and whistles).



Double boat dives always include morning tea and a gourmet lunch on board. We have a fridge/ freezer on board for all food and ice cold drinks.

“Full Boar” is also set up for game fishing, island cruises, sunset cruises and we also have a 6 man towable shark for some fun in the sun. Soon we will also offer para sailing which will be unique for Santo.

Transfers from the airport to us on the island are 3000vt per head.

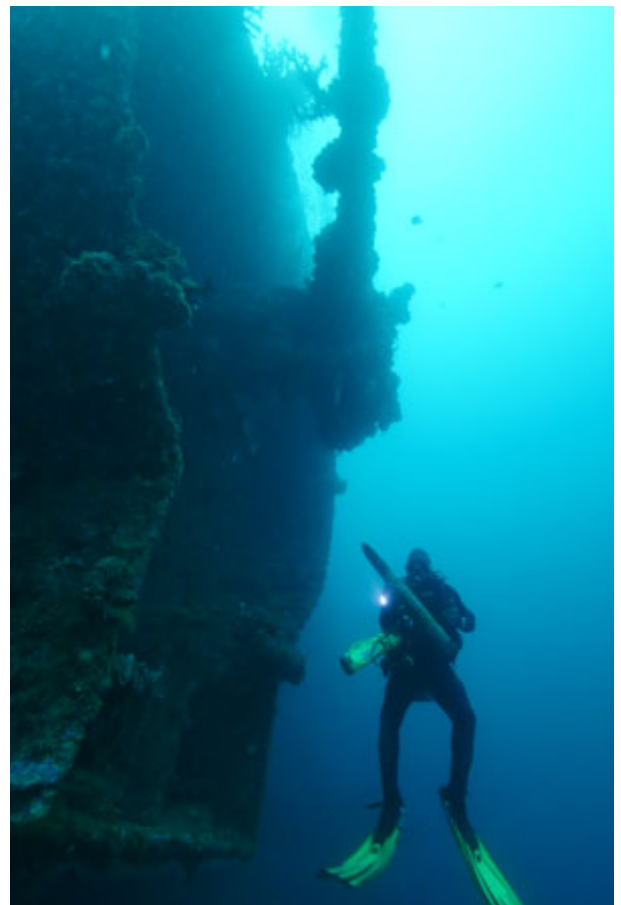
Double boat dives with tanks/weights/guide & gourmet morning tea/lunch provided is 15000vt per diver.

6 dive package 42000vt plus hire gear as needed.

10 dive package 69000vt plus any hire gear needed.

Hire gear as required 3000vt per double dive include a personal dive computer.

Dive light as required 1000vt per double dive. ❖



Stuck in My Crawfish

A blast from the past by Rob Kirk

An innocent post from a new diver in the VSAG Facebook group got some serious memories happening for me a few months back. The new diver posted the question “Does anybody ever dive in Westernport?” Of course, the feedback he got warned of wild currents and muddy water, but, citing a dive I did in 1977, I countered that if divers are prepared to go to some effort, it is possible to dive in these conditions.

In 1977 I was still in High School and had done my “C”-card course with Bob Cumberland at the City Baths. A lifetime of scrounging piles of soft-drink bottles to cash in for the deposits, together with an apparently (in hindsight) generous pocket-money allowance, had somehow given me enough of a war-chest for the course plus a bit of a kitty for joining a Club and hiring the necessary gear. The Club I chose was Marlin Scuba Club which was an independent club that met at the Village Green Hotel in Glen Waverley. I actually used to ride my pushbike to and from meetings – no laws about drink-riding then!

Not having a car actually wasn't that great a handicap for me. There were plenty of people in the Club to cadge a lift off for dives, but hiring and returning tanks was a logistical nightmare! SCUBA tanks and pushbikes aren't that good a mix so I used to catch the train to Malvern then take two trams to get to Ern Ireland's Diver's Den

in Prahran. One day the ol' Ern actually offered me a job! He was going to teach me all about the Dive Industry and I'd end up as an Instructor and Service Technician. When I made the mistake of telling mum she went into a panicked hysteria because it meant that I'd be leaving school - I wouldn't do my HSC and I'd never amount to anything. So I had to tell Ern that I was going to stay in school so I could get a nice safe job as a Clerk in the Public Service or a Bank. What a dick I was!

But I digress. Back at the Village Green Hotel one night, Greg Richards, who was with Valley Divers at the time, announced that he had hatched a plan to hire boats out of Warneet to dive Crawfish Rock. Through my alcohol-fuelled haze it seemed like a good idea at the time and my hand shot up! It would make a nice change from shore diving, which was all we did back then.

Warneet Boat Hire at the time hired out these 12' (3.6metre) tinnies with pissy little putt-putt outboard engines. I think we hired 2, or maybe 3 boats with 2 or 3 divers in each boat. Out we went into the wilds of Westernport Bay's upper reaches for what Google Earth now tells me is the 5.35 kilometre trip out to the fabled Crawfish Rock. I remember it was one of those grey, wet and miserable overcast August mornings that we set out and wallowed and putt-putted out into the bay.

In those days wetsuits left a lot to be desired and would have been only 3mm if that. What was worse is that my wetsuit pants were just that. Pants! Long-Johns

were yet to arrive on the scene so in winter I used to dive in an old woollen jumper with my wetsuit jacket over that. Needless to say I was COLD!!



Crawfish Rock itself is a sentinel of rock at the north-west corner of French Island. By sentinel I mean all around it is mud, but the tide rushing on around the rock over millennia have carved a 15 metre deep hole in the seabed. The area is quite a unique habitat, not that we knew it at the time. When we got to Crawfish Rock we basically dragged the boats onto the rock, geared up and went in. Greg had organised things beautifully as we arrived very near the top of the tide. This was important as we could start the dive in the lee of the tide while waiting for slack water. The rock was absolutely carpeted in sponges of every colour and type. At one point the ambient gloom darkened considerably and I looked up to see the belly of the biggest damn Bull Ray I had ever seen before or since!

All too soon the tide made its dreaded turn to the ebb, which was a pity because I was actually starting to acclimatise. That is, I'd stopped shivering at least. It turns out that's the next stage of hypothermia... who knew? We surfaced and de-briefed and stamped our feet on the rock to try and

warm up and generally fart-arsed about like shags on a rock (appropriately enough) until somebody noticed that the tide had gone down considerably and that the boats were now high and dry on the jagged rocks! So we had to unload the boats and get them back into the water and load them again and take off back to civilisation and heating! It had started to rain as we dropped out of the boat into knee-deep mud to drag the trusty tinny back into the channel.

Now some 38 years later I look back fondly at that dive. Through the magic of Facebook we learnt that Carole Lois of VSAG was also there that day. Greg Richards posted "Best dive ever". I assume that most people today will pick up on Greg's unique and sarcastic sense of humour, but at the time, for this young, gung-ho schoolkid aching for adventure it certainly was! ❖

PLACE	CRAWFISH ROCK.	DEPTH	15m	Time in water	40
Remarks	Boat hired from Warrnet. CR is about 40 mns run from Warrnet. Not a bad dive but for the change in weather, coldness and generally poor visibility. Below water the area is covered in colorful sponges. combustible A torch brings out the true colors in murky water. It was advisable to dive only at slack tide, staying close to the rock. Fuddled with RUM				
Signed	Date	Countersigned			
	8/11/77				

Excerpt from Rob's dive log

[http://www.melbournwater.com.au/aboutus/reportsandpublications/Research-and-studies/Documents/Understanding the Western Port Environment - 13 Rocky Reefs.pdf](http://www.melbournwater.com.au/aboutus/reportsandpublications/Research-and-studies/Documents/Understanding%20the%20Western%20Port%20Environment%20-%2013%20Rocky%20Reefs.pdf)

BRYOZOA

by Jan Watson

*Continuing her series of articles on
Marine Biology for
Divers*

The phylum **Bryozoa** (colloquially called lace corals or moss animals) is a large phylum with about 6000 known living species world-wide. Many species are yet to be scientifically described from southern Australia. The reason so many marine organisms are unknown or are so poorly known in Australia is that governments have little interest in funding marine biology.

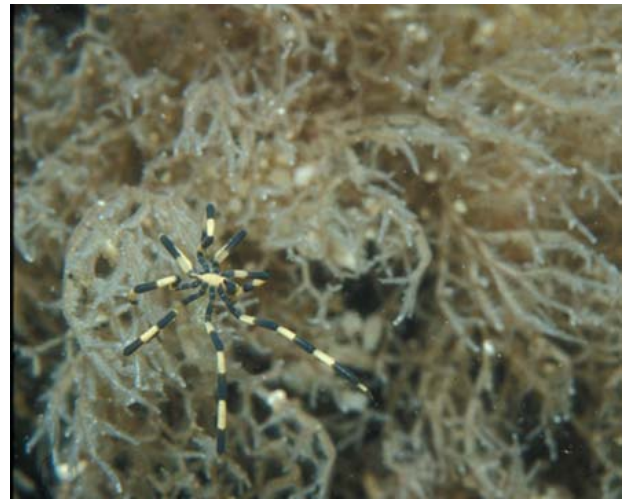
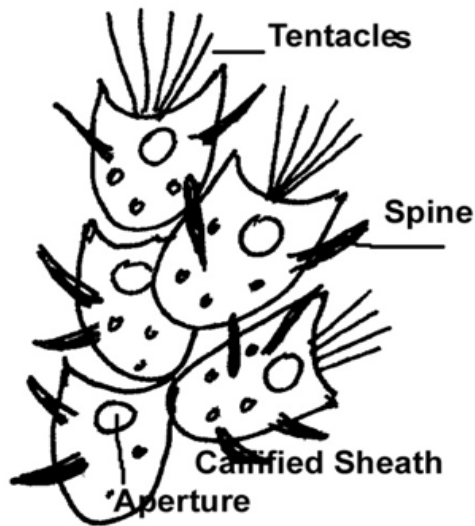
Bryozoans are predominantly marine and we see many species on every dive. Most bryozoans are sessile, growing fixed to firm substrate. The individual polyp (zoid) is about 1mm long, and many thousands live together in spreading or erect arborescent colonies. They are suspension feeders, the zoid having tentacles, mouth and stomach, but they are more evolutionary advanced than the hydrozoans. The zoid has a row of short, strong tentacles (lophophores) which sweep water and microscopic food into the mouth. Exhalant water and wastes are discharged from the stomach through pores (windows) in the sheath rather

than back through the mouth as happens in the primitive hydrozoans. A general way to distinguish a bryozoan from a hydroid is what I call the “crunch test”. If it crunches or feels harsh between the fingers it is a bryozoan, not a hydroid.

The phylum is divided into three major **Orders** comprising zooids of different shapes, but for the diver there are two obvious groups to be seen at scuba depths - zooids with a hard calcareous outer sheath and those with a flexible uncalcified or lightly calcified sheath. The outer sheath of the zoid is often ornamented with spines of various shapes which are important in microscopic identification of species. Reproduction is by either budding or development of eggs in a brood chamber. Bryozoans are seldom overgrown by other marine organisms as many have small pincer-like arms (avicularia) that protrude through the sheath to grasp and cast aside settling foreign larvae.

Bryozoans have a long geological history, many being known only as fossils. In the geological past, many bryozoans were so prolific that they formed reefs, now consolidated into limestone rock. The Mt Gambier limestone is such an example, composed of calcareous bryozoans skeletons many millions of years old.

BRYOZOAN COLONY



Pycnogonid Stylopallene longicauda
on colony, wharf pile, 3m, Western Port
(Photo, David Staples).

SOFT (LIGHTLY CALCIFIED) BRYOZOANS

Amathia ?tortuosa. (The “?” preceding the species name indicates there is doubt about identity of the species). Fist-sized buff-coloured branched colonies with a soft texture. Often pink from encrusting red algae. Common on shaded jetty piles in Port Phillip and Western Port. It is eaten by the black and white banded pycnogonid *Stylopallene* and a small yellow gastropod mollusc *Cysticusus*.



Amathia ?tortuosa. buff-coloured colony,
wharf pile, 3m, Western Port.

Bugula dentata. Colony with a slightly crunchy texture due to light calcification. Grows in bushy fist-sized colonies under shaded jetties. Distinguished by the blue to pale greenish colour. Eaten by the yellow and blue winter nudibranch *Tambja verconis*. Common in Port Phillip.



Bugula dentata.
Typical blue colony
on sponge,
wharf pile
Western
Port, 5m.

Nudibranch
Tambja
verconis
feeding on
colony, St
Leonards
jetty, 2m.



Bugula neritina. Similar in size and colony shape to *B. dentata*, also with slightly crunchy texture due to light calcification. Purple to brownish in colour. Grows in shade under sheltered jetty piles. Common in Port Phillip. Unlike its congener *B. dentata*, there are no records of anything eating *B. neritina*.



Bugula neritina. Colony on jetty pile, Clifton Springs, Port Phillip, 1 m.

Bugula cucullata. A soft ferny flesh-coloured bryozoan growing in small colonies on shaded jetty piles or reef. Short branches arranged in whorls around the main stem. Often under jetties in Port Phillip and Western Port.



Bugula cucullata. Crawfish Rock, poor visibility, Western Port, 6m.

CALCIFIED (HARD) BRYOZOANS

Hornera robusta. A lacy brittle white calcareous bryozoan, growing in small hidden (cryptic) colonies on open reef. The branches do not intergrow and individual calcareous sheaths of the zooid can be seen. It is also found in New Zealand.



Hornera robusta. Colony among coralline red algae, Chimney Rock, off Barwon Heads, 21 m.

Membranipora membranacea. Colony comprising a single encrusting layer of zooids on thalli (fronds) of brown kelps. The image below shows brood cells as white spots. The species is cosmopolitan, occurring world-wide on brown kelps. Common in Port Phillip and along the Victorian coastline. Eaten by several species of nudibranchs.



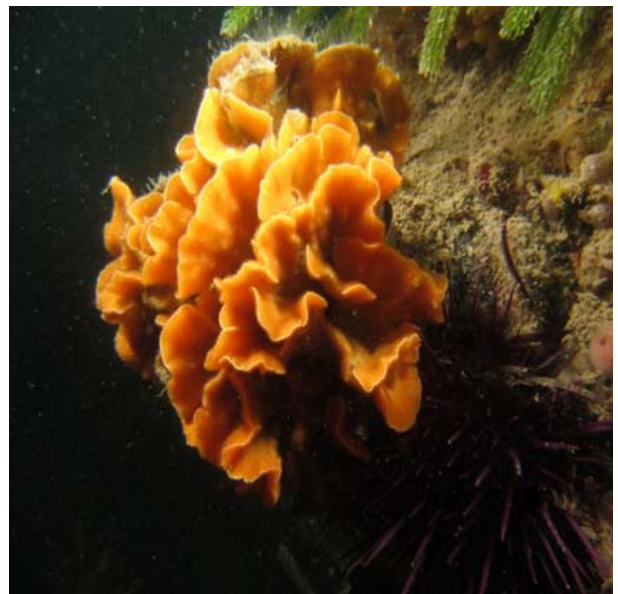
Membranipora membranacea. Colony on the brown kelp *Ecklonia radiata*, under gannet platform, Popes Eye, 1m.

Orthoscuticella ventricosa. Bushy yellow to orange flexible colonies growing on reef. Branches lightly (crunchy) calcified and curled over. Sometimes pink-coloured from encrusting red algae. Yellow pycnogonids can often be seen feeding on it. Common in southern Port Phillip and Western Port.



Orthoscuticella ventricosa. Colony Boarfish Reef, Port Phillip Heads, 13m.

Celleporaria spp. (“spp” means that it is a poorly known species group difficult to distinguish between species). Colonies orange to dull purple, depending on species. Easily recognised by their large size and hard brittle texture. The species group is common on shaded jetty piles on Victorian coasts. Colonies often become so large and heavy they fall off and continue growth on the bottom.



Above. *Celleporaria* sp. brittle fist-sized yellow foliose colony, St Leonards jetty, 2m.

Below. *Celleporaria* sp. Smaller purple fan-shaped colony at bottom of wharf, Western Port, 6m.



Triphyllozoon monoliferum. Small to fist-sized tightly folded hard but brittle lacy cream to pale yellow colonies. Distinct elliptical holes in folds. Often found on jetty piles. May grow so heavy they fall off to bottom to continue growth. Common from southern Australia to Southern Queensland.



Triphyllozoon monoliferum. Fist-sized colony on wharf pile, Western Port, 6m.

Mucropetraliella elli. Small cryptic deep red, brittle colonies tucked between other marine organisms. Individual zooids and tentacles usually visible. Common on shallow jetty piles in Port Phillip. Eaten by the bright red nudibranch *Madrella*.

Watersipora subtorquata. Red and grey spreading colonies in shaded upper subtidal zone of sheltered wharf piles. Resembles *M. elli* but colonies are darker red and much more brittle. Grey parts (image) are dead sections of colony.



Above. **Mucropetraliella elli.** Small colony with tentacles extended making image appear fuzzy, Clifton Springs, 1m.

Below. **Watersipora subtorquata.** Colony on upper jetty pile, Corio Bay, 0.5m.



Bob Burn's authoritative book **Nudibranchs and Related Molluscs** is now available at the Museum Victoria bookshop Carlton for \$30. Essential for nudibranch photographers. ❖

MEMBER OF THE MONTH December 2015



Member of the Month Award goes to Graham Ellis for the tireless work he did in organising the City of Launceston dives, which allowed many of our members to dive this remarkable wreck. Great work Graham!

Pictured above : Peter Galvin and Graham with his award at the December General Meeting at The Water Rat Hotel

**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR LATEST
PHOTO COMPETITION WINNERS**

WINNER- NOVEMBER



**Tim Forster's photo of Ian Scholey
with Oceanic Black Tips,
Protea Banks, South Africa**

RUNNERS UP IN THE NOVEMBER PHOTO COMPETITION



**Equal 2nd - Both photos by David Flew
Waterhole, South Africa**



WINNER — DECEMBER



*1st - Charmaine Alford
Flabellina Nudibranch,
Blairgowrie*

As usual, the standard was high, so well done to all the other entrants.

All the photos entered can be viewed on the VSAG website:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/vsag.divers/>

It's great to see more members getting out there with their cameras and entering the Photo Competition.

RUNNERS UP IN THE DECEMBER PHOTO COMPETITION

2nd - Ian Scholey's photo of Tony Knott by the bow of the SS Coogee



© 2015 Ian Scholey



3rd - Graham Ellis - Seven Gill Shark with John Lawler in the background

SOUTH AFRICAN DIARY - Part 2 October - November, 2015

Continuing Ian Sholey's report and photos - Part 1 ended in Mozambique

Back at camp we were briefed on our next day's activities. You should have seen the faces when we were told that breakfast was at 4.30am and departure at 5am. Things really do start early in Africa, especially when there are borders to be crossed and we were off to our next country, Swaziland.

Bleary eyed, everyone was up as requested and we were soon heading south again towards Maputo. With just a few stops for the loo, we arrived at the border about 13.30pm. Leaving Mozambique was a whole lot easier than getting in, although we were held up a while by customs. Once again our driver, Dennis, managed to talk his way through the issue and we eventually crossed into Swaziland.

We immediately noticed the difference, with people clearly more affluent and the landscape less tropical. Swaziland is a pretty small place at



200km long by 130km wide and is an independent kingdom with its own language and currency. It didn't take long before we arrived at the Hilane National Park. The word Hilane means wilderness in Swazi and before being declared a National Park, the area was the private hunting ground of the Swazi royal family.

The first thing we noticed as we pulled into the campsite was the amount of wildlife wondering about. There were Impala and Nyala antelope which we were able to approach very close to. David Flew got so close to a male Nyala that a ranger came out of nowhere and advised him to back away from the animal which had an



evil looking pair of horns, although it frankly seemed uninterested in David.

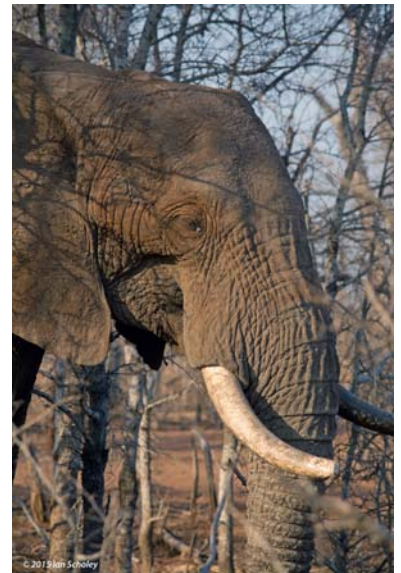
Next stop, as we explored our campsite, was the waterhole where from the conveniently placed row of chairs we watched the basking hippo and a couple of white rhino. Camp site exploration complete, we left our trusty crew to put up our tents while we boarded a couple of Safari 4 x 4's and headed off into the National Park for a sunset game drive. This one was a classy affair where the guide took our drink orders before we departed so we left, looking forward to our comfort stop and a cold beer during our drive.

Entering the park, our first spot were the two White Rhinos we had seen earlier at the water hole who were now grazing on what little worth eating they could find. Swaziland has had a bit of a drought and the vegetation was extremely dry, leaving the resident animals with a hard task to find both food and water. During our game drive we saw evidence of how hard this was hitting them with several carcasses visible from the dirt tracks we drove along.

We then went through a spell of finding Elephants, with half a dozen spotted and several of them being very close to our vehicle. The guide watches the Elephants very carefully, as

especially the males are liable to charge at vehicles they take a dislike to.

The predators in this national park are in a separated area to allow tight control and as we entered this area, the guide stopped our vehicle and put up some netting sides on our open vehicle for extra safety. It didn't take us too long to find a couple of Lionesses doing what Lions do best, sleeping under a



tree. A little further away we then found a third Lioness together with a cub. We completed a trio of Lion sightings when we came across a young male lion at a water hole.



Our final stop was another water hole where we got our cold beer. The water level was really low and we could see fish splashing about in what was left of the water. There also seemed to be a croc in the muddy water but we were unsure with our visibility ham-



pered by the on-coming sunset. A very nervous Giraffe appeared and approached the water slowly, stopping every few seconds to look around and smell

the air. Sadly for the poor animal, our presence seemed to spook it and it left without getting a drink. *See David Flew's photos in the November Photo Contest on page 25.

After an enjoyable couple of hours we returned to the campsite and made a quick turnaround before heading to the on-site restaurant for an evening meal. On the menu was Impala which we all enjoyed despite there being something slightly wrong with eating one the animals we had just been out to see.

After the meal we dragged our exhausted bodies outside and were treated to some traditional Swazi drumming and dancing around a large campfire. An atmospheric end to the day and most of us were asleep within seconds of hitting our sleeping bags. The night was an interesting one, for those that woke up at least, with Lions and Hyenas calling very close to the camp. They make quite a racket and obviously had the security guards on

edge as a rather loud radio conversation just outside our tent woke us up at 4am.

We were getting used to the African early starts by this stage and it wasn't long before everyone was up ready for our 6am morning game drive. This time we shared our 4 x 4's with a group of French tourists. They were a chatty bunch although clearly we couldn't understand a word they said. That said, we communicated via one of their group who spoke some English and a lot of hand signals and smiles.

Initially, the game drive was a little fruitless with just a few Impala and Nyala being seen. As we entered the predator area, things started to warm up when a very small snake slithered across the track in front of us and then circling vultures caught our guide's attention.

Following the vultures, we found two Lionesses right by the side of the track with a freshly killed Water Buck. We managed to get within about 12 feet of the gruesome scene as the Lionesses set about eating the unlucky animal. The whole scene was very gory but strangely fascinating. Things went from bad to worse when one of the Lionesses pulled a foetus from inside the Water Buck who was clearly pregnant. We stayed for a good half an



hour watching the Lions from very close up. It wasn't pleasant but certainly illustrates how brutal life can be and will go down as another highlight of our trip for sure.

Back at camp our crew had put the tents down again and cooked up a nice breakfast. Well fed and watered, we were back on the truck and off to our next destination, Sodwana Bay.

Sodwana Bay is 500km north of Durban on the east coast of South Africa and is in the state of KwaZulu-Natal. The border crossing from Swaziland to South Africa was very easy and we made good time in our dash towards the coast. After a stop to stock up on supplies, and in our case some more beers, we arrived at Triton Dive Lodge mid afternoon.

The road in has to be seen to be believed - we literally crashed our way down the narrow sand road with trees smashing into the side of the truck, leaves and sticks showering the inside of the truck before we managed to shut the windows, and ourselves hanging on for dear life as we were bounced and shaken about. Brushing ourselves down we were shown to our

accommodation for the next three nights.

The lodge was a real getaway-from-it-all kind of place set amongst the forest. It was pretty basic, but in my opinion, the best place we had stayed at so far. First job for us was to get our kit sorted for the morning's diving so we headed off to the equipment store to pick up what we needed and leave our own gear ready for transportation to the beach. With everyone settled into their rooms and rested, we slowly assembled at the bar for a well earned beer or two before dinner.

A relatively late start saw us up for breakfast at 7.30 the next day, eager for some more diving. Sodwana Bay is within a Marine Protected Area and National Park so the park entry fee was paid and we parked close to the beach. The first thing that struck us was a brilliant warning sign that had beware of sharks, crocs and hippos all in the same red triangle.



All of our gear was waiting for us under a large shelter on the beach so we headed that way and got ourselves sorted for the dive.

The reefs at Sodwana Bay are simply named based on their distance from the launch site and our first destination was to be 7 Mile Reef. The diving set up was similar to Tofo with diving done from a large RIB with twin 100 hp outboards and a surf launch. The conditions were good with only minor surf. One difference was the donning of life jackets which is a legal requirement for commercial surf launches in South Africa.

Shortly after launch, we found a pod of dolphins playing in the surf zone. We watched for a while, desperately hoping that they would come out closer to the boat so we could jump in with snorkels, but sadly they seemed very happy playing in the waves.

At the dive site we found our dive crew were a bit disorganised with several bits of kit missing. A shortage of weights saw some of us shed a couple of Kg from our weight belts to help out, and a missing mask meant that Fern had to sit the dive out.

The plan was to dive in a similar way to how we had dived at Tofo, with a single guide towing a buoy and the group keeping her in sight. As we

rolled in, Tom unfortunately lost his weight belt which meant he also sat out the dive. This incident caused further problems as our dive guide disappeared in order to look for the lost belt leaving us on the surface unaware she had gone. By the time we realised and descended into pretty average vis of 10m, we had little chance of finding her. I was diving with Anna and David Flew and after looking for a minute, we followed the brief and surfaced again.

On the surface, the boat came over and tried to tow us to the buoy. It's never easy to be towed and in the sea conditions we faced it was a tough ask. We got a bit battered by the waves and although I was worried about Anna on only her 4th dive, she took it all in her stride.



With us back on the RIB, the skipper then headed off to pick up everyone else who were on the surface having also failed to find the runaway dive

guide. There were a few expletives on the boat over the shambolic attempt but we soon calmed down and were dropped on the buoy and headed down for our dive.

Although the vis was ordinary, it was instantly obvious that the diving was going to be much better than in Tofo. The reef was covered in corals and teeming with fish life. Sodwana Bay is the world's most southerly coral reef and it is in excellent condition. There are large plate corals, green tree corals, black coral and several other types in abundance with good coverage of the reef structure.

Hand in hand with Anna, and with David close by in support, we began to explore the reef at 18m. With Anna diving like a pro, we stopped here and there to look at things. One of our first finds was a Hawksbill Turtle with its head stuck under the coral. We hovered above waiting for it to pop its head out and snapped a photo or two.

The reef life was similar to Tofo with schools of Yellow Snapper and Fusiliers, Large Potato Cod, Moray Eels, Antheas and Trumpet fish in abundance, together with a huge selection of other reef fish. There were also a number of Nudibranch and other small things to spot. David, Anna and I worked a good system, with Anna switching from myself to David when

I wanted to photograph something, but the dive was really about Anna for me so I didn't use the camera much.



Back on the boat there were smiles all around with the post dive stories of what had been seen being relayed to the group. The skipper, Grant, was a real pro and he manoeuvred the RIB through the surf with ease before throttling up and running us up the beach. The crew took cylinders to be filled while we headed back to the truck where our crew had refreshments ready and waiting for us.

We then headed back to the beach for our briefing on dive number two at a spot called Anton's on 2 Mile Reef. Being our second dive, it was a little shallower with the bottom at 16m. The splash in went fine this time and we descended into a reasonable current and drifted along the reef. This time we were much closer together as a group and Anna spent a little time and in hand with Pam as I followed close behind with David.

With her confidence growing, Anna began to explore on her own with me in close attendance. She has the makings of a good spotter, finding a very nice Nudibranch at one point. This was a very chilled dive and we drifted on before heading up after a total dive time of 53 minutes. There were plenty of compliments on the boat for Anna and her diving, especially when she revealed that she had come back with 100bar in her 10L cylinder. If only all our air consumption was that good!



Ian & Anna Scholey at Sodwana Bay

On our second day at Sodwana Bay, the wind had shifted from Northerly to Southerly and the surf had really dropped a lot. We were using Nitrox for the first dive to get more bottom time on a deeper dive. The dive spot was Rooney's on 2 Mile Reef and we were promised a spectacular macro site which was good for me. Sadly, the depth ruled Anna out of the diving so she had to sit top side.

As we splashed in, we couldn't be



lieve the difference in 24 hours - the vis was now 25m plus and we could see the reef stretched out before us. I was again buddied with David Flew and almost at once he was pointing out a nice little Porcelain Crab to me. The star attraction on this reef are 4 Thorny Seahorses, two males that are red in colour, a small yellow female and a white female. It didn't take us too long to find one of the red males.



After shooting a few shots of the male, we drifted a little further and came across the yellow female who was perhaps half the size of the male.



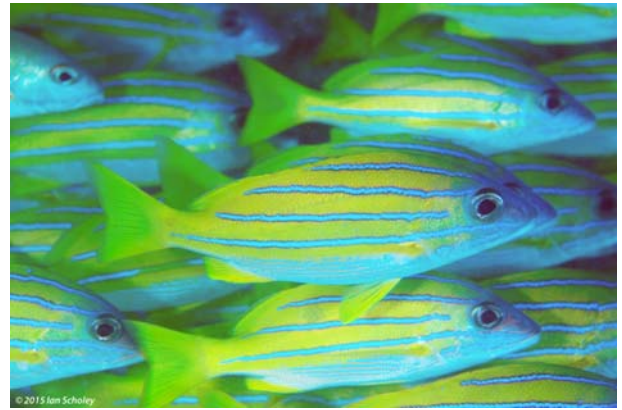


Other things of interest were several Nudibranch, Cleaner Shrimps, Mantis Shrimps and a Stripped Pipefish. With a maximum depth of 31.5m and an average depth of 23.8m, we were soon approaching our no deco limits, even with the 31% Nitrox mix. As we ascended we were treated to a dancing Devil Ray out in the blue which was a nice way to end the best dive of the trip so far. Our total dive time was 40 minutes.



We made the usual tank switch at the beach and were soon heading out for our second dive of the day which was again on 2 Mile Reef, this time at a spot called Bikini. The current was running a little so we completed a

negatively buoyant entry. With Anna on only her seventh dive, I kept her close to me but she managed the manoeuvre with ease and we were soon on our way to the reef 16m below.



We were having a good deal of luck with turtles and the first find was a massive Loggerhead Turtle. We managed to swim within touching distance for some time as it cruised along in the current. Tim Forster spotted a Black Tipped Reef Shark early on during the dive but we missed that one. The schooling fish were really impressive on this reef and we managed to position ourselves right in the middle of a large school with fish surrounding us on all sides. Even though I had a macro lens on some nice pictures were taken of the swirling fish.

With Anna switching between David and I, we continued to explore the reef, finding a Yellow-mouthed Moray as well as two giant Honeycomb Morays. In front of us the guide pointed to the sand and brushed a little

sand away to reveal a hidden guitar shark, fantastically camouflaged under the sand. Once again the reef teemed with life and we maxed out our bottom time once again. With air running low we began our ascent and hit the surface after 56 minutes with a max depth of 15.9m and an average of 12.9m.

We had a restful afternoon back at the lodge with the appearance of an ominous looking green snake the only drama. The snake was quickly dealt with by the staff who removed it. In the evening we were given an interesting talk and photo show by Eve, our extremely passionate and knowledgeable dive guide. We were lucky enough to see video footage of dives to 120m to film the prehistoric Ceolocamp Fish which can be found below 90m in a trench off of Sodwana Bay. To date, the dive centre's annual expeditions to find these magnificent animals, have identified 26 individuals. The dive lodge bar is decorated with stunning pictures of these unique creatures.

We left Sodwana Bay the next day. Personally I could have stayed a lot longer and would have liked to spend more time exploring the reefs. The coral and sea life were exceptional although the surf launch, surface conditions and current make this advanced diving.

We dived with Triton Dive Lodge and our feelings were mixed about them. The boat skipper was truly excellent in the conditions, the dive guide was knowledgeable and her briefings were focused on the life we could expect to see. However, the hire gear had definitely seen better days, the support crew were disorganised and several of our fills were suspect. On balance, if they tightened their operation up a little, I would be more than happy to return and dive with them again.

We had a lie in the next morning with breakfast at 7.30. We then hit the road, once more heading south towards Durban where we dropped our new friends, Tom and Ruth, off at the airport before we continued further south to the beachside town of Margate, our base for the next week while we started the serious shark diving on Aliwal Shoal and Protea Banks.

Margate is a nice little seaside town with plenty of bars and restaurants and was clearly geared up for holiday makers. Our accommodation had everyone smiling as it was quite luxurious. We were in two very nice four bedroom apartments right on the beachfront. The only thing to spoil the perfect scene was the weather with grey skies and rain. This didn't dampen spirits as the sea conditions looked good and we were here to get wet after all.

That evening we headed out to a local restaurant to say farewell to Menzeli who was sadly having to leave us due to an expiring work visa. Half way through a fine meal our replacement cook, Gugu, arrived and joined us.

We were once again up early the next morning and heading to African Dive Adventures, our dive centre for the next few days. With waivers signed and the kit we needed sorted, we headed down to the small boat harbour at Shelley Beach and loaded the RIB.



Protea Banks is situated 7.5km straight out to sea from Shelly Beach. It is a fossilised sand dune that is 6km long and 800m wide. The dive briefing was detailed and serious as we



Preparing to launch the boat at Protea Banks

were given strict diving instructions on both the importance of buoyancy in our intended midwater dive and the need to avoid separation from the guide and all important buoy line.

With a very clear message that it wasn't a good idea to get lost that far out from shore in the expected 3m swell, we then moved onto protocol for diving with the big sharks. We were told to stay upright in the water, nothing the sharks eat has that orientation, and under no circumstances, to swim away from a shark.

Our first dive was to be a baited dive where a ball stuffed with rotten fish would be lowered to 10m. This would attract the sharks in and we would then splash in and the fun would start. As the whole process started, a very large pod of dolphins appeared. This was great to see but not really what was needed to attract sharks, so for the first 15 minutes of our dive not a shark was to be seen. With all of us starting to worry that this dive was going to be a dud, you could almost hear the sighs of relief as the first two sharks appeared below us and circled slowly.

The two big Bull Sharks were cautious but slowly got closer and closer. Finally at our level, they cruised around us, at times no more than inches away. The number of sharks grew steadily and soon we were surrounded by a



good number of Bull Sharks and Oceanic Blacktips. The sharks were completely at ease with us and would swim in very close before veering off at the last moment. With our adrenalin pumping and cameras flashing, we were having a lot of fun.



Our dive guide, Kyle, pointed to the distance and glancing that way, we saw a wall of Scalloped Hammerheads filling the ocean from just below the surface to the bottom. There were hundreds of Hammerheads but they were frustratingly staying at the edge of our vision. The Bull Sharks continued to give us close encounter after close encounter until we sadly had to end the dive after 65 minutes.

The pick-up was challenging in the surface conditions but I don't think anyone cared after what can only be described as an awesome dive. I had dived with big Bull Sharks before at Beqa Lagoon but this was a very different experience. There is something special about being mid-water with them rather than being on the bottom.



Graeme Williams, Pam Dagley & David Geekie preparing for the run back into the beach at Protea Banks

After another cold, wet and adrenalin filled boat ride back to Shelly Beach, we were relieved to find the truck and our crew ready and waiting with snacks and hot drinks. Suitably refreshed and slightly warmer, again we changed cylinders and headed out for dive number two. In slightly better sea conditions we headed out to the Southern end of Protea Banks for a negative buoyancy entry followed by a multi level drift dive.

We headed down to the bottom at 31m. There was plenty of fish life to be seen on the bank but that wasn't our target so we soon ascended to the 20m mark where we were to spend most of our dive. The dive objective was to get closer to the Hammerhead schools if possible. This time we got much closer and could really appreciate the spectacle of the massive schools of literally hundreds of sharks. The shy Hammerheads still stayed out of photo range which was annoying, but not unexpected. As we ascended further to 10m, a couple of sizeable Bull Sharks cruised in and stayed with us a while. With safety stops complete we headed back to the choppy surface with a dive time of 46 minutes.



Our day's diving had been absolutely excellent and, keen to repeat it, we asked Fern to sort out a second baited dive for us. That done, there was certainly an excited buzz as we headed to the boat ramp for our second day's diving.

The wind was stronger than the previous day and was forecast to get worse as the day went on, so we made the baited dive our first dive of the day when given the choice. This time there were no Dolphins and the sharks came in as soon as we



David Flew preparing for the cold boat dive, Protea Banks

hit the water. The Bull Sharks were there again, although fewer this time, and the gap was filled by a large number of the sleeker, although still sizeable, Oceanic Black Tips. This time we knew the score and managed to position ourselves better for even closer encounters. Both Pam and I had sharks brush our fins and a large Bull Shark approached my camera dome on several occasions as if looking at it's own reflection.

While the Bull Sharks moved slowly and deliberately with their attendant Remoras, the Black Tips were much faster and made tight turns around us. Once again the Hammerhead school was visible every now and again at the periphery of our vision. This dive was



even better than the previous day and we stretched it to 67 minutes.



The seas had really picked up when we surfaced and we were now battling a 3-4m swell. The RIB handled it well under the guidance of our expert skipper. By the time we were back at Shelly Beach we were all very cold. We didn't have much time to warm up with the skipper saying we had to leave immediately if we wanted a second dive as the harbour master was close to shutting the harbour for launches.

David Flew and Tim decided to sit the next dive out as they were really cold. The rest of the VSAGers made their quick change and the boat was quickly

reloaded and off we went. We pounded our way through the waves to the Southern end with a plan to do a multi-level drift again, but this time on the opposite side of the sandbanks to yesterday. It was a relief to be off the boat when we splashed in, leaving the skipper to suffer topside.



Heading to the bottom at 32m, we spotted a cruising Bull Shark almost immediately. This one didn't hang around for long so we turned our attention to the smaller reef fish. We came across a small Marble Ray who we startled, and with it disappearing into the distance, two spotted Eagle Rays then appeared to the side of us, swimming low across the bottom.

With a little bit of deco time accumulated, we headed upwards. Back in the mid water at 20m we again found the Hammerheads and again they stayed just out of camera range. As we ascended further, another pair of Eagle Rays were seen out in the blue.

After clearing deco and completing safety stops, we surfaced and the boat was right there. It was a difficult job to get cameras up, gear off and up and then haul ourselves over the side of the RIB but we managed it somehow. With our feet planted firmly in the safety straps, we took the adrenalin ride back into shore. That completed another excellent day's diving in some pretty challenging conditions.



The South African divers about to hit the sharks again on Protea Banks.

L-R : Pam Dagley, Tim Forster, David Geekie, Ian Scholey, David Flew, Graeme Williams

We were pleased to hear that the forecast was now for improving conditions for our remaining time at Protea Banks and for very good conditions at our next destination, Aliwal Shoal. Wind conditions for our last day's diving had improved as per the forecast, although the swell seemed to have increased which was making the beach look like an interesting challenge.

Although we got the boat turned around and pointing into the surf reasonably quickly, a couple of bad hits left the boat half filled with water. With just the skipper and Divemaster on-board, the boat punched out through the surf and completed a couple of runs and turns to clear the water before heading back in and picking us up. Our dive plan today was to drop onto the Northern Pinnacles and locate a couple of caves where Ragged Tooth Sharks (Grey Nurse Sharks) hung out.

The briefing was detailed and long as it was made very clear that this was not a dive to be taken lightly. We would complete a negative buoyant entry and head quickly to the bottom at 33m. If anyone failed to stay with the group, their dive was over as there was no chance of rejoining the group. The current was going to be strong and every detail of the dive plan was covered until everyone fully understood it.

To give us additional bottom time, all of the VSAG group dived on Nitrox. One of the other divers decided not to do the dive after hearing the briefing which I thought was a brave and sensible decision. If you aren't comfortable, then don't do the dive - it's a habit we should all be in. On the way out to the drop point we saw a Humpback

The sharks of Protea Banks

Photos by Ian Scholey & Tim Forster



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Whale from the boat but it dived quickly and we didn't see it resurface.

The entry went to plan and we headed down in a reasonable current. After drifting for 50-60m we finned hard to our first cave. Dropping another 4m to the sand in front of the cave at 37m we knelt outside the cave and watched 3 Raggies slowly circling the cave. On the dive leader's signal, we all ascended back into the current. Almost immediately we saw our first Dusky Shark cruising along the reef to our left.

The next signal from the dive leader rang out and those that wanted to entered a 7m tunnel through the reef, while others continued over the top of the reef. Safely back together, we then dropped into our second cave. This time there were no Raggies but Pam did pick up a tooth indicating they had been there.

Now 15 minutes into our dive, we began to ascend as we drifted. We ascended in 5m increments, spending time at each level. We crossed an area of sand at 20m and below us saw a large Guitar Shark slowly moving below us. At 15m we were joined by two Bull Sharks who circled first below us and then at the same level as us, getting reasonably close before disappearing. At the 10m mark they were re-

placed by a couple of Oceanic Black-Tips who darted around us for a few minutes. Finally doing our safety stop at 5m, a pod of Dolphins came into view before quickly disappearing into the blue.



Hitting the surface we were bounced about a bit in the sizeable swell before the boat came in and picked us up. This was the most challenging dive of our 6 at Protea Banks but also a fine dive with lots to be seen.

After a quick change of tanks on shore, we headed out again, this time headed for the Southern end and the schooling Hammerheads. This dive took on the same format as our previous dives in the area. We splashed in negatively buoyant and dropped quickly to the bottom at 32m. We then hugged the bottom before beginning our slow ascent. The plan for this dive was to stay longer at 20-25m and look for the Hammerheads.

We saw two separate schools of sever

al hundred animals but once again could not get close enough to photograph them. At the 10m mark we were joined again by Bull Sharks with 3 or 4 coming in to check us out. There was also a lone Remora swimming in and out amongst us for several minutes before it selected a Bull Shark to adopt.



In summary, what can I say about Protea Banks? If you like sharks you need to put it on your bucket list, there are loads and you will get close encounters. It is not easy diving, in fact it's some of the most challenging diving I have done. The sea conditions are often very challenging. In fact we are the first group that Nomad has ever taken there that has managed to complete all of their programmed dives as at least one day is normally lost to the weather.

The currents are strong and you must be able to stay with your dive leader and the all important surface buoy they tow. If you separate, it is very

difficult for the boat to recover you and keep track of the buoy and this is given as a very strong message to all divers.

We dived with African Dive Adventures and they were excellent. The crew were extremely professional and they have a genuine passion for sharks which infects you. The owner of the company, Roland, joined us for a beer and talked to us about the work that they are doing to try and conserve their sharks for future generations. This is not an easy thing to do in South Africa and he was a true inspiration to us all. We turned in for the night wondering how our next and final dive destination of the trip would compare against Protea Banks. Tomorrow we were off to Aliwal Shoal and hopefully some more big Shark action.

After the recent relatively late wake up calls, it was a shock to the system getting up for a 5.15am breakfast. We then loaded our dive gear on the truck and headed an hour and a quarter back up the coast to the small town of Umkomaas, our launch site for Aliwal Shoal.

The area is named Umkomanzi in Zulu which translates into "The watering place of the Whales". Like Protea Banks, the shoal is a fossilised sand bank and sits 5km off shore. It is

1.5km wide and runs north to south on the edge of the Mozambique current that brings in warmer water. The shoal was named after the Aliwal, a ship that sailed to Durban from London in 1849 and was nearly wrecked there.



We arrived at Aliwal Dive Centre shortly after 7.00am. The Dive Centre was one of the most picturesque I've ever used and was well equipped. Our gear was loaded onto the RIB for us and we clambered into the back of a pick up truck for the short drive to the launch site. The launch was the easiest yet as the rib was boarded in a river and we simply stepped from the sand to the rib with no push through the surf.

If the launch was easy, it was then a white knuckle ride as we clung on tightly as the RIB crossed the bar and negotiated the considerable breaking waves. Once out on the open ocean, the conditions were the best of the trip with a gentle swell and bright sunshine.



Tim Forster keeping a low profile, Aliwal Shoal

The dive plan was to drop onto a spot called North Sands and then drift with the current along Inside Edge. This site was a wall stretching from 3 to 6m high with ledges, caves and overhangs to explore. The first find was a Round Ribbon Tail Ray sleeping under a ledge. It was unfazed as David Flew, David Geekie, Graeme Williams and myself all lined up side by side to snap pictures.



The shoal gets dived a lot - on a busy day there can be up to 35 boats spread out across it and this was evident by how comfortable with divers the fish life seemed to be. Many of the overhangs were rammed full of schooling fish so thick that they looked like a solid mass. As we continued our dive we twice saw Devil Rays out in the blue and on the reef we came across a Leaf Scorpion Fish, Lobsters and the occasional Nudibranch.



At one point I glanced up to see the sun obscured by an absolutely huge school of fish that must have numbered many thousands. The depth was relatively shallow at 16.7m which meant we were able to enjoy a nice 58 minute dive. Vis was about 15m and the water temp was 24 degrees.



Today we didn't return to shore as we had everywhere else, but switched cylinders on the boat and did our second dive. In keeping with the way we had been looked after, our crew had sent out snacks and drinks for our surface interval which we shared with the skipper and dive leader. From the boat we saw a small Hammerhead Shark swim past which was nice.



With our surface interval done, we got on with dive number two. This time we dropped in a short drift to a site called Cathedral. This is the iconic dive spot on the shoal and at certain times of the year up to 150 Ragged Tooth Sharks are known to congregate in this large cave surrounded by a crater like rock formation. As we descended toward Cathedral, buddy David Flew and I hung in mid-water as an inquisitive Potato Cod swam up and circled us, posing for photos. We then descended to the cave entrance at 26m and joined the others.

We didn't quite get 150 but there were

four or five Raggies swimming slowly around the cave. This time of year is right at the end of the season and only the juveniles remain, with the fully grown sharks having headed south after mating. We hung around with the Sharks until our no deco time was exhausted and then headed up to drift across a large plateau. Once again there was plenty of fish life to be seen as we explored slowly. David Flew, David Geekie, Pam and I were the last ones up again with a run time of 55 minutes.



Topside, the wind had picked up as it seems to do in the afternoon and we endured a chilly ride back to shore despite the sunshine.

You always find out things about your travelling companions when you are away on a trip and as Tim, David Geekie and I were sitting having coffee while the others chilled out, the conversation returned to sharks as it had on many occasions across the trip. This is when Tim revealed that he had actually been bitten by a Wobbegong



in WA after getting a bit too close during a dive. Seems the shark bit him on the top of his thigh leaving teeth marks and bleeding.

Tim is obviously made of stern stuff because, after freeing himself and returning to the surface, he still completed his second dive of the day. He thought it was a good idea to jump straight back in and seemed genuinely relieved that the shark bit his thigh rather than that sensitive area a few inches higher!

After a chat with the group, I spoke to the trip leader about our dive plan for the last day. We decided to follow our baited shark dive with a dive on the

wreck of the Produce which lies just to the north of Aliwal Shoal, having struck the Northern Pinnacles and sank in 1974. The dive would be very much weather dependant but if it was possible, we were keen to do it.



The wreck is home to some Brindle Bass that are 3m in length as well as an endemic species called the Harlequin Goldie that is only found on the Produce and another nearby wreck called the Nebu.

Our journey the next morning to Umkomaas started out in bright sunshine, but in typical South African style, by the time we arrived, it was grey and raining. We had made a very late request for Nitrox for our second dive the previous evening but when we arrived, they didn't have enough filled tanks for us. A quick phone call to another local dive operator solved the problem and they soon dropped some extra tanks off for us.

The boat ride out was a bit of a chore as we had to punch directly into the

2m swell and it was still raining. The long boat ride left us already cold but no one worried about it too much as the baiting to attract the Sharks was kicked off. Almost immediately we could see sharks just below the surface.

As we splashed in, the first thing we noticed was the deterioration in the visibility since the day before - we now had approximately 10m and the water was a little milky. Following our brief, we levelled off at 12m, keeping the suspended, converted washing machine drum stuffed with Sardines in sight. The vis meant that we couldn't see the Sharks coming from a long way off but this added to the excitement of the dive.



We were soon surrounded by a dozen Oceanic Black Tips and a couple of Dusky Sharks. The dive was all adrenalin as the fast moving sharks darted around us. The Sharks came from all angles and on several occasions my fins were bumped by sharks below me. It was frenetic and exciting but didn't feel threatening in any way.

Tim Forster and I were off slightly to one side and the dive guide from time to time would reach into the drum and grab a handful of Sardines which he then released into the water in front of us. We knew what was going to happen and we raised our cameras ready as the water exploded with sharks all around us. A couple of large Grouper were also in and out of the action grabbing what they could in the way of scraps.



During our 58 minute dive we were moving in the current although with no bottom to reference we felt no movement. We were stunned to find out later that we had drifted for 4.2km during the dive.

Although we had arranged for some hot drinks to be on board the boat for our surface interval, these didn't really help with the cold. The wind was now blowing hard and the surface interval was unpleasant. The current was too strong to attempt the wreck of the Produce so we quickly hatched a back up plan. The consensus was to use our

Nitrox to get more bottom time at The Cathedral, the cave we had dived yesterday where the Raggies could be found.

Relieved to be out of the wind, we did a negative buoyant entry 80m from the cave and headed quickly down to the bottom. The drop was judged perfectly and we found the cave almost immediately. With more time, we were able to explore more as the Sharks cruised slowly around. The walls were covered with soft corals and a school of fish filled an entry to a side cave. Tim Forster and Graeme Williams were the first to leave the cave and they were lucky enough to find three John Dory's swimming past.



Slowly we exited the cave and regrouped around the dive guide and the buoy to the surface and started to drift. We saw a large Round Ribbon Tail Ray cruising a flat section of the reef together with a beautiful Ornate Sleeper Ray half buried in the sand. Staying in our tight group we contin-

ued to drift and enjoy the impressive variety of fish life on show.

First to ascend were Tim and Graeme and they were lucky to have a group of Devil Rays circle them as they followed the line to the surface. The rest of us below were unaware of the Rays above, with our attention focused elsewhere. Eventually the cold rather than our gas got the better of us and we started up. We bottomed out at 26.3m on this dive and our dive time was 46 minutes.

As I hit the surface, happy after another terrific dive, the sad reality that our trip was coming to a close hit me. All that remained was the challenge of drying our gear in the persistent rain and getting ourselves warmed up. The hot showers at the dive centre were a welcome sight as was Fern there to greet us on our return with a tray of steaming hot teas.

We dived Aliwal Shoal with Aliwal Shoal Dive Centre. As previously mentioned, this was a really very nice Dive Centre and Lodge. The crew were extremely professional and we were well looked after.



And that was that -

- 19 days
- 3 countries
- thousands of kilometres travelled
- 21 dives
- Bull, Dusky, Oceanic Black Tip, Scalloped Hammerheads, Ragged Tooth and Leopard Sharks, Humpback Whales, Dolphins and a Whale Shark from the boats
- Lions, Elephants, Buffalo, White Rhino, Wild Dogs, Hyenas and Leopards.

We were the first group ever to take this tour that did not lose at least one dive to the weather, and the only group on any of the hundreds of trips that Nomad has run, to see a Leopard kill.

The diving was challenging at times and we all felt we learnt from the experience. We have had our eyes opened as to what sea and surf conditions it is possible to dive in, launch boats into and then retrieve them. That said, we will be leaving that to the experts. This was a fantastic trip. The group helped to make it so, as much as the Sharks. Now I'm going back to work, I need a rest. ❖

VSAG INVESTS IN CAPABILITY

report and photos by Ian Scholey

In line with our long standing objective of “Safety in Diving”, the committee were delighted to offer members the chance to increase their skill set with a subsidised double course in First Aid and Oxygen provision.

Two separate courses were run over consecutive weekends at the end of November and start of December, each was attended by 8 members. The DAN courses were taught by instructor Chris Davidson who some of you will know well from his role with Dive Victoria. Chris did a great job of making the courses relevant to both diving in general and our usual small boat operating model.

Course participants were able to practise likely scenarios and get used to using our recently purchased upgraded O2 kits. At the end of course they were required to complete exams in both courses and I am delighted to report that everyone passed with flying colours.

Congratulations to our newly qualified First Aiders and O2 Providers:

David Flew, Tim Forster, Sandy Webb, Graham Ellis, David Politakis, Carole Campisano, Feng Qui, Steve Lamb, Rob Kirk, Ian Smith, Pam Dagley, Ian Scholey, Tony Knott, Charmaine Alford, David Geekie and Priya Cardinaletti. ❖



Rob, Priya, Pam, David and Tony watching Charmaine and Ian practising their life support skills

Charmaine Alford



Ian Smith



Exam Time



New O2 Kits

Ian Scholey



The newly purchased O2 kits are now available for members' use. There are two new kits available. One is located at the Scuba Doctor and the other is at my home address in Frankston South.

These kits deliver a significant increase in capability over the old kits. Each kit comes with either a 10L or 11L O2 cylinder and both a demand and continuous flow regulator allowing two divers to receive O2 simultaneously. Each kit also contains an operating guide and a quick reference flow chart. If you are using these kits it is important that you make yourself familiar with these before departure.

The club now has several members who have been formally trained in the use of these kits. For information the following members have been trained

or are already qualified in their use:

Myself, David Geekie, Pam Dagley, David Flew, David Politakis, Tony Knott, Rob Kirk, Priya Cardinaletti, Carole Campisano, Tim Forster, Sandy Webb, Feng Qui, Steve Lamb, Ian Smith, Charmaine Alford, Benita McDonough, Christine Reynolds

If you are also qualified for O2 delivery and are not on the above list perhaps you could let me know via e-mail.

To book the kits please email me at ischoley@iinet.net.au to arrange.



I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that the club has 4 cylinders available for member's use. There are two 12L cylinders at the Scuba Doctor and one 12L and one 10L cylinder at my address in Frankston South. **There is no charge for using these, you just have to return them filled.** Once again if you wish to book these please email at the address above. ❖



From Tilley Reynolds

Administration Assistant, coordinating the 2015 Great Victorian Fish Count

Phone: (03) 9347 5188

Email: tillyr@vnpa.org.au

Hi Fish Counters!

Well, the 2015 Great Victorian Fish Count has wrapped up for another year and the Victorian National Parks Association would like to say a huge thank you to all involved!

This was the eleventh year of the Great Victorian Fish Count and once again this fantastic marine citizen science event proved to be a great success! Approximately 350 different participants were involved over the course of this year's count, with 33 different sites surveyed along Victoria's coastline.

Fish everywhere!

Healthy levels of marine life were observed at many of the sites, particularly within Victoria's marine national parks and sanctuaries. The most common species observed this year were: Magpie Perch, Leatherjackets, Victorian Scalyfin, Zebra Fish, Old Wife, Sea Sweep, Senator Wrasse, Blue Throat Wrasse.

Great Victorian Fish Count Summary Report

We are still analysing the results and data from all the survey sites and hope to send out this year's summary report at the end of January or early February.

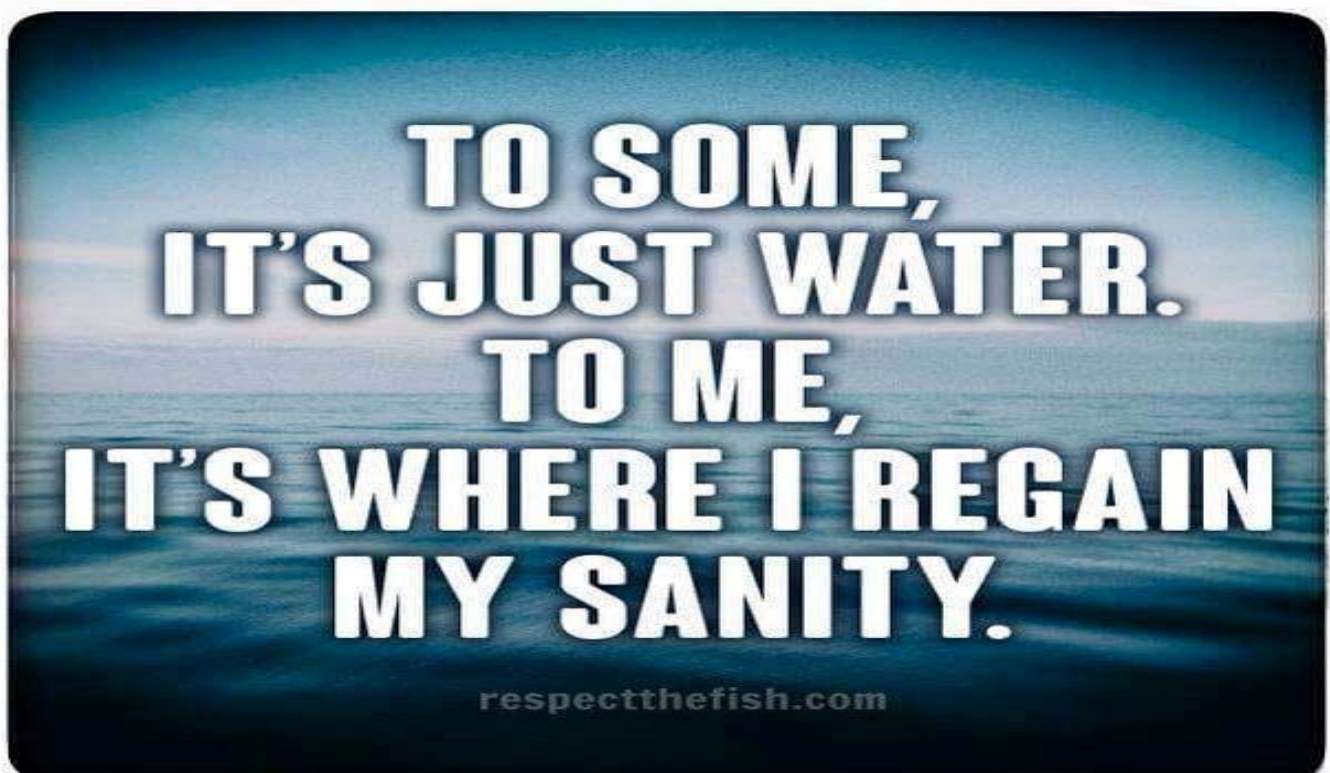
Finally, we'd like to say a big thank you to the all local conservation groups, dive operators, schools, dive clubs and their participants who took part in the Great Victorian Fish Count this year.

We would also like to extend particular thanks to Parks Victoria for their invaluable support and for implementing fish count activities in Victorian marine national parks and sanctuaries.

Thanks also to Coastcare Victoria for their assistance in promoting this year's event and to Museum Victoria and Redmap Victoria for providing scientific consultation and assistance with fish identification. ❖



*Participants in their 2015 Great Victorian Fish Count t-shirts at Blairgowrie Pier
You might recognise a few familiar VSAG faces.*



Dive Reports & Snippets

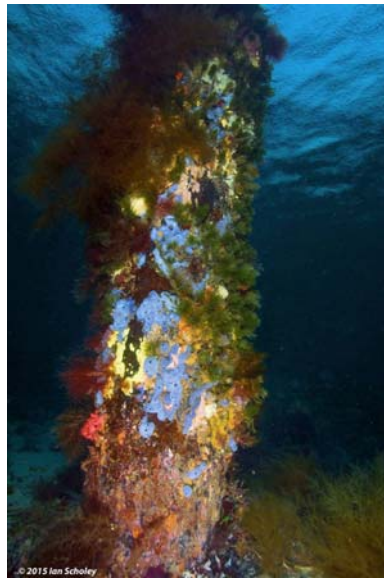
Parkdale

Thursday, 24th December 2015

David Reinhard

Had a nice dive with John Lawler this morning on a reef off Parkdale. Fish life was good but visibility was a bit ordinary. Water temp at this end of the Bay is around 22C at present which makes for pleasant diving.

One of the highlights of this reef is the large number of Old Wives that are always found there. In fact it is the best collection of these fish that I have seen in the northern Bay region. ❖



Flinders Pier

Friday, 25th December 2015

Ian Scholey

Peter Beaumont and I grabbed an early morning splash in the rain this morning. Made for some interesting light. Some nice life about - an enjoyable dive. ❖



Blairgowrie Shore Dive

Sunday, 27th December 2015

Ian Scholey

Umm, wrong decision to cancel the boat dives today, the bay looked fantastic. We have to call it and those are the breaks I guess. With no boats out we had a couple of shore dives going on. While Walter Medanbach took a crew to Mornington Pier, Peter Beaumont and I headed to Blairgowrie. We had a nice chilled couple of hours, grabbed breakfast and were home by 11.30am. ❖



© 2015 Ian Scholey



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Mornington Shore Dive

Sunday, 27th December 2015

photos by Phil Watson



Cuttlefish



*Above & below:
Linley Point, Mornington*

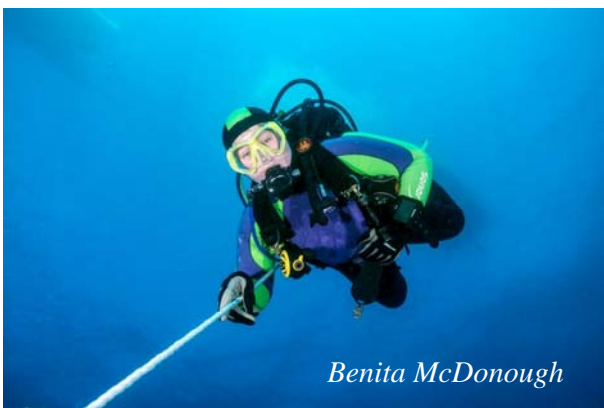
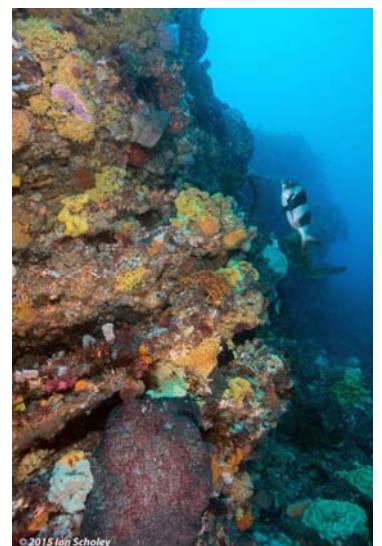
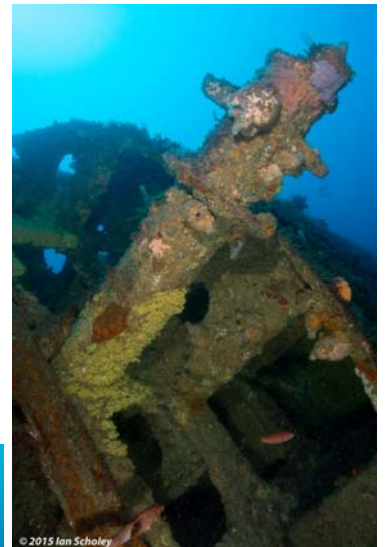


J1 Sub & North Wall Corner

Monday, 28th December 2015

Ian Scholey

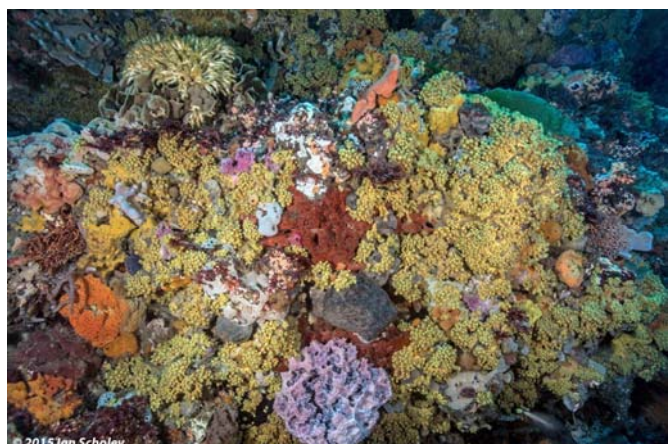
Great diving today for our two boat crews. First up was the J1 Sub and then we did the Ebb Slack on North Wall Corner before finishing up with a drift from Boarfish Reef for the remaining divers. On Sea Eagle were myself and Rob Kirk. On Toucans were Peter Beaumont and Benita McDonough. Also out and about were Peter and Carole Peter Campisano who checked out the J4 Sub. ❖



Benita McDonough



Peter Beaumont

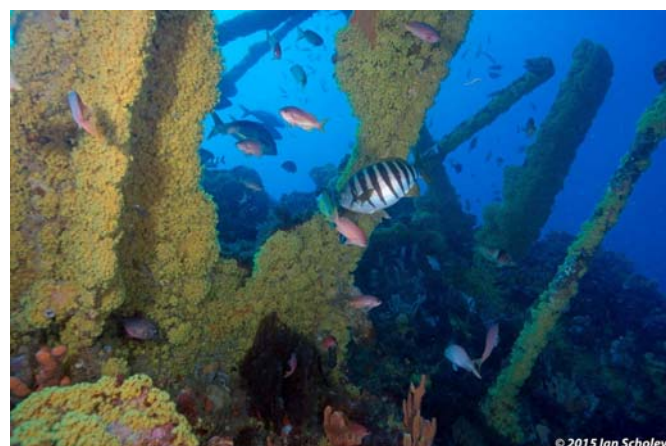
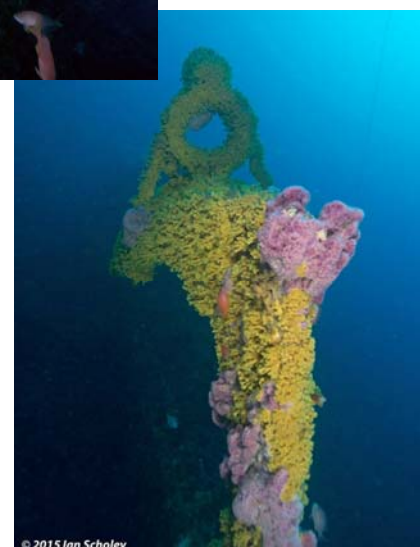
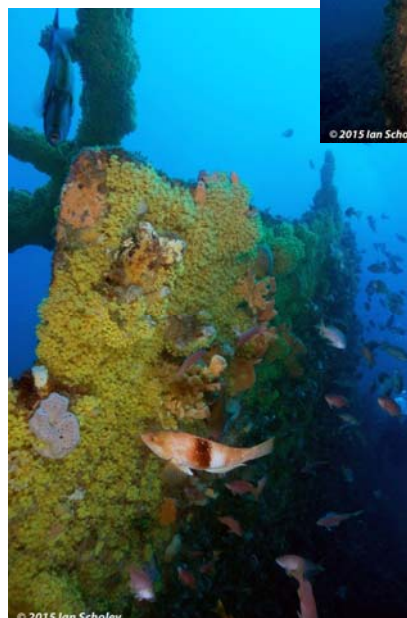


J4 Sub & SS Coogee

Tuesday, 29th December 2015

Ian Scholey

A sublime day's diving today in near perfect conditions. First up we headed to the J5 and then followed that with the SS Coogee (my boat) and Golden Arch (Toucans). Diving today were Myself and Tony Knott on Sea Eagle, and Peter Beaumont and Greg Richards on Toucans. We just beat Dive Vic to the Coogee and, as we were leaving, Peter Campisano arrived on Carmine (Great minds think alike). ❖



Lost Reef & SS Coogee

Wednesday, 30th December 2015

Ian Scholey

Another top day's diving today in magnificent conditions again.

We had three boats out today:

On Sea Eagle, myself and Antony Plaxford ; On Toucan, Peter Beaumont ; On Signature One, John Lawler, Graham Ellis, Rob Kirk & Peter Altis.

First dive site was Lost Reef also known as New Deep Bommie. At 35m down to 40m we didn't get a lot of bottom time but it was a very nice spot and we will be heading back soon. Highlight was a Seven Gill Shark which was seen by JL and Graham Ellis.

As the Coogee was so good yesterday we went back there and had another good dive although the vis was down on the previous day. ❖



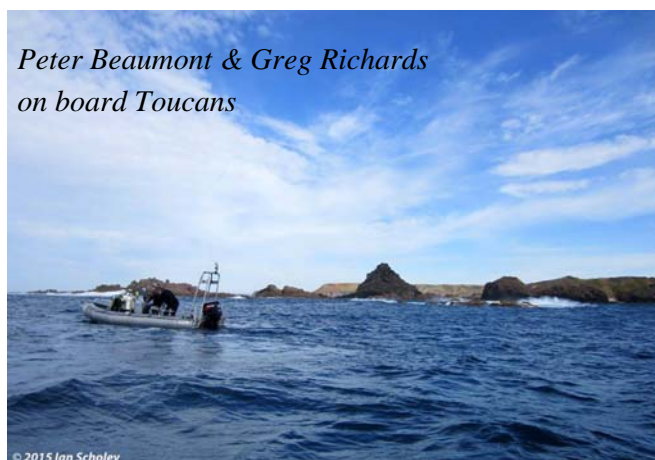
George Ker- mode & Cape Woolamai

Thursday, 31st December 2015

Ian Scholey

A very nice day to finish the year. Today we headed to Phillip Island and dived the George Kermode and then Cape Woolamai. On Sea Eagle were myself and guest diver Anna Scholey. On Toucans were Peter Beaumont and Greg Richards.

This was new diver, Anna's first wreck dive and she did a great job as my buddy. As usual the wreck was stuffed full of fish. Cape Woolamai was a little mucky but nice never the less. Sadly for Anna and I, a problem with the ankle valve on my Dry Suit meant we didn't do the second dive. ❖



*Peter Beaumont & Greg Richards
on board Toucans*



A happy Anna on board Sea Eagle

Portsea Pier

Sunday, 3rd January 2016

Ian Scholey

With the wind up today, we replaced boat diving with a shore dive at Portsea Pier. The surge was a problem for the photography but I did manage these shots of a cluster of *Verconia verconis* Nudibranch. They are extremely well camouflaged but when you have the eagle eyed Peter Beaumont that isn't a problem. There were 4 in the cluster which is the most I have ever seen together.

Diving today were myself, Peter Beaumont, Benita McDonough, Feng Qui and Anna Scholey. ❖

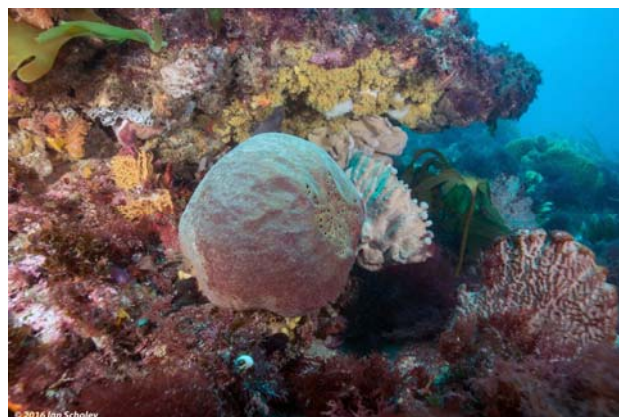


SS Coogee & Boarfish Reef

Sunday, 10th January 2016

Ian Scholey

A busy day for VSAG today with 5 boats out at various locations. Peter Campisano and crew on Carmine and John Lawler and crew on Signature One, were up north catching up on the weather affected cancelled dives on SS City of Launceston from before Christmas. Sea Eagle, Toucans and Signature Two headed south and dived combinations of SS Coogee, Lonsdale Wall and drifts from Boarfish Reef. For me it was the Coogee and a drift from Boarfish Reef, two excellent dives even though the vis wasn't the best. Diving the southern end were myself, Peter Beaumont, Michael Ngai, David Geekie, Pam Dagley and prospective new member, Ian Wheatly, together with Alan Beckhurst, Mary Malloy and the rest of the crew from Get Under on Ocean Diver. ❖





Launceston Wreck

January 2016

reports and photos by Peter Campisano

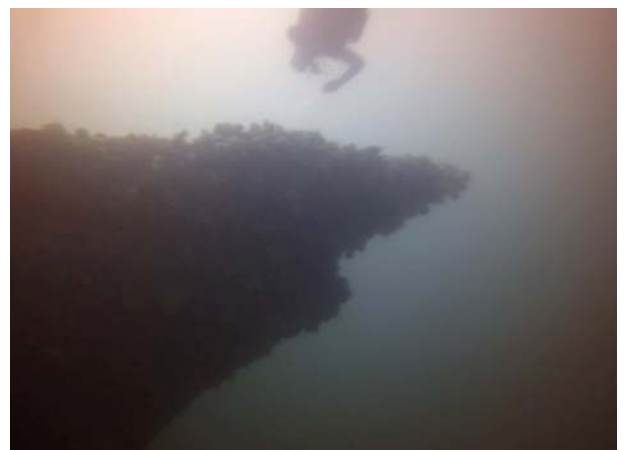
Sunday, 10th January

D/C: Carole Campisano.

Divers: Peter Campisano, David Politakis, Denys Shermchanskyi, Tony Knott and Steve Vajda.

Sea conditions were excellent, but viz was fairly low - as expected. It reminded me of diving the Uralba.

The wreck was covered in huge mussels and thousands of empty scallop shells. It was amazing to see part of the bow of the Penola still embedded in the hull of the Launceston.



David Geekie on the drift line

John Lawler and friends were also able to dive in the allocated time slot due to the generosity of the staff at Heritage Victoria.



Tony Knott

Tuesday, 12th January 2016

D/C: Peter Campisano

Divers: Carole Campisano, Chan Maneesilasan, David Flew, Bert Parker and Leo Maybus.

Sea conditions were less favourable, but the viz was better. It was great having the entire boat ramp at St.Kilda Marina, to ourselves. Also, no jet skis to be seen!



As we arrived, Leo was greeted enthusiastically by Des Williams on the Heritage Vic boat. Once again I'd like to thank the staff of Heritage Vic for giving us this rare opportunity. ❖



Steve Vajda

MASSIVE VSAG DIVE DAY!

Sunday, 17th January 2016

report by John Lawler & photos by John Lawler, James Van Den Beek

This Sunday saw one of the biggest responses from club boat owners and divers to get out in the best conditions we have experienced for a long time. Continuing reports of 20/30 + vizability has become the norm!

WHO:

John Gladding on “Barchrusher” had Deb, Benita McDonough and Greg Richards as his crew out of Sorrento for an early start to catch the 8.30 ebb dive.

David Geekie on “Signature Two” had Michael Ngai, Sandy Webb and Denys Smerchanskyi out of Barwon Heads - they dived Lost Reef - “lost” being the operative word as dive tank/s came loose off the clip on the side of the boat after the dive and fell back into 30 metres. A plan was agreed to dive the site again and due to very clear water, the items were located! (Seems lost and found dive items is becoming practice in the club). *See Alan Beckhurst’s article & video link on Lost Reef on page 82

John Mills and Priya Cardinaletti on their RIB “Wave Rider” out of Sorrento.

Ian Scholey and Peter Beaumont on “Two Cans” out of Newahven at 7.30am for the Pinnacles. Not a good day, apart from brilliant diving conditions, with Ian slashing his right hand with a dive knife requiring stitches?

Peter Campisano on “Carmine” out of Sorrento with Carole Campisano, Bert Parker, Herb Mackay. This dive team basically hung with John and Priya.



David Politakis (above) on “Crusher One” departed Sorrento early for a long hunter/gatherer run up along the back beaches. Crew were Angus Stewart-Adams, Jeremy Van Den Beek and John Lawler. The usual fineBBQ lunch of prime beef and sausages was on offer, cooked to perfection by Chef David.



Conditions under the water were milky, the swell was at times a bit testy and the catch poor...3 crays. Professional cray pots were strung out all along the coast and on many of the best cray dive sites...naturally!



Angus Stewart-Adams



Above water the day was brilliant... warm and sunny ...heaven really!
A very diversified club dive day and one of the best! ❖



ONLY 3 crays! David Politakis with the catch

Queenscliff & Deep Sub

Sunday, 17th January 2016

report by John Mills

Not having had a chance to launch

Wave Rider in the New Year, this was our first outing for 2016. The trusty Willy Weather Site indicated favourable winds for Sunday so I booked us in.

The Dive time was a civilised meet at Sorrento at 8:30 am. However a follow up e-mail indicated a change to 7:45am. We had a barbecue at friends' the night before and didn't finish up until midnight.

Anyway, I was up at 5:30 on the Sunday to drag the boat out of the shed. I was all set to switch to the wetsuit now that it was nice and warm - I couldn't find my booties. So it was going to be a dry suit dive after all. I just wore fewer garments underneath it.

I dragged Priya out of bed around 6:00. She was very tired as she had a full day's diving out on Westernport the previous day with a shipwreck group. We also had to fill the truck with Diesel on the way. The upshot was a 7:45 arrival at Sorrento was looking a Bit Shaky. I left a message with JL regarding this. If worst came to worst we could launch and find them out on the water.

On the way into Sorrento I noticed we were being followed by a vehicle with a big red boat behind it. I said, "I think that's Campo". This was con-

firmed when we got to the Scuba Doctor's to get the ramp pass. Peter said we weren't late as it was only David's boat doing the early start. "Good," I thought, "we now have Buddies".

The predictions regarding a busy ramp were correct - there were no spots in any of the car parks. We couldn't even do the traditional meeting in the top carpark without blocking traffic. We launched and I hung around out the back of the moorings until Priya came back. She had to park down the road a fair distance away.

We finally got underway, checked the radios and headed out through The Heads. We radioed Signature 2 and he was further down the Coast off Barwon Heads. We decided to drop in off the beach at Queenscliff and do some hunting. Three of us dropped in on a line and had a look around but I couldn't find any critters. As my air was getting low, I signalled to Peter that I was surfacing and went up the line. When Peter surfaced he indicated that after I left he came across some more reefs and he found a nice size Cray. Typical, you always come across them when you are out of air.

Priya was unsure about doing a dive as she didn't feel like a reef dive. However Carole indicated that we should check out the Deep Sub. Priya

soon changed her mind as she didn't want to miss a wreck dive. Peter had the marks and found the wreck on the sounder in no time and dropped the shot. I helped Priya get the dry suit and gear on and dropped her at the shot with the others.

As I am still learning how my sounder works, this was a good opportunity to play with it and learn what the wrecks look like. I saw a nice shape come up on the screen and marked the spot on the sounder. The others surfaced and indicated that they had a great dive with excellent visibility. It was smiles all around. When the shot was pulled back up I went back to the mark I'd made and sure enough I found the site on the sounder. Cool, we can probably find this wreck ourselves now.

After sitting around chatting at lunch, we had 2 hours surface interval and went back to the reefs and retrieved the boat. It was still quite busy at the ramp. We headed to the Scuba Doctor's, filled the tanks and washed the boat and gear. I was glad we made the effort to get the boat on the water as it was much cooler than being on land. We got home about 6:00pm and put the boat and gear away. I had a bite to eat and sat down to watch a trashy comedy and was asleep in no time after a long day. ❖

The Pinnacle & Cape Woolamai

Sunday, 17th January 2016

Ian Scholey

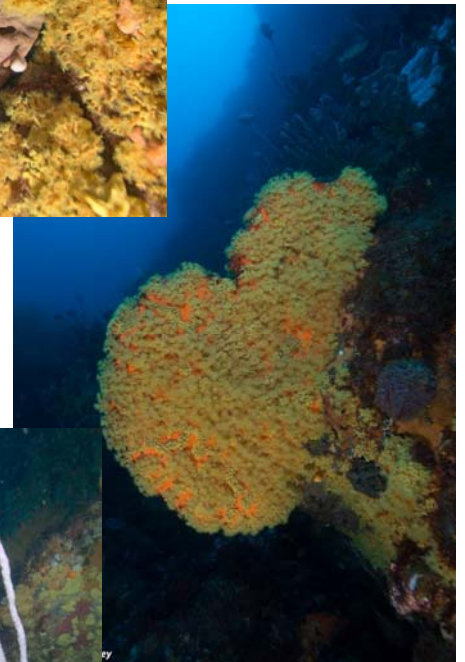
What a fantastic day out on the water today. Put off by the Peninsula traffic jams and recent boat ramp delays, Peter Beaumont and I headed to Phillip Island. I never tire of The Pinnacle - it has to be my favourite dive site. Today we were joined by a friendly seal.



Cape Woolmai was a bit of a work out in the surge but PB found a 2m Wobbegong and I was treated to a pod of Dolphins while doing my surface interval. We were done and dusted by 12.30. ❖



The Wobbegong - photo by Peter Beaumont



Blairgowrie Night Dive

Friday, 22nd January 2016

Ian Scholey

Peter Beaumont and I snuck a last minute Night Dive in at Blairgowrie last night. Apologies that this one didn't go out via email. Slowly the site is picking up again after the carnage of the works. The highlight last night was actually seeing a Swimming Anemone floating in the current which made for some nice shots. ❖



The Hurricane

Sunday, 24th January 2016

Ian Scholey

Just Sea Eagle operating out of Rye with myself and Peter Beaumont on board. With Southerlies kicking in, we opted for the safety of the bay and a double dive on The Hurricane. With Blairgowrie suffering a bit from the works, this site is now my vote for best critter site in the area. The variety and quantity of fish life is magnificent and today was no exception. Despite it being pointed out to me I failed to see the Goblinfish, hence the second dive.

Not noted for moving far, of course it had moved, so I couldn't find it on the second dive either. All up I was under for 3 1/2 hours and really enjoyed the dives. ❖



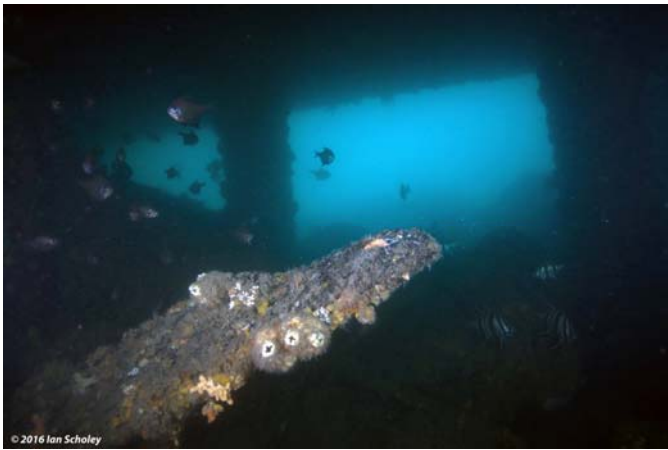
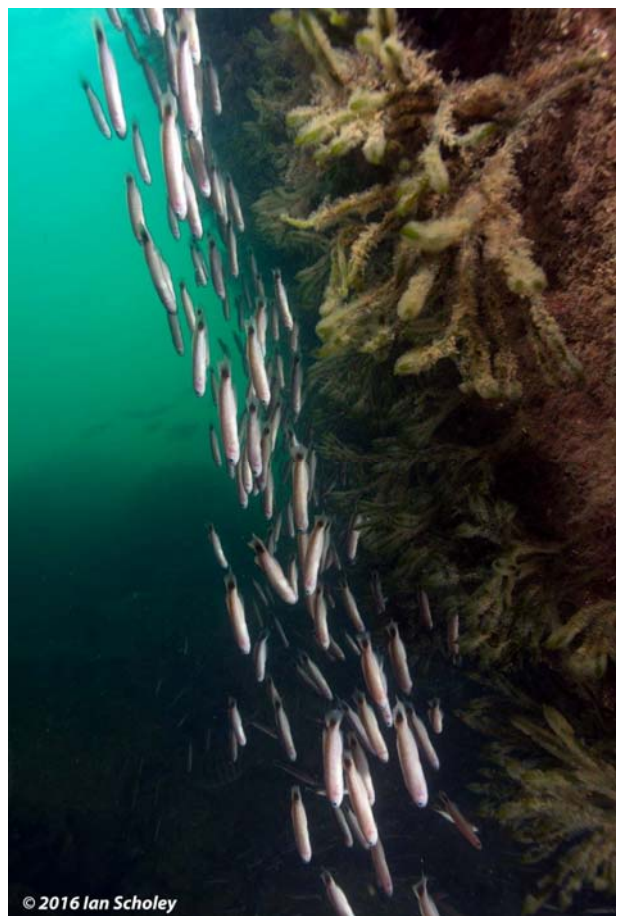
Mornington Pier

**Australia Day Shore Dive
Tuesday, 26th January 2016**

Ian Scholey

Diving today were myself, Peter Beaumont, Graham Ellis, Meg Johnson, Ricky Pritchard and Peter Briggs

Wow, what happened at Mornington Pier since I last dived it? An absolute explosion of fishlife made for a fantastic dive this morning. The vis was pretty ordinary but that made for a great back drop of green water. I have never seen such huge schools of Hulafish and the Oldwives are back in large numbers as well. ❖



VSAG Dive and Meeting Calendar

By Peter Beaumont, Dive Calendar Coordinator, VSAG

Activity Details

Dive Coordinator (DC) nominated below.

Dive site determined by DC and advised by email based on forecast conditions.

Boat Captains for the dive will be confirmed by email prior to the weekend.

Dive day can swap between Sat and Sun depending on conditions!

Dive Coordinator is responsible for organising a dive report after their weekend.

Dive sites adjusted on the day to suit divers and conditions.

Book in for a dive day ASAP after receiving notification via email. Please provide the Dive Captain with your full name, mobile phone number and e-mail address.

You are required to call the Dive Captain between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. the evening prior to the dive day to confirm that you will still be coming on the dive.

Feb 13/14	Boat DC Ross Walker 0417 376 192
Feb 16	General Meeting, The Water Rat Hotel, 8.00 pm
Feb 20/21	Boat DC David Geekie 0419 300 686
Feb 27/28	Shore DC Walter Medanbach 0408 899 881 Boat DC Peter Galvin 0417 061 564
Mar 5/6	Boat DC John Lawler 0414 922 916
Mar 12/13/14	Shore DC Walter Medanbach 0408 899 881 Boat DC Ian Scholey 0439 310 646
Mar 15	General Meeting, The Water Rat Hotel, 8.00 pm
Mar 19/20	Boat DC Graham Ellis 0403 070 920
Mar –Easter weeknd 25/26/27/28	Boat DC Michael Ngai 0414 894 684
Apr 2/3	Boat DC David Geekie 0419 300 686
Apr 9/10	Boat DC Peter Beaumont 0403 410 725
Apr 16/17	Boat DC David Flew 0418446530
Apr 19	General Meeting, The Water Rat Hotel, 8.00 pm
Apr 23/24/25	Boat DC Benita McDonough 0419399000
Apr 30/1	Boat DC Peter Galvin 0417 061 564

Tidal Streams at the Heads — February 2016

RED italic times are slack water with EBB about to start (Flood Slack) which are the best diving conditions near the Heads. **BLUE** are Ebb Slack.

February						
MON 1	TUE 2	WED 3	THU 4	FRI 5	SAT 6	SUN 7
2:47	3:19	3:53	4:31	0:06	1:16	2:30
8:43	9:12	9:43	10:18	5:17	6:22	7:53
15:35	16:11	16:50	17:33	10:58	11:49	12:57
21:26	22:13	23:05		18:25	19:27	20:34
MON 8	TUE 9	WED 10	THU 11	FRI 12	SAT 13	SUN 14
3:36	4:28	5:10	5:48	0:18	1:04	1:48
9:25	10:31	11:23	12:11	6:24	6:59	7:35
14:15	15:30	16:36	17:34	12:56	13:42	14:27
21:38	22:37	23:30		18:28	19:22	20:15
MON 15	TUE 16	WED 17	THU 18	FRI 19	SAT 20	SUN 21
2:30	3:11	3:53	4:39	0:07	1:17	2:28
8:12	8:50	9:32	10:18	5:34	6:46	8:19
15:12	15:58	16:45	17:35	11:10	12:14	13:29
21:08	22:04	23:03		18:32	19:38	20:48
MON 22	TUE 23	WED 24	THU 25	FRI 26	SAT 27	SUN 28
3:34	4:27	5:11	5:47	0:19	0:55	1:27
9:44	10:48	11:37	12:18	6:19	6:46	7:13
14:50	16:02	17:00	17:48	12:54	13:26	13:56
21:54	22:51	23:39		18:30	19:08	19:44
February	March					
MON 29	TUE 1	WED 2	THU 3	FRI 4	SAT 5	SUN 6
1:56	2:26	2:57	3:29	4:03	4:45	0:20
7:39	8:06	8:36	9:07	9:42	10:22	5:40
14:27	14:59	15:32	16:07	16:47	17:34	11:14
20:21	20:59	21:40	22:26	23:19		18:33

Tidal Streams at the Heads — March 2016

RED italic times are slack water with EBB about to start (Flood Slack) which are the best diving conditions near the Heads. **BLUE** are Ebb Slack.

February	March					
MON 29	TUE 1	WED 2	THU 3	FRI 4	SAT 5	SUN 6
<i>1:56</i>	<i>2:26</i>	<i>2:57</i>	<i>3:29</i>	<i>4:03</i>	<i>4:45</i>	<i>0:20</i>
<i>7:39</i>	<i>8:06</i>	<i>8:36</i>	<i>9:07</i>	<i>9:42</i>	<i>10:22</i>	<i>5:40</i>
<i>14:27</i>	<i>14:59</i>	<i>15:32</i>	<i>16:07</i>	<i>16:47</i>	<i>17:34</i>	<i>11:14</i>
<i>20:21</i>	<i>20:59</i>	<i>21:40</i>	<i>22:26</i>	<i>23:19</i>		<i>18:33</i>
MON 7	TUE 8	WED 9	THU 10	FRI 11	SAT 12	SUN 13
<i>1:29</i>	<i>2:38</i>	<i>3:37</i>	<i>4:25</i>	<i>5:07</i>	<i>0:02</i>	<i>0:50</i>
<i>6:59</i>	<i>8:35</i>	<i>9:51</i>	<i>10:50</i>	<i>11:42</i>	<i>5:47</i>	<i>6:26</i>
<i>12:26</i>	<i>13:54</i>	<i>15:17</i>	<i>16:28</i>	<i>17:30</i>	<i>12:32</i>	<i>13:19</i>
<i>19:46</i>	<i>21:03</i>	<i>22:11</i>	<i>23:10</i>		<i>18:25</i>	<i>19:18</i>
MON 14	TUE 15	WED 16	THU 17	FRI 18	SAT 19	SUN 20
<i>1:35</i>	<i>2:18</i>	<i>3:01</i>	<i>3:44</i>	<i>4:30</i>	<i>5:23</i>	<i>0:41</i>
<i>7:06</i>	<i>7:46</i>	<i>8:29</i>	<i>9:14</i>	<i>10:03</i>	<i>10:59</i>	<i>6:32</i>
<i>14:05</i>	<i>14:50</i>	<i>15:35</i>	<i>16:20</i>	<i>17:07</i>	<i>17:59</i>	<i>12:05</i>
<i>20:09</i>	<i>21:00</i>	<i>21:50</i>	<i>22:43</i>	<i>23:39</i>		<i>19:03</i>
MON 21	TUE 22	WED 23	THU 24	FRI 25	SAT 26	SUN 27
<i>1:47</i>	<i>2:52</i>	<i>3:47</i>	<i>4:31</i>	<i>5:07</i>	<i>5:38</i>	<i>0:34</i>
<i>7:58</i>	<i>9:18</i>	<i>10:18</i>	<i>11:05</i>	<i>11:43</i>	<i>12:18</i>	<i>6:06</i>
<i>13:24</i>	<i>14:48</i>	<i>15:59</i>	<i>16:54</i>	<i>17:39</i>	<i>18:18</i>	<i>12:49</i>
<i>20:17</i>	<i>21:30</i>	<i>22:29</i>	<i>23:18</i>	<i>23:59</i>		<i>18:53</i>
March				April		
MON 28	TUE 29	WED 30	THU 31	FRI 1	SAT 2	SUN 3
<i>1:05</i>	<i>1:36</i>	<i>2:06</i>	<i>2:37</i>	<i>3:10</i>	<i>3:45</i>	<i>3:26</i>
<i>6:33</i>	<i>7:01</i>	<i>7:31</i>	<i>8:03</i>	<i>8:37</i>	<i>9:14</i>	<i>8:58</i>
<i>13:20</i>	<i>13:51</i>	<i>14:22</i>	<i>14:55</i>	<i>15:29</i>	<i>16:07</i>	<i>15:52</i>
<i>19:27</i>	<i>20:02</i>	<i>20:38</i>	<i>21:16</i>	<i>21:57</i>	<i>23:42</i>	<i>22:34</i>

Tidal Streams at the Heads — April 2016

RED italic times are slack water with EBB about to start (Flood Slack) which are the best diving conditions near the Heads. **BLUE** are Ebb Slack.

March				April		
MON 28	TUE 29	WED 30	THU 31	FRI 1	SAT 2	SUN 3
1:05	1:36	2:06	2:37	3:10	3:45	3:26
6:33	7:01	7:31	8:03	8:37	9:14	8:58
13:20	13:51	14:22	14:55	15:29	16:07	15:52
19:27	20:02	20:38	21:16	21:57	23:42	22:34
MON 4	TUE 5	WED 6	THU 7	FRI 8	SAT 9	SUN 10
4:19	5:31	0:37	1:38	2:33	3:22	4:08
9:56	11:14	6:57	8:13	9:17	10:13	11:04
16:48	18:00	12:44	14:11	15:23	16:25	17:20
23:34		19:24	20:41	21:46	22:42	23:32
MON 11	TUE 12	WED 13	THU 14	FRI 15	SAT 16	SUN 17
4:52	0:19	1:05	1:49	2:34	3:21	4:14
11:53	5:37	6:23	7:10	8:00	8:52	9:51
18:11	12:40	13:25	14:09	14:52	15:35	16:23
	18:59	19:46	20:32	21:19	22:08	23:01
MON 18	TUE 19	WED 20	THU 21	FRI 22	SAT 23	SUN 24
5:18	6:31	0:58	1:52	2:39	3:17	3:50
11:00	12:20	7:40	8:37	9:23	10:02	10:38
17:22	18:36	13:41	14:49	15:42	16:25	17:03
23:59		19:55	21:00	21:51	22:33	23:09
April						May
MON 25	TUE 26	WED 27	THU 28	FRI 29	SAT 30	SUN 1
4:22	4:53	0:15	0:48	1:21	1:55	2:32
11:11	11:44	5:26	6:00	6:35	7:13	7:56
17:38	18:11	12:16	12:49	13:23	13:58	14:36
23:43		18:45	19:19	19:55	20:33	21:13

Websites for Tidal Streams & Weather Conditions

Peter Beaumont

Tidal Stream information for Port Phillip Bay Heads is located here:

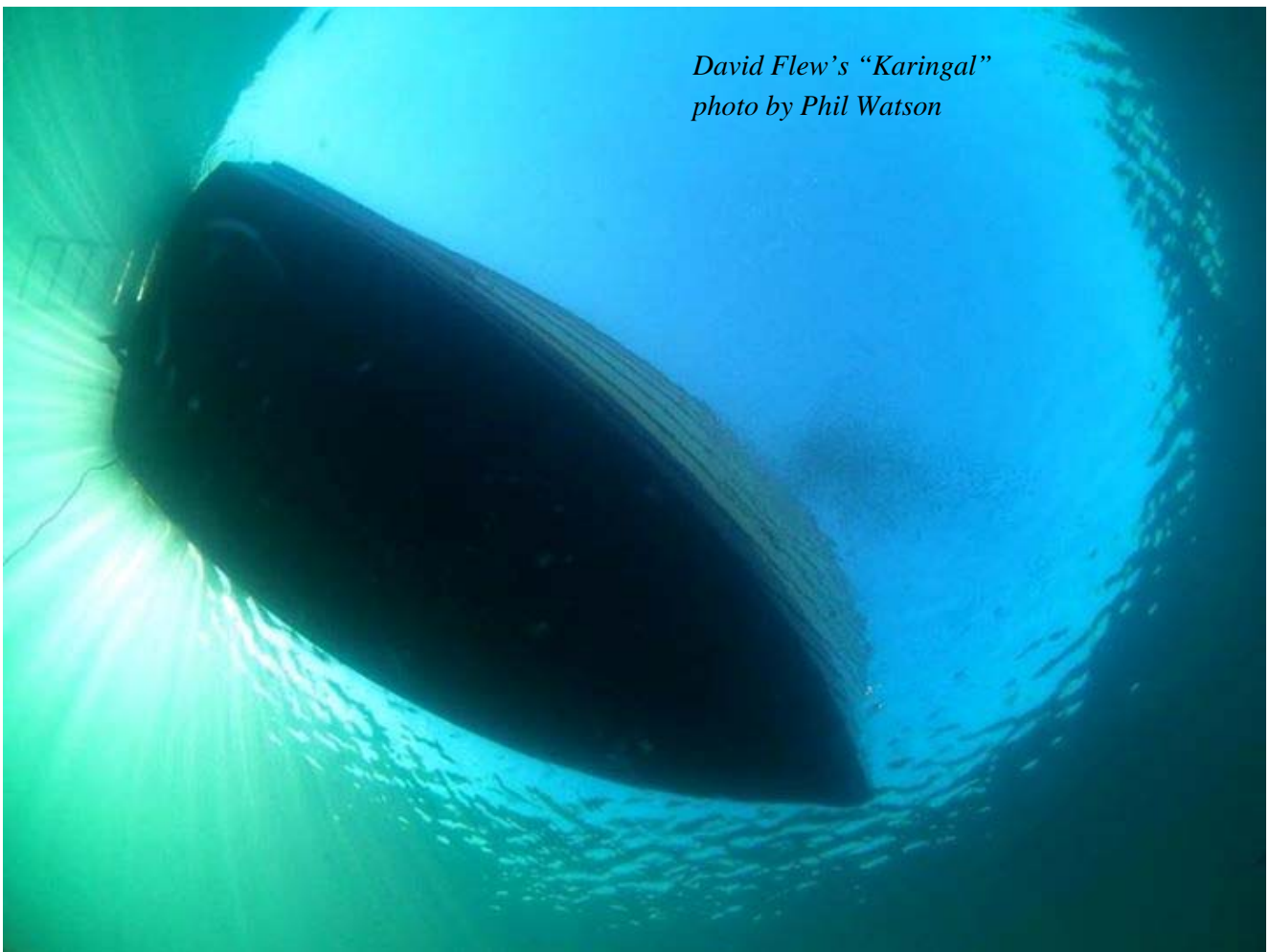
<http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/tides/#!/vic-the-rip>

Port Phillip Bay winds and temperature information is located here:

<http://www.baywx.com.au/>

Tide information for Cape Woolamai is located here:

<http://tides.willyweather.com.au/vic/gippsland/cape-woolamai.html>



*David Flew's "Karingal"
photo by Phil Watson*

Safety Snippet

David Flew

You should all know by now that the area defined as Port Phillip Heads has changed.

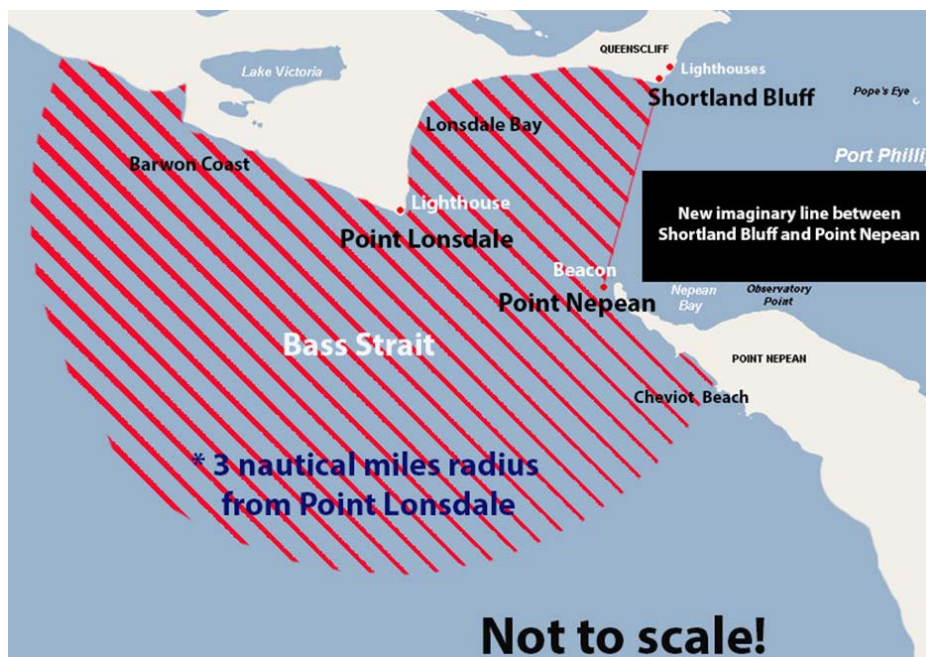
The details are on Transport Safety Victoria's web site at <http://transportsafety.vic.gov.au/maritime-safety/newsroom/new-definition-of-port-phillip-heads>

Port Phillip Heads is a "designated hazardous area" as defined in the regulation 101 4(a): the vessel is crossing or attempting to cross an ocean bar or operating within a designated hazardous area.

Additional safety measures are im-

posed on vessels in designated hazardous areas, including mandatory PFD wearing.

The area covered by the new definition covers many sites dived by VSAG, so you will need to wear PFD's (life jackets) for longer times on many dive trips. Whilst all VSAG boats carry enough PFD's for everyone on board, they are not necessarily the most comfortable ones available. If you own a PFD you should consider bringing it with you. If it's an inflatable type it must be within its service period. There are servicing instructions on the MSV web site. ❖



LIFEJACKET WEAR IS MANDATORY IN THE RED AREA

Emergency Contact Information

Anywhere on water in Victoria Ch 16 or 88 should be your first choice using Mayday or Pan Pan

**VHF Channel 16
27 MHz AM Channel 88**

Note: VSAG uses VHF CH 73 and 27 MHz CH 96 for routine communications. Check you are using the correct emergency channel.

VSAG Nautilus will be tuned to Ch 73 (Green button for routine comms) and Ch 16 (Red Button for distress comms)

Speak slowly and clearly

<p>Mayday Call – for grave & imminent danger requiring immediate assistance</p>	<p>Urgency Call – when the danger is not grave or imminent</p>
<p>Distress Call:</p> <p>Mayday, Mayday, Mayday</p> <p>This is: <u>“Boat call sign x3”</u> (Boat owners insert your call sign)</p>	<p>Urgency Call:</p> <p>Pan Pan, Pan Pan, Pan Pan</p> <p>All Ships, All Ships, All Ships (or the emergency service you want to contact)</p> <p>This is: <u>“Boat call sign x3”</u> (Boat owners insert your call sign)</p>
<p>Distress message after contact made:</p> <p>Mayday</p> <p>“2 DIVE 4”</p> <p>Give position-(see GPS for co-ordinates), nature of the problem, number on board plus any other relevant information</p> <p>Over</p> <p>Follow advice given by the emergency agency – DO NOT “Sign off” until told so by agency.</p>	<p>Urgency message after contact made:</p> <p>Pan Pan</p> <p>“2 DIVE 4”</p> <p>Give position-(see GPS for co-ordinates), nature of the problem, number on board plus any other relevant information</p> <p>Over</p> <p>Follow advice given by the emergency agency – DO NOT “Sign off” until told so by agency.</p>

All passengers on a boat should be familiar with the use of marine radio(s) in case of emergency.

Emergency Contact Information

Telephone contacts

Police – Ambulance – Fire : 000

Water Police no longer use the 1800 088 200 number

The new 24/7 No is : 03 9399 7500

DAN International Emergency Hotline: +1-919-684-9111 (from mobile)
0011 1 919684 9111 (from landline)

State Emergency Service (VIC): 132 500 (new number)

Alfred Hospital Hyperbaric Unit: 03 9076 2269

Alfred Hospital switchboard: 03 9076 2000

Mornington Peninsula Area

Diving Emergency Service: 1800 088 200

Dr. John Roth:

Mornington Medical Group **03 5975 2633**

Rosebud Hospital:

1527 Nepean Hwy, Rosebud **03 5986 0666**

Frankston Hospital:

Hastings Road, Frankston **03 9784 7777**

The Bays Hospital:

Main Street, Mornington **03 5975 2009**

Southern Peninsula Rescue: (Sorrento) 0417 038 944

Mornington Bay Rescue Service: 0419 233 999

*Coast Guard (Queenscliff) **03 5258 2222**

*Coast Guard (Hastings) **03 5979 3322**

*Coast Guard (Safety Beach) **03 5981 4443**

***Coast Guard is not always manned & operates mainly during daylight hrs**

Diving Doctors:

Dr Pamela Dagley (Eltham) **03 9439 2222 (VSAG member)**

Dr Vanessa Haller (Carrum Downs) **03 9782 6666**

Dr Adrian Murrie (Sorrento) **03 5984 4322**

Dr Guy Williams (Rosebud) **03 5981 1555**

Dr John Roth (Mornington) **03 5975 2633**

PHIL WATSON'S PHOTOS



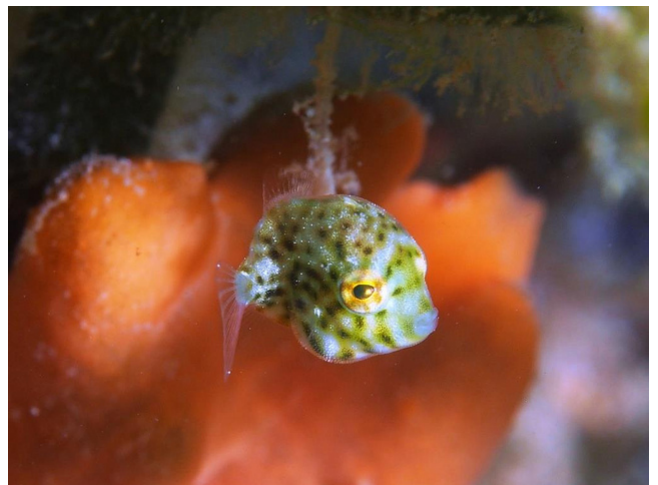
Nudi threesome - three Phyllodesmium nudibranchs mating, Williamstown



Nudibranch - Ercolania boodeae, Williamstown, Depth 5m



Noumea haliclona, Point Gellibrand, Depth 4m



Baby Pygmy LJ, Steele Rocks



Paper Nautilus, Mushroom Reef, Flinders



Velvetfish, Steele's Rocks



Baby Blue Devil, Queenscliff



Spotted Pipefish - Stigmatopora argus, Point Wilson, Depth 2m



Rainbow Cale, Queenscliff



Anemone, Point Gellibrand, Depth 4m



*Philineopis lineolata - Ricketts Point
Depth 4m*



*Gnathiid isopod, Point Gellibrand
Length 2mm. Depth 3m, in water column.*

Lost Reef

Here is a recent article and video link by Alan Beckhurst

Two nautical miles southwest of Lonsdale Lighthouse is the end of a reef which runs for kilometres from the west. The top of the reef is 30 metres deep, and the sides plunge down to over 37 metres. Being the first large reef for many kilometres, it is a haven for fish, and commonly completely covered by schooling perch and pike. The reef itself is quite rugged, with holes, cracks and over

hangs, covered on rich algal growth, and lots of invertebrates on the walls and in the caves. Lace fan sponges and sea tulips are features on the lower slopes. Not often dived, this reef is called Lost Reef (or New Deep Bommie to some). ❖

<https://vimeo.com/151992853>



A hard day at the office for L-R : Arthur Kokkinos, John Lawler & Peter Galvin



© 2015 Ian Scholey

*Perfect spot for a dive interval - Ian Scholey on board Sea Eagle at Phillip Island
A diver's life is such a happy one!*



Lizard at our campsite
Sodwana Bay, South Africa

© 2015 Ian Scholey