



Sea Braggin'

St George scuba club newsletter



What's on...

O/S Interstate	Local	Check the newsletter
	Xmas party Kurnell Sun 7 Dec	regular boat / shore dives
Yongala Great Barrier Reef		Night dives on Thursdays

Diving in November/ Dec

Deep Dive Annie M Miller	30 Nov	Kelly McFadyen
Clifton Gardens	6 Dec	Jason Coombs
Hole in the wall	29 Nov	Dave Casburn
16 Nov to 22 Nov	Yongala Great Barrier Reef	Mike Scotland
19 Nov	Club Meeting	Natasha Naude
weekly	Shore dives	See calendar
Thursday nights	Night dives	Michael McFayden
Sun 7 Dec	Xmas party Kurnell	Dave Burns

A big thankyou to Jason Coombs, Ron Walsh, Shelley Brueseker, Nancy Scoleri, Michael McFayden for articles submitted.

The Bare Island Anglerfish (aka Ugly) Fish

In October 2014 our very own undescribed "Bare Island" Anglerfish finally got a name. Its scientific name is *Porophyrne erythrodactylus* which is broadly speaking Greek for "the spotty toad with red fingers". From the ones that I have seen the description is pretty much spot-on (pun intended).



The story of the Bare Island Anglerfish goes back a long way. One was collected in 1980 in Sydney Harbour and sent to the experts at the University of Washington in Seattle USA. However it went missing, the rumour being that a spat between academics led to it and a number of other specimens being flushed down the toilet.

It should be recognised that long-time Sydney critter hunters and photographers including Mike Scotland and Noel Conlon have photographs of the Bare Island anglerfish going back more than 20 years.

Rox and I first saw this fish (a grey version) in 2004 at Indian Point (the point between Little Congwong Beach and Henry Head in Botany Bay) and incorrectly identified it as *Antennarius pictus* or painted anglerfish. In 2005 we were diving Bare Island Sponge Gardens with our friend and dive buddy Rob Harcourt who happens to be a professor of marine biology at Macquarie University. We saw another grey one on this dive and got photos.

Rob being better trained and more inquisitive than us didn't buy the painted anglerfish ID and sent it to Mark McGrouther at the Australian Museum. Being slightly stumped, Mark forwarded it to the University of Washington. The response was much excitement at the long-lost fish appearing again after more than 25 years.

Since that time the fish has been photographed from Sydney Harbour to Jervis Bay where it has been found at a dive site called Middle Ground. A spectacular red and white version has also been photographed at Bass Point. While it is normally quite shallow and inside bays and harbours I have seen it at 23m at Shark Point, Clovelly in Sydney.

We have most commonly seen grey versions on the right (western) side area of Bare Island mainly in the area of the sponge gardens. In 2009 we saw an orange one on the left or east side (we have mainly seen orange ones in this location since). It seems that the colours are well adapted to the surrounding sponge life of the specific location.



In 2012 Rox found a red / brown version of the fish at the Steps at Kurnell. It was almost entirely covered in growth which it must accumulate from the reef. You could hardly make out the eyes and mouth and Rox only spotted it because it was moving.

In 2013 we saw a largely white version of the fish. Its fin tips were yellow as though they had faded with age. Where it was whitest it looked like the skin was smoothed with no pores as though it was being rubbed off. My assumption is that they go this colour when they get old.

The best advice we have had to assist with finding critters like anglerfish came from Rachel Arnold at the University of Washington. Anglerfish always sit out of the current and surge so you should look for them on the sheltered side of reefs and bommies.

The fish has been placed on its own in a new family (genera) making it very special. It has two forward dorsal spines or in common speak two lures on its forehead. Often one will be up against its head making it hard to see.

Uniquely to angler fish (or frog fish) it has a tuft of colourful filaments in the centre of the lower jaw which may also be used as a lure. The red / crimson bands appear across the ends of the fins and it can also have red around the mouth, eyes and lure.

Anglerfish are Rox and my favourite fish for their cryptic camouflage and colourful variability. To think we could have assisted with the recording of a new species or that it could happen at a location like Bare Island where dozens of divers go every weekend is very special.

When ABC Radio did an interview with Rob Harcourt they unkindly referred to it as “an ugly little predator that lives on the seabed”. While it is not the most attractive fish its extensive camouflage make for stunning photographs.

The identification of the species is very important. Bottom dwelling shallow reef critters like angler fish and seahorses are favourite targets for the aquarium trade and a fish can only be protected if it officially exists. It also allows more information on new colour forms and locations to be added to its record as more are found and photographed.

Like all these things the identification was a true team effort from Rob Harcourt at Macquarie University and Mark McGrouther at the Australian Museum to Ted Pietsch and Rachel Arnold at University of Washington as well as scuba divers including David Harasti. And of course my favourite little dive buddy Roxanne Fea.

Jason Coombs

(It should be noted that a number of facts for this article are drawn from Copeia 2014 No.3 - Arnold, Harcourt and Pietsch)



Henry Head and Shaky by Shelley B

Greg and I went out with John Beddie and Mike Scotland on Saturday 25/10 and did two dives from Port Botany.

The swell and the wind were up a bit and the tide was still coming in, so the first dive we did was Henry Head.

John and Mike went in first and Greg and I followed after about 15 minutes. First we straightened out the anchor as the wind had changed slightly. As we ventured off we saw John and Mike in the distance and Mike signalled to us to follow him. John looked amused as we both took off after him.

He showed us a Red Indian fish and took a photo of it with me in the background. Being the consummate model, I hadn't even cleared my mask yet so it will look all foggy. Oh well, I guess I won't be on the front page of Dive Log.

After he left, Greg took some footage with the GoPro and we noticed later that the Red Indian fish looked like it had two faces. I guess that fish "speaks with forked tongue" like in the old Cowboy and Indian movies.

Greg and I continued on and our impression of this site is that it is a temperate water version of the Great Barrier Reef with sponges instead of coral, little bommies everywhere and lots of colour.

I knew this was sea horse territory as they love hanging on to the sea tulips and my persistence in looking for them paid off, but with only one sighting. I'm sure I missed hundreds. The one I saw was holding on to a finger sponge. Perhaps I was looking in the wrong places.



Photo of Shelley by Mike Scotland

Greg came across a pair of male Maori Wrasse having a territorial battle. They were biting each other's mouth and wrestling to see who was the strongest. He broke them up several times but they kept at it until eventually a winner was determined and they swam off in different directions.

I had a Crimson Banded Wrasse stick its face at my camera, and I managed to get my torch onto it to show up its beautiful red colours.

We found a Snakeskin Wrasse hiding in a bundle of rope on an old anchor and once disturbed it did a dance for us before swimming off.

We spotted 3 or 4 Weedy Sea Dragons, we may have seen the same one twice, once on the way out and again on the way back.

The vis was about 10 metres and the temp was 16 degrees. I got very cold as we were in the water for almost an hour and we just cruised around slowly.

After sitting in the sun and a warm drink to get our temperatures back up, we investigated the conditions outside. They weren't too bad, so we decided to dive at Shaky.

Shaky is named by rock fishermen for a large rock that moves when big waves hit it. The dive site is located on the east side of Cape Banks, close in to the rocks.

We had trouble anchoring, so a plan was devised where they'd throw the anchor in, and then Greg and me straight after it to pick it in. It sort of worked, except for the bit where Greg was looking for me on the surface. I got to the bottom and found a little ledge to catch the anchor on, then scouted around and found a big hole to drop it in. By then Greg was on hand to help me move it.

It is hard to believe the anchor wouldn't pick in as the site is a series of rocky ledges with overhangs and is really nice territory for eastern blue devils, wobblygongs or pineapple fish, but no one had told them. Perhaps it is subject to too much surge on a regular basis.



photo of John Beddie by Mike Scotland

We found there was great fixed life; fans, sponges, corals etc. but little fish life. I did find a striking Bullseye which was dark bronze in colour with white leading edges to all his fins. I also found the Usain Bolt of Mosaic Starfish.

I felt much warmer on this dive than the first, but the bottom temperature was the same and again we did over 50 minutes. We did a lot more swimming, especially against the surge, and the temperature on our safety stop was a degree warmer, with the surface temperature at 18 degrees.

On the surface we were entertained by a Catalina Flying Boat overhead and the maxi yachts sailing past with their silent but deadly keels, putting up their spinnakers. A good reason not to surface away from the boat!

Our video of this dive can be found at <https://vimeo.com/110541806>.

Shelley Breuseker



Photo of John Beddie with Weedy Sea Dragon by Mike Scotland

Thursday Night Dive Bare Island 23 October 2014 Ron Walsh

Meet time was 7pm at Bare Island. It was a beautiful warm summer like night with no wind and only a small swell. It was decided to dive the deep wall from the back right of the island as the back left of the island was covered with fishermen.

Diving were Michael M, Gary D (his first dive for a couple of months – amazing how those wetsuits shrink), Gary P, Kim D, Mike S, and a new member Michael (another one!).

Entry was easy for most with only Kim having minor issues with a little wave. Visibility was around 8-10m and the water temperature 10C. Headed SW as usual across the kelp and shallow sponge gardens following Michael and then dropped down to the sand line at a depth of around 18m.

Explored the sponges looking for pygmy pipe horses (PPH) but could not find any. Instead found a couple of dwarf lionfish, an octopus, a pear helmet shell, and a number of nudibranchs – bennetts hypselodoris, serpent pteraeolidia (blue dragon), sweet ceratosoma and a krusensternii dendrodoris (the renamed denisons dendrodoris).



As we headed back along the sand line Michael nominated that he had found the 3 resident seahorses at their usual spot. I only found 2 – a pregnant yellow one hiding in a finger sponge and the nice reddish/black one.

The group split in two here as some of us (me, Gary P and Mike S) stayed a bit longer with the seahorses to take photographs while Michael led the rest back towards the exit point.

Botany Bay Angler fish by Ron Walsh



The next critter found – and the first time I have found one rather than having it pointed out to me – was a yellow Bare Island Anglerfish. He was nicely sitting in a greenish sponge making a nice frame for photographs.

Near the large concrete block Gary found a Red Indian Fish (RIF) sitting nicely erect on sand – I think he was posing for photographs! There were another two RIF found later in the dive.

At seahorse point Gary found the resident PPH, and again found another 2 later in the dive.

Other critters found included a dumpling squid, tiny juvenile squid (I assume southern calamari squid), a fine lined bubble (from the opisthobranch family), Tasmanian chromodoris, yellow finned leatherjackets, blue morwong, and a large discodoris with a leopard type colouring.

Red Indian Fish by Ron Walsh



Exit was at the small boat ramp after a really nice 70 minute dive.

After packing up we all headed to Maroubra Junction for our usual late dinner of pizza (pre ordered just before we leave) before heading for home.

Bubble Shell by Ron Walsh



Baby Squid by Ron Walsh

[Yongala and the Great Barrier Reef \(part 1\) by Michael McFadyen](#)

On Sunday 15 November 2014 13 members and 3 non-members arrived in Townsville. Mike Scotland has chartered the live aboard dive boat MV *Kalinda* for dive trip to the SS *Yongala* and the Great Barrier Reef.

On the trip was Mike Scotland, Chris Heath, Steve Boyd, Caroline Corcoran, Deb Cook, Mat Peeling, Jo Campbell, Glenn Erskine, Mark Weeks, Gary Solomon, Bram Harris, Tong Zheng and myself. Also on the trip are a friend of Tong's Olivia and two divers from Peking that Tong met on a trip to the Maldives, Fan and Wei.

After a few drinks at the yacht club, a walk around the waterfront and dinner, we board the boat at 8 pm. The *Kalinda* is not the most salubrious boat, but at the price we are paying, it is very good value. We get a briefing from the owner and skipper, Dave, fill out the necessary forms and then find a cabin and get ourselves settled in. Just before 10 pm we depart for the *Yongala*, almost 47 nautical miles away.

The seas are a little sloppy, but a few beers make sleep come quickly. At 3:20 am we arrive on the wreck. We are up early for a pre-dive breakfast and then the diving starts. Just after 8 am we hit the water. There is a bit of current running from the bow towards the stern. It is not too bad, but you need to make sure you hold on to the line from the boat to the ascent/descent line.

What a wreck! This is my first dive on the *Yongala* and despite the poor visibility (say 7 m) we see so much. I see a few huge bull rays, a large turtle, dozens of large giant trevallies and more. Others see the resident Queensland gropers, including one that is enormous.



We do another two dives on the wreck. The next one has virtually no current but the third one is stronger than the first dive. As well as the things mentioned before, we see quite a few eagle rays, some barracuda and I get to see the Queensland gropers. On these dives we go right to the stern and see the rudder, the engine and the many holds and masts etc. Unfortunately you are not permitted to penetrate the wreck; otherwise it would be an even better dive.

We were originally planning to do a night dive on the *Yongala* but by 5 pm the current has got even stronger. Captain Dave decides that we will head off early to

our day two dive location. An early drinks o'clock is enjoyed and the first of our very nice dinners served. At 11:30 pm we arrived at Shell Reef, 35 nautical miles away.



Photos of Debbie Cooke and two Rays by Mike Scotland

The next morning, Tuesday 18 November, we do a morning dive at what we called Staghorn Corner. This was a Bommie located off the southern end of the reef which had a nice wall and a slope to over 25 metres. We did a drift dive to the south and then came back between the bommie and a larger part of the reef. There was a very nice swim-through that dropped back to the outside of the reef.

On the dive we saw a couple of white-tipped reef sharks as well as all the normal coral and tropical fish. The second dive was also done, here; most went to the north of the boat which had some interesting bommies. As well as more sharks, we saw some largish clams and very long sea whips. I should add that the water temperature on all dives on the trips varied between 26.3° and 27.3°C.

After lunch we moved a couple of nautical miles to what Dave calls "No Name Reef" (as it has no name on charts). This is a very nice site which Kelly and I hope to visit again next year in our yacht. The site is a sort of lagoon with bommies, large and small, all around. There were plenty of places to go, including outside the lagoon. More white-tips, some small hump-headed wrasse, a few nudibranchs I have never seen before and a couple of clown triggerfish were seen. A very nice dive.



We did a night dive here as well; it was pretty good up until my camera housing flooded again. Despite seeing it soon after it happened, enough water got in to kill the camera. Bugger! A chicken curry and a few beers made me feel a bit better.

Michael McFadyen

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Photos of Diagonal Sweetlip and Bram H by Mike Scotland

Honeymoon Bay Camping and Diving Weekend – 8 & 9 November 2014

Text and photos by Ron Walsh

Honeymoon Bay is located on the northern peninsular of Jervis Bay. It is accessed via a corrugated gravel road on the way to Point Perpendicular. The site located within the Beecroft Weapons Range and camping is allowed on Friday and Saturday nights only – during the week they apparently fire guns and things. It is bush camping with about 60 sites with the only facilities supplied being portaloos.



Donna & I arrived at around 9:15 on the Friday night to be met with a quite full camping area. Chris Heath had already arrived and obtained a site, and Donna & I were able to find another one not too far away. Daryl and Sarah arrived about an hour later and fitted onto Chris's campsite.

Michael, Kelly, Ida, Ray and Peter Flockart arrived Saturday morning and luckily were also able to find campsites.

Once settled in we kitted up for a dive. The plan was to enter the water off the beach, head out to the edge of the reef, turn left and follow the reef line. The divers were Donna, Michael, Chris, Daryl, Sarah and me. The dive is only shallow, being 8m max depth, and consists of kelp covered rocks with some sponges and ascidians. Away from the sand line the terrain consists of straight line gutters criss-crossing a bit like a street map with a number of small holes and swimthroughs. We found large wobbly sharks, a magnificent volute, a recently deceased fiddler ray, a huge flathead, several nudibranchs including *chromodoris splendida*, and small schools of mado and yellowtail.

After lunch some rested and read books, some swam and sun baked on the beach, others went for the 30min walk to Target Beach. This beach faces the entrance to Jervis Bay and provides magnificent views of Point Perpendicular and the lighthouse.

At 5pm we gathered at a picnic table overlooking the bay for drinks and nibbles before having a superb club sponsored BBQ with a magnificent sunset over the bay as our backdrop. The night had music and dancing – I don't think I will forget the Daryl and Sarah bridal waltz re-enactment – and Halloween glow sticks thanks to Sarah.

Sunday morning was a sleep in followed by a lazy breakfast and explore before some packed up and headed to see the lighthouse and then head for home. Others went swimming, and some walked again to Target Beach.



Donna & I decided to go for another dive and this time we explored to the right hand side of the bay. This dive was similar to the left hand side the day before but slightly shallower and more kelp. We saw a fiddler ray (alive this time), octopus, schooling mados, several different nudibranchs and some sea tulips and sponges.

After lunch and a restful time reading books we packed up and headed for home. A really nice weekend where the weather gods played nice, the diving was pleasant, and the company most excellent.



Photo of Donna by Ron Walsh



Photo by Kelly McFadyen

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