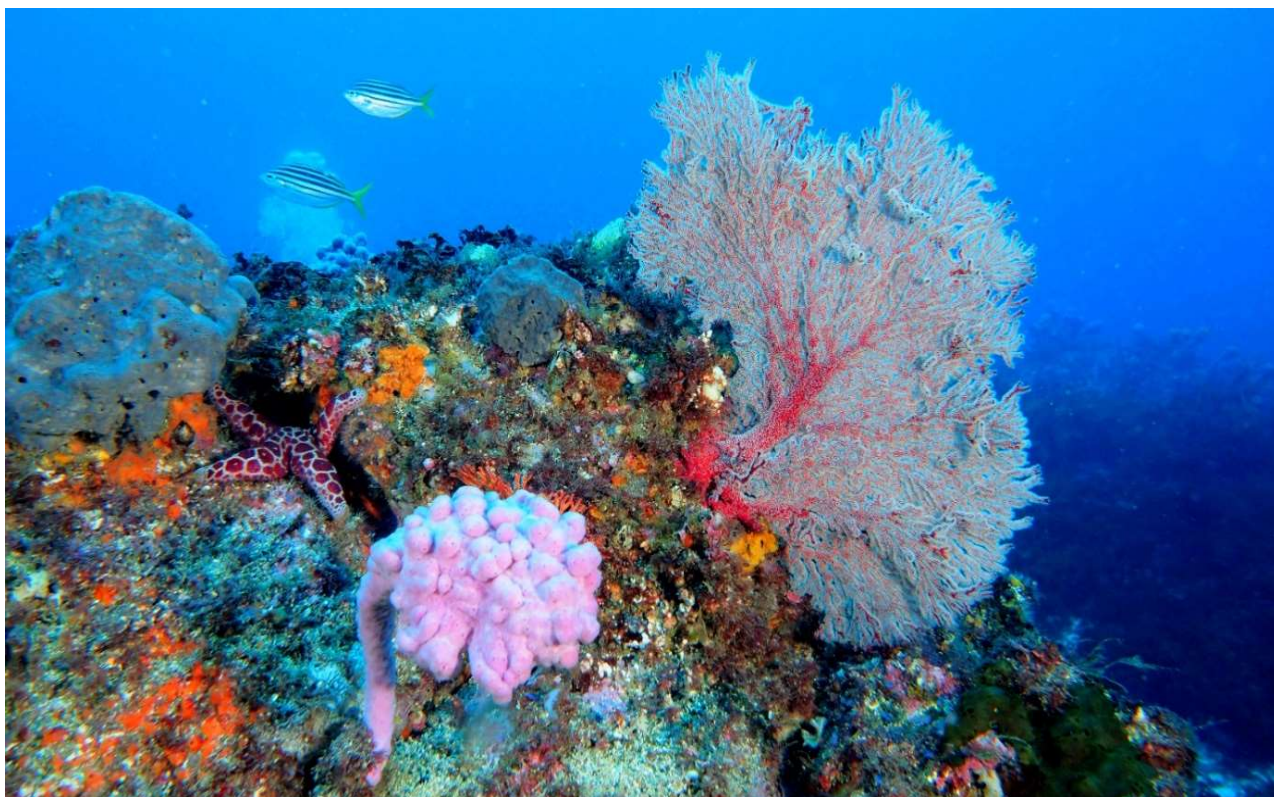




February 2023 Newsletter



Cover photo by Tammalee Butcher.
Bass Point in January 2023

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*Tammalee Butcher
Russ Jones
Peter Flockart
Peter Flockart
Andrew Whitten
Phil Short
Ron Walsh
Ron Wash*

For sale

Camera and tanks

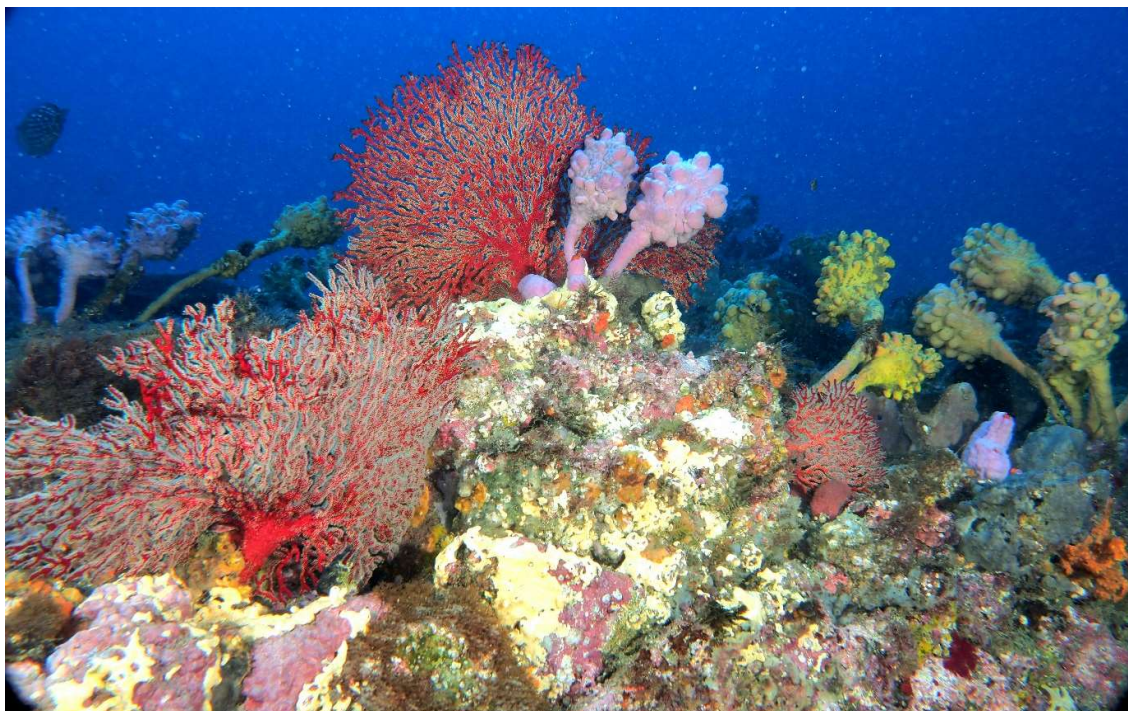
Bass Point reef dives

Text and photos Tammalee Butcher

During January I took a few club members out on my boat Nauti Nudi to explore some reefs around Bass Point. The dives range from 20-30m so deco had to be considered. We have marked and named a number of spots along the reef.

The reef we explore most is a 15-20m channel with reef on each side. We haven't found there to be much fish life but there is an abundance of sponges, fans (including the black fan), nudis, morays, spiders and more. Even found a seahorse and a baby Weedy in January.







Lissenung Island, PNG

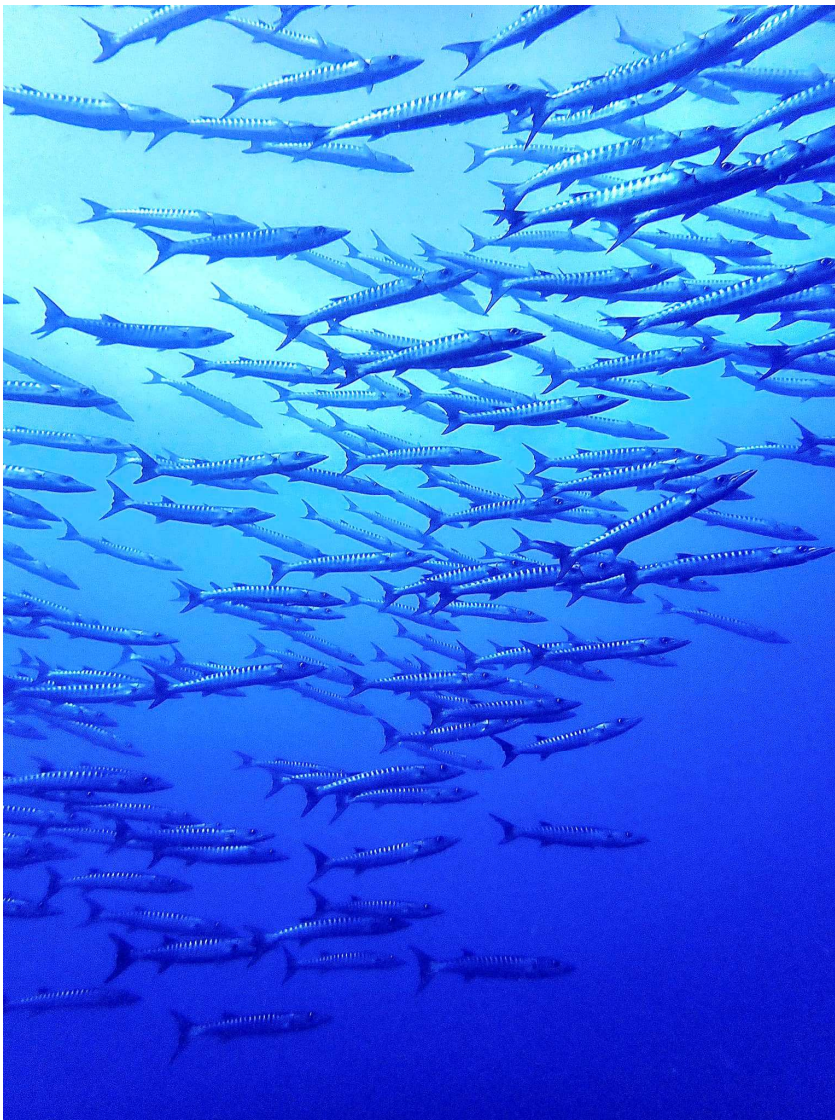
Text and photos Russ Jones

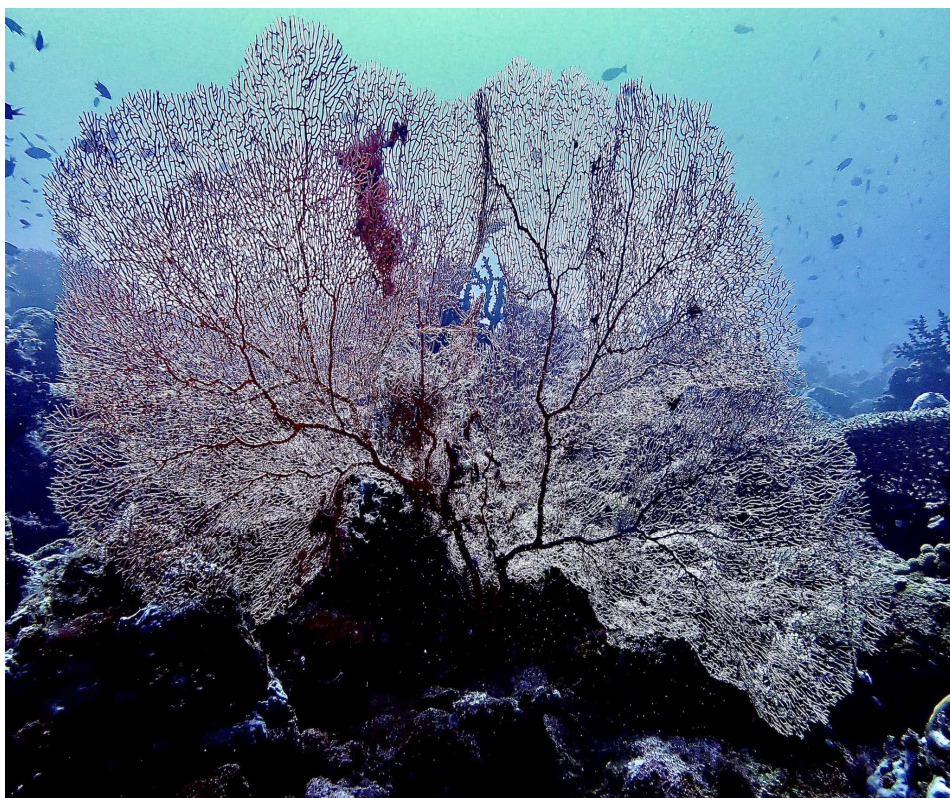
Peta and I travelled to Lissenung Island, far north on the archipelago of PNG.

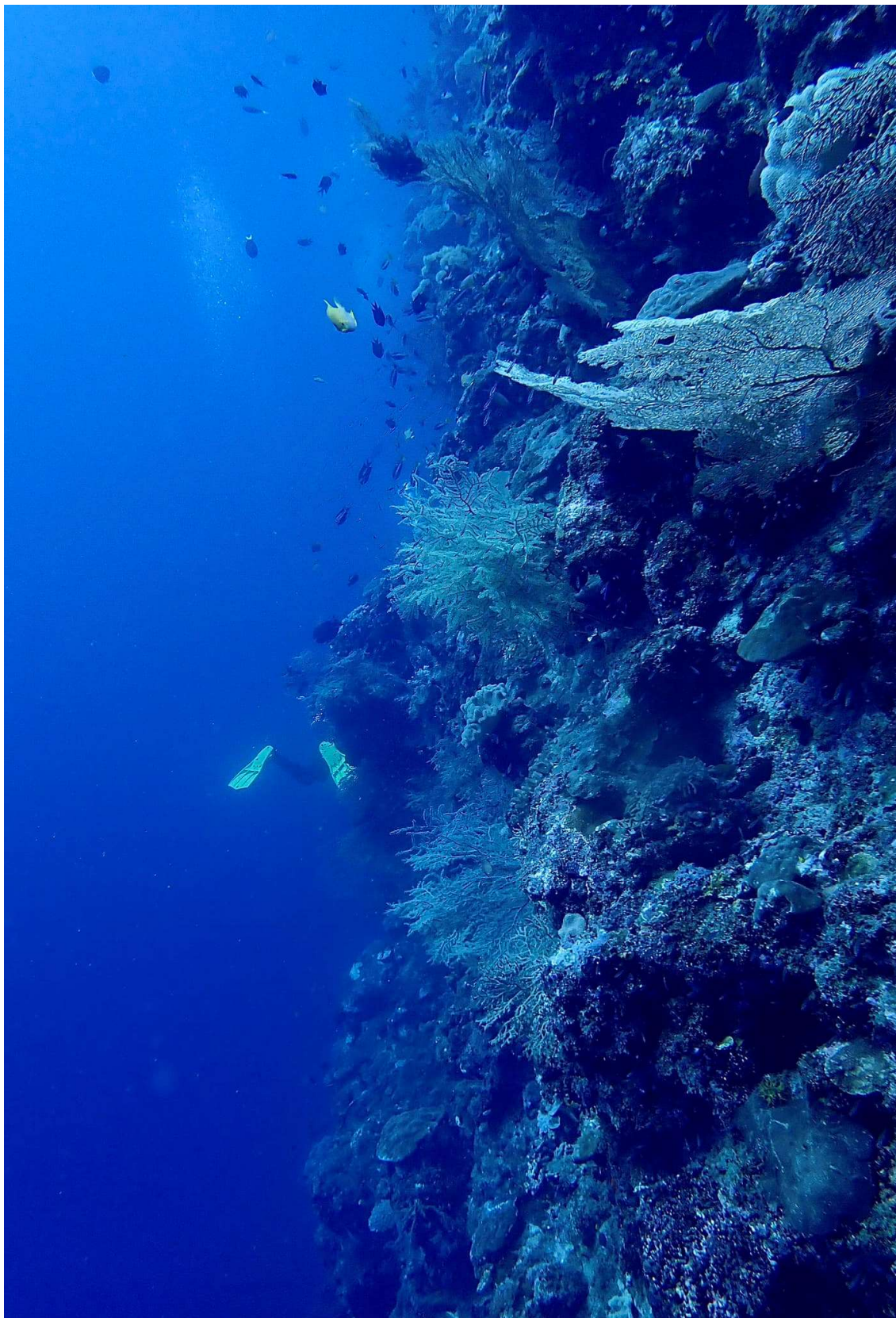
2 days travel each way, but worth it. Stayed 9 nights over Xmas and the only guests on a 150m x 100m dive and surfing resort island.

Dietmar is Austrian and has been on the island for 25 years. His knowledge of the environment and the local culture is exceptional. You could almost label him a Professor of Shells, as they are his main passion.

The biodiversity in this region is mind blowing. With 26 dives over 8 days, I identified dozens of underwater species that I had never had the pleasure to see before. Plenty of WWII wrecks to visit as well.







South West Rocks and Wooli club dive trip

Text and photos Peter Flockart

This trip was organised by Michael Materazzo for the weekend of Dec 9th to 12th . Friday 9 th Dec saw 11 eager divers arrive for what was hoped to be 3 days of diving at Fish Rock with the resident Grey Nurse sharks and all other associated marine life. We were supposed to be 12 in number but one had to pull out due to sickness.

Friday night saw us all walk up top the pub in a light drizzle for a good meal and a few glasses of wine or beer before retiring to our accommodation over the dive shop. Some read or watched the world cup soccer while others like me set up their camera gear for the morning.

The morning dawned and in continuing drizzle we loaded our respective boats before heading down to the ramp to gear up and head out to the rock. Both our dives for Saturday were at Fish Rock. They split us into two groups one doing the cave and other outside. Vis was around 10-20m and in other spots less. There was a large number of sharks and plenty of other life to keep us all entertained. There was a slight current present but all were able to handle it. I was able to obtain several good shark photos.

Dinner that night was at the Thai restaurant near the pub. The food was excellent and plentiful. All washed down by numerous bottles of wine we had taken. The weather was still overcast but we hoped for a better day on Sunday.

Sundays dives were again at Fish Rock and in some places the vis was around 25m in others not so good. At the deep entrance to the cave vis was down to about 8m. It got uncomfortable when a large GNS went vertical in front of one of the dive guides, giving her quite a fright judging by her bulging eyes. On this dive we saw some of the tall black coral trees and a small green turtle. Some people who did the cave were rewarded with great vis at the shallow entrance of the cave.

Although we had hoped to dive on the Monday, mother nature had other ideas and with the wind speed and seas were rising and rain increasing, the shop cancelled our dives. So, all paid up we enjoyed a last night meal at the Riverside Inn near the ramp on the river. Before retiring and packing in readiness for the drive home. By 9.30am Monday morning we were all on the road heading home.

Thanks to Michael for organising a great couple of dives at South West Rocks, we'll be back.





Wooli



Porcelan crab



M. & K. Reef, Henry Head, Rockfall and Bass Point reef dives.

Text and photos by Peter Flockart

Dives between 24th December 2022 & 14th January 2023

24^h December - Dived Rockfall with Wayne Heming and Mike Scotland out of Port Botany. The vis on bottom around 10 – 12 m & a bottom temp of 18.9 degrees with no current. As we all had camera's we executed the St George starburst pattern before meeting back at the anchor after 50 mins. Disappointing marine life today on a site that is usually buzzing. I managed a few blue wrasse shots and a wobby. Overall water clarity towards the ends of the dive was milky.





31st December – We dived the reef known as M & K which is out from the old Prince Henry hospital site. The colour of the water on the surface was green and warm – 24.7 degrees. The colour stayed the same down to 18m where we dropped over the top of the ridge. At the bottom – 24.4 m- where the temp was 19.1 degrees vis was better.

In the cave there was one large blue devil & another was around the corner near the anchor.

Apart from these the only fish seen were several species of. We did find an area at 16m that was covered with a low brown algae that had a large number of nudibranchs - A marginata grazing on it.

After 40 mins we ascended to our safety stop at 5m before surfacing.

Our second dive was at Henry Head after a surface interval. Again, water was green in colour to 12m before becoming clearer on the bottom at 20m. Swam down to the sand line and then turned west. Life seen was a medium moray with a busted jaw, a few juvenile speckled leather jackets and a red Indian fish. Mike said he saw a few of the pink & black sea spiders.

Bottom water temp was 19.1 degrees and we got a little cold towards the end of the dive.

So, when we surfaced after an hour it was good to find the surface a bit warmer at 24 degrees.

It was a great way to finish off the year of 2022.

12th January – Today was the first dive of 2023 at Shellharbour. This was from a member's boat – Marion Moodie. With me was Helen Price, Marion Moodie and Rob Chenery. I hadn't dived down for quite a number of years. For our first dive we did a site known as The Valley.

This is a reef that rises from around 32m to approx. 28m. The prevailing south north current made descent difficult but once on the bottom it was OK. Looking down you could see the sandy bottom. The bottom consisted of bare and jagged rocks covered with the usual sponge life. Being on Nitrox gave some of us a slightly longer bottom time than those on air.

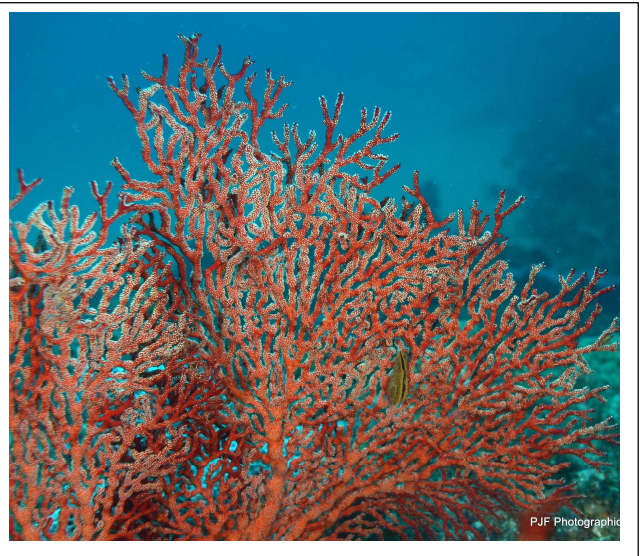
Again, on ascent and reboarding the current proved challenging but manageable.

Dive 2 after a surface interval was on a site known as Coral Rock. A pinnacle that rises from 25 to 23.6m and is characterized by several large red Gorgonian fans. The rock has a great number of under and overhangs and a resident and over friendly Blue Devil. This type of fish is normally very reclusive and found deep in caves.

When trying to get photos of him I had to keep back peddling as he gets too close.

On finishing the dive, we found the NE wind and swell had picked up and it was once again a challenge to reboard.

Back at the Shell Cove ramp we thanked Marion for the dives.



14th January - I dived in Botany Bay Wayne Heming and Mike Scotland. Our first dive was at The Steps in disappointing vis of only 5 – 8m. We had planned to dive magic Point but the stronger than expected NE wind & swell put paid to this idea.

There was a lot of large white solid jellyfish in the water – *Catostylus* sp and I managed a couple of images. We also saw several weedy sea dragons and one large Whites Sea horse.

After our surface interval we headed to our favourite dive site of Henry Head.

Once we had negotiated Abyss's divers who decided to ascend on our anchor rope as we went in Water was colder on the bottom at 17.9 degrees but it had brought with it better vis. We were able to find a large rock lobster and a keyhole limpet with the animal out. We also saw the usual variety of colourful sponges, which this site is renowned for. Disappointingly we saw no Red Indian Fish.



Norfolk Island – January 2023

Text and photos by Andrew Whitten

I have just come back from a week at Norfolk Island with the family. Norfolk Island not a on the well-trodden path of popular Australian diving destinations, however there is a small dive operation on the island and I found the diving to be very good.



The coral reef lagoon of Slaughter Bay with the historic settlement of Kingston in the background

Norfolk Island is a small, 8km x 5km, volcanic rise, approximately 1600km NE of Sydney, 1000km NW of Auckland and 700km South of New Caledonia. It is a little over 2 hours flying time from Sydney in a Qantas 737.

I dived with Norfolk Island Diving run by Mitch Graham (you can find him on Facebook or Insta). Like a lot of people who live on the island, Mitch wears many hats. His main job is working for the Council keeping the island's electricity generation plant running. After he knocks off for the day, he takes people diving. His rather large garage at his house serves as the island's dive shop. Mitch dives from a 5.5m, New Zealand built Blackdog Cat. I had never seen a boat like this before. The day I went out there were 6 divers plus the driver on board and it was very stable boat to dive from.

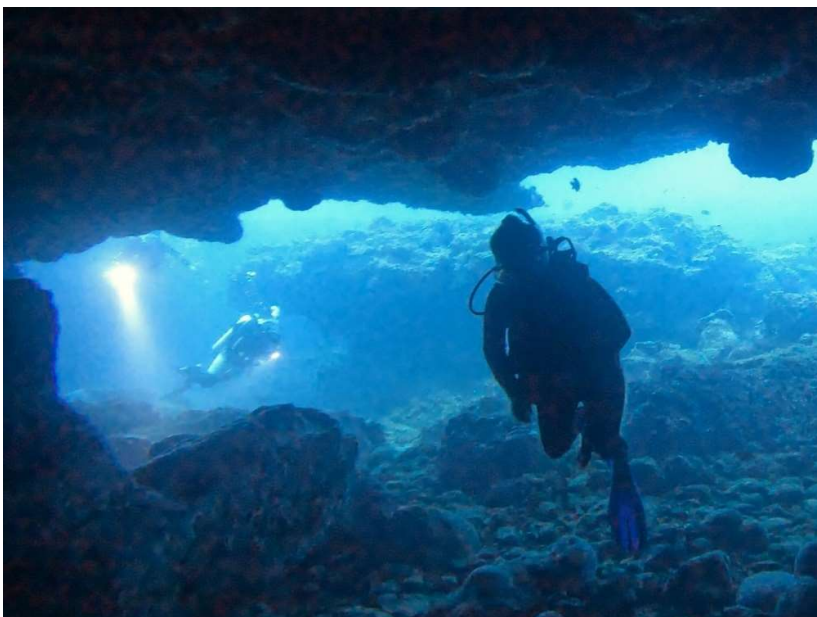
Norfolk has a pretty rugged coastline with no boat ramps, so all trailer boats are launched by craning them off one of the islands two jetties chosen depending on the prevailing swell direction.



Launching the dive boat from Cascade Jetty on the northern side. The usual procedure is that all persons get in the boat before it is lifted off the trailer except one remains on the jetty to manoeuvre the crane jib to swing the boat out over the water.

What was the diving like I hear you ask? In a word – fantastic! The water was warm, blue and clear. We could easily see the 20m deep bottom from the surface. Apparently, visibility is good all year round due to the remoteness and the fact there that there are no significant rivers running off the island. The water temperature was 23 degrees C and gets down to 18 in winter. I was surprised at the amount of hard coral cover given the latitude of 29 degrees, similar to Ballina in NSW. There is a mix of tropical and southern fish species and whilst the fish life is not as prolific as the GBR further north it was still pretty good. Some interesting fish are seen such as double header wrasse which are only otherwise seen at Lord Howe Island. Although we didn't see any on our dive, Grey Reef sharks are commonly sighted.

Being an exposed island, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the sea conditions can get rough and prevent diving. For this reason, there were only a few dive able days over the week and I only managed one dive trip. We will just have to go back again and experience more of the diving on offer. Following are a few still images captured from GoPro video.



Single file through the "Doughnut Cavern" swim-through. Many of the Norfolk dive sites have extensive caves, overhangs and swim-throughs.





A pair of Wide Band Anemonefish (*Amphiprion latezonatus*)



Typical hard coral reef

When not diving or snorkelling in the lagoon, there are plenty of other things to do on the island. The history of the island is fascinating with the 1st British convict settlement (1788 to 1814), wreck

of the first fleet flagship, HMS Sirius (1790), brutal 2nd convict settlement (1825 to 1857) and then the final settlement by the descendants of the Bounty mutineers relocating from Pitcairn Island. We spent several days going through the museums, doing guided tours and wandering around the historical sites. There are also some nice walks you can do through the National Park and around the rugged coastlines.



World heritage area of Kingston with some mint condition Georgian buildings and some ruins from the 2nd penal settlement. The tip of Philip Island is seen in the background, 6km to the south.



View from the Captain Cook lookout on the northern side of the island.

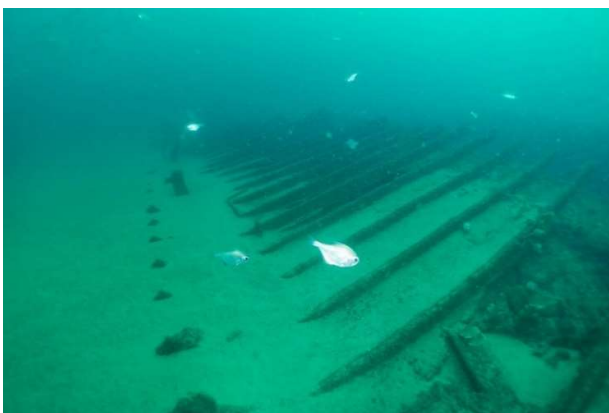
Tuggerah wreck dive – January 2023

Text and photos Phil Short

On Wednesday 25 January 2023 I took Argonaut out to dive the Tuggerah with some club members. The seas were a bit sloppy with swells from different directions. However the diving conditions were pretty good with a moderate current from the north bringing in clear blue water down to about 15 metres and 22 degrees. The bottom viz was about 15 metres and a colder 15 degrees. Hopefully the first of many dives there for the year.



The stern is always a great photo op on a good day





A life jacket lost from a club members boat 9 months ago has washed back into the wreck and two morays have made a home in it.

Below: Nice to deco in blue 22 degree water.



Australia Day Dive and BBQ

Text and photos Ron Walsh

The St George Scuba Club Australia Day dive and BBQ at Kurnell was organised by Mark Arrowsmith. The day was attended by 17 divers in total plus a few more as shore support. The dive entered and exited at the Whales sculpture . The tide was low and incoming and with a large tide change which made for a reasonable current. We saw weedy seadragons, various nudibranchs, usual sponges and sea tulips and generic fish life. Bacon & egg rolls and coffee after the dive.



Juvenile Cowfish



Clingfish



Bushrangers Bay – January 2023

Text and photos Ron Walsh

After sending out a club email several club members held an impromptu dive day at Shellharbour Bass Point to dive with the sharks in Bushrangers Bay and explore the pylons at The Gravel Loader. Ten divers plus a couple of shore support.







Gear for Sale

For Sale

D300s Camera, Battery and charger, 32G CF and 32G SD flash cards
60mm macro lens
Nauticam NA300 Housing
Nauticam port for Macro lens
Vacuum Leak Detection System fitted with pump (worth \$950 from Scubapix)
2 x Inon D2000 Strobes arms and cables
Ideal setup for beginning the underwater photography experience.
\$1200

Twin 7 Litre 300 bar cylinders with bands and manifold
Not as heavy as twin 12 litre 232 bar tanks, and only 1000litres of less air.
Hydro tested Dec 2022
Will come with a 300 bar fill of Air/Nitrox if picked up.
\$850

Regards

Wayne
wayne.heming@hemnet.com.au
0428 436 638

<http://dive.hemnet.com.au>

Upcoming Calendar Events

February 2023

Saturday, 4 February 2023 Carol Martin Memorial Dive/BBQ Bare Island La Perouse

John McPherson 0439 481 683 jjmcpersoncarlton@gmail.com

Saturday, 11 February 2023 Boat Dive Whale Watching Platform Sylvania/Port Botany

Peter Flockart 0409 304 959 pjflockart@speednet.com.au

Thursday, 16 February 2023 Club Meeting Ramsgate RSL Ramsgate

Michael McFadyen 0407 276 556 michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info

Friday, 17 February 2023 Sunday, 19 February 2023 Girls Weekend Jervis Bay Huskisson

Maxine Hayden 0418 630 146 maxinehayden5@gmail.com

Saturday, 18 February 2023 Boat Dive Bypass Reef Sylvania/Port Botany

Shelley Breuseker 0438 998 199 seashellsb01@gmail.com

Saturday, 25 February 2023 Boat Dive Marley Point Yowie Bay/RMYC

Peter Flockart 0409 304 959 pjflockart@speednet.com.au

Saturday, 25 February 2023 Anniversary Dinner Ramsgate RSL Ramsgate

Jason Coombs 0405 302 730 jcblackmanta@gmail.com

March 2023

Saturday, 4 March 2023 Shore Dive Bare Island La Perouse

Carole Harris 0448 379 020 carole.uw@gmail.com

Saturday, 4 March 2023 Boat Dive Middle Ground Yowie Bay/RMYC

Peter Flockart 0409 304 959 pjflockart@speednet.com.au

**Sunday, 5 March 2023 Friday, 10 March 2023 Nelson Bay Camping Week
Halifax Park Caravan Park Nelson Bay**

Michael McFadyen 0407 276 556 michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info

Saturday, 11 March 2023 Frenchmans Bay Dive and BBQ Frenchmans Bay La Perouse

Kelly McFadyen 0410 599 186 mcfa1kel@gmail.com

Monday, 13 March 2023 Saturday, 18 March 2023 Week Away North Solitary Island Wooli

Michael Materazzo 0413 437 554 mickmazz@hotmail.com

Thursday, 16 March 2023 Club Meeting Ramsgate RSL Ramsgate

Michael McFadyen 0407 276 556 michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info

Saturday, 18 March 2023 Boat Dive M & K Reef Sylvania/Port Botany

Greg Blackburne 0419 977 390 blackburnegnb@gmail.com

Sunday, 19 March 2023 Friday, 24 March 2023 Week Away North Solitary Island Wooli

Michael Materazzo 0413 437 554 mickmazz@hotmail.com

Saturday, 25 March 2023 Shore Dive The Leap Kurnell

Paul Soares 0425 250 582 soares66@optusnet.com.au

Sunday, 26 March 2023 Boat Dive Marley Point Yowie Bay/RMYC

Bram Harris 0414 351 777 bram.harris@eml.cc

April 2023

Saturday, 1 April 2023 Boat Dive SS Hilda Yowie Bay/RMYC

Greg Blackburne 0419 977 390 blackburnegnb@gmail.com

Thursday, 6 April 2023 Monday, 10 April 2023 Easter Weekend NEEDED

Friday, 7 April 2023 Boat Dive Marley Point Yowie Bay/RMYC

Bram Harris 0414 351 777 bram.harris@eml.cc

Saturday, 15 April 2023 Boat Dive Voodoo Yowie Bay/RMYC

Peter Flockart 0409 304 959 pjflockart@speednet.com.au

Thursday, 20 April 2023 Club Meeting Ramsgate RSL Ramsgate

Michael McFadyen 0407 276 556 michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info

Saturday, 22 April 2023 Boat Dive Southern Artificial Reef Yowie Bay/RMYC

Greg Blackburne 0419 977 390 blackburnegnb@gmail.com

Tuesday, 25 April 2023 Anzac Day Shore Dive/BBQ Bare Island La Perouse

Geoff Ward/Jill McKenzie 0430 578 410 jillngeoff2@gmail.com

Saturday, 29 April 2023 Deep Wreck Dive SS Undola Yowie Bay/RMYC

Ian Roffey 0418 208 125 ianroffey@gmail.com

Please submit any articles and photos for inclusion in the newsletter by replying to my club emails which are sent out every month. The newsletter will be published every month or bi monthly depending on content received.

Dive stories and photos are not restricted to organised club dives. Things like “I learned from that...” recent courses, equipment and general interest diving / diving photography articles are also welcome. If you don’t have time to write anything, just send me photos with where and when details.

Many thanks to all of the contributors.

Cheers. Phil