



March 2023 Newsletter



Life members at the club's 50th Anniversary Dinner
Steve Shaw, Phil Rose, Judy Morris, Geoff Sanders, Elly and Les Caterson and Michael McFadyen.
Anyone guess the number of dives and years experience between them.

In this newsletter

50th Anniversary Dinner

Girls Weekend Away, Jervis Bay

Bushrangers Bay

Grey Nurse Shark behaviour observations

Raja Ampat

Jervis Bay and Advanced Junior Course

Lord Howe Island

Jason Coombs, Kelly McFadyen

Maxine Hayden

Ron Walsh

Lynne Tuck

Russ Jones

Zoran Vuckovic

Paul Soares

St George 50th Anniversary Dinner – 25th February 2023

By Jason Coombs, photos by Kelly McFadyen

On the 25th February 2023 72 members and guests convened at the Ramsgate RSL for a 3 course dinner and party to celebrate 50 years of the St George Scuba Club. The room was decorated by a bunch of keen, creative volunteers in a marine theme and a photo timeline of members and club milestones across the years scrolled on the big screen.

Each table featured colourful decorations with marine creatures, easter eggs, octopus napkins, placemats and special mementos in the form of an engraved stainless steel cup for each attendee organised by former president of the club Maxine Hayden.

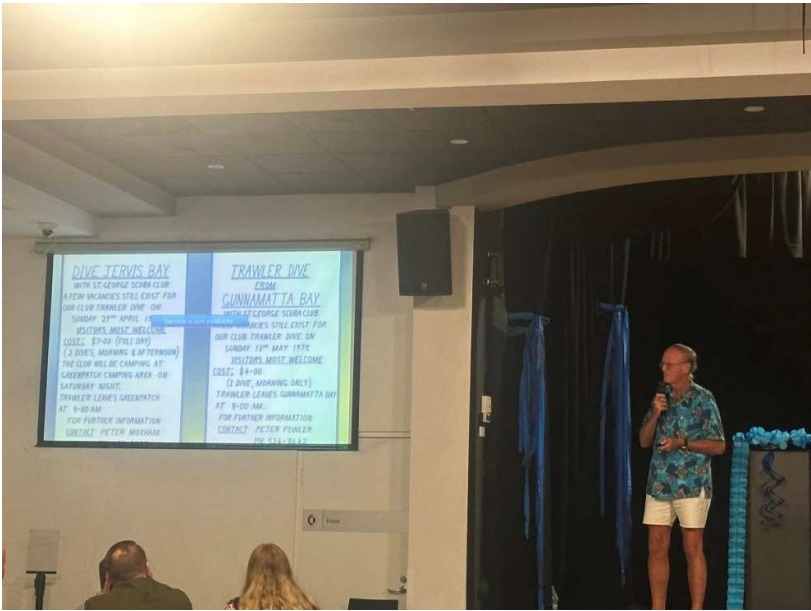
Throughout the night, presentations on the history of the club were given by life members Geoff Sanders and Michael McFadyen. As evident in their speeches, diving in the early days was really challenging including diving off smelly, uncomfortable fishing trawlers instead of the specialised dive boats we enjoy today.

There were lucky door prizes as well; Aidan Slevin, Neil Lightfoot, Robert Hill and Michael McFadyen won \$50 gift certificates for Abyss Scuba Diving. Wayne Heming and Andrew McDermott won a bottle of wine each.

After dessert, a special 50th Anniversary cake (and 50 mini-cupcakes also with the club logo!) was revealed to be cut by Les and Elly in the presence of the other life members. And it was delicious too.

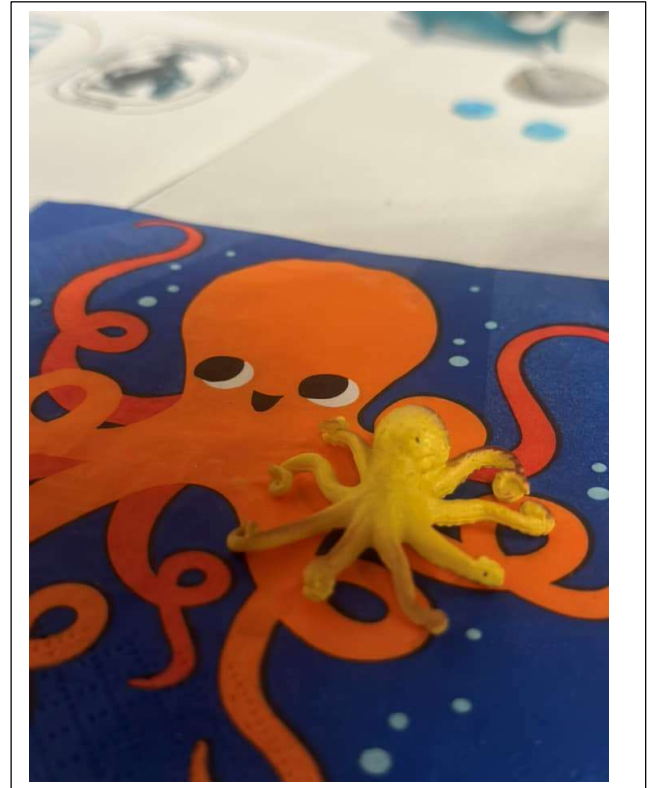
As always the evening was a team effort. A big thanks to Rox for being the MC, Bram for running the IT, Kelly for taking official photos, Maxine for the mementos, Geoff and Michael for speaking, the members who turned up earlier in the day to decorate and everyone else that contributed to make it a successful and enjoyable celebration.

And now we can look forward to the next 50 years of the club!



Geoff Sanders presentation.





The first St George Scuba Club meeting was held at the Coronation Hall in Arncliffe on February 28, 1973.
44 people attended, 14 people joined the Club and the half yearly membership fee was \$5

In that year...

- The Paris Peace Accord is reached with Vietnam.
- *Roe v Wade* overturns bans on abortion.
- The first cellular phone call is made in New York.
- The World Trade Centre opens.
- The Watergate hearings air on TV.
- *The Godfather* wins Best Picture Oscar, and Marlon Brando is Best Actor.
- *Song of the Year* is *The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face* by Roberta Flack.
- The United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and Denmark enter the *European Economic Community*, which later becomes the *European Union*.
- *Secretariat* wins the Triple Crown.
- The AP Athlete of the year is O.J. Simpson.

And in AUSTRALIA...

- Australia's first casino, the Wrest Point Hotel Casino, opens in Hobart.
- The federal voting age is lowered from 21 to 18. The state of New South Wales had already enacted such a change in 1970.
- Whiskey Au Go Go Club fire in Brisbane (killing 15 people)
- The first General Dynamics F-111 aircraft is delivered to the Royal Australian Air Force

What happened UNDERWATER!

- Sydney Opera House opened by Elizabeth II.
- Papua New Guinea gained self-government from Australia.
- AC/DC perform their first major gig in Sydney Australia.
- Cathy Freeman, James Hird and Karen Perkins were born.

What happened UNDERWATER!

- Most popular dive gear manufacturers were Scubapro, Voit and US Divers. Voit's and Fenzy's "horse collar" BCDs were the most commonly used models.
- Drs Richard Strauss and Leon Prokop published the groundbreaking Article "Decompression Sickness Among Scuba Divers" in JAMA (Journal of American Medical Association), February 1973
- A rise of interest in speleological scuba diving (cave diving) led to the formation of a National Cave Diving Fatality Database in the US in 1973; helping to improve understanding of the risks of cave diving and safer diving methods
- Illuminated dive gauges were introduced
- 60,120 divers worldwide received PADI qualifications in 1973 (there have now been more than 27 million awarded by the end of 2019), and PADI (Asia) was formed

LUCKY PLACE-MAT NUMBER







GIRL'S WEEKEND, JERVIS BAY

Text Maxine Hayden

Photos Maxine, Madeleine Haglund-Gaunt and Linda Morgan

On Friday 17th February, Madeleine, Helen, Linda, Judy, Jill and myself descended on Jervis Bay for our annual girl's weekend of diving and merriment. Judy and I deviated to Greenwell Point for a lovely seafood lunch at Jim Wilds on the waterfront on the way down. On the way out of there, we stopped to laugh at a Shetland pony rubbing it's bum on a wire fence and clearly enjoying the experience. 😊

After checking in to our accommodation and the dive shop, we all went out to the Husky Pub for dinner followed by drinkies back at the house.

Saturday morning was warm and calm as we headed out aboard Avalon, the only boat Jervis Bay Dive shop have in the water at present. She takes 12 divers, plus dive master and crew with an onboard toilet and hot shower. No freezing in a cold wetsuit for us! The seas were a little big outside the heads so the crew chose The Docks and Double Decker Cave for our first spot. The vis was an easy 10 metres with some clearer bits and we got a 64 min bottom time. We saw lots of yellowtail overhead, a small eagle ray cruised past, wobbegong sharks, grouper, various nudi's, several swim thru's and we even saw a MALE club member on the surface. He had obviously heard how good our ladies trips were or was he spying on us??

Second dive of the day was at Pinnacle Cave but I had an ear squeeze and couldn't equalise, so I returned to the boat. After successfully clearing, I descended and caught up with the girls, but I only managed 40 mins. The ladies were already happily photographing a long snouted silver boarfish which was huge. We also encountered an eastern blue devilfish, 2 fiddler rays, more wobbegongs, several beardies, butterfly fish, pairs of leather jackets, a few small rays swimming around, hundreds of yellowtail, sweet ceratasomas and other nudis. There was a strong current above 5 metres and a severe thermocline to chill us. Back on the boat the hot shower was well appreciated.

After the obligatory visit to the bakery to pick up lunch, we headed back to our B&B home to rinse gear and hang up wetsuits to dry. Then we trekked to the Flamin' Galah brewery for some cold beverages before an unexpected storm hit (no one told us!), bucketing down torrential rain and hail amid very close

lightning and thunder. Those in the beer garden rushed inside along with their dogs and soon the brewery was packed with wet revellers forming long queues at the bar and the dogs barking every time thunder struck. We were holed up for close to two hours (what a shame) before returning to wet cars as two of us had left the windows down. Our wetsuits were all dripping and we then discovered the washing machine wouldn't spin! 😞 More hot showers then we ordered Asian takeaway as everywhere was already booked out. We ate on the covered veranda with more wine before a good nights' sleep.

Day two dawned nice and sunny and our requested run down to Spider Cave was a go ahead! It was a bit surgy against the cliffs but the water was warm and clear with 15 metres viz. We entered the cave at 20 metres and cleared the massive boulder frightening suspended above. Swimming around the constrictions we found lots of urchins and beardies had taken up residence along with a moray eel in one of the overhangs. After swimming in for about 60 metres we turned to exit at 14 metres depth, the water so clear inside in the dark. At the exit we found Maddie cruising effortlessly alongside another friendly long snouted boarfish, happy to pose for her camera. Along the reef here we found many mosaic and cookie sea stars, a curious blue grouper, pipefish, blue dragons, variable nudi's and some black margined nudibranchs. Massive schools of fish hung overhead as we conducted our safety stop in surgy water far enough off the cliff wall to not get slammed while our boat stood off. We were limited on this dive to 45 mins and got to 25 metres depth.

We came inside Bowen Island for hot soup, morning tea and another hot shower... well, why not?

Our second dive of the day was at The Nursery. Not our choice and a rather bland and boring site with lots of sand, naked boulders and no reef or kelp to hide critters. However, we did manage to locate another eastern blue devil fish, a fiddler ray, a lovely gurnard out in the open, plenty of crimson wrasse, an octopus, a moray and heaps of wobbegongs, including a massive female with swollen sides which we assumed was pregnant. She was very tolerant of our cameras and torches before we left her in peace.

Another hot shower on the way back to the wharf then home to pack up, eat leftovers for lunch and head back to Sydney.

Thanks ladies for being so easy to organise and get along with. Lovely to get to know a few members I haven't had the chance to spend a lot of time with and I hope you all enjoyed yourself.

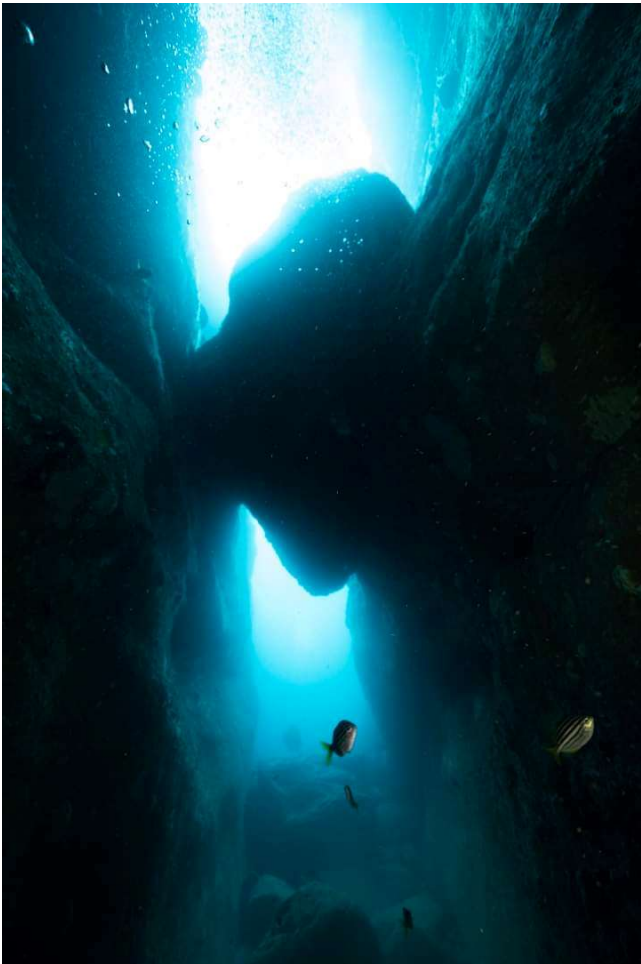
Go get wet.

Maxine Hayden









Bushrangers Bay, Bass Point

Text and Photos Ron Walsh

In late January/early March a number of club members did two trips to dive with the grey nurse sharks at Bushrangers Bay.

The first trip on 24 January had 10 divers and several support crew. Beautiful weather conditions and lots of sharks - estimated at up to 30 mainly juvenile sharks. Visibility in the shallows was only around 3m but improved to over 10m at depth. A nice BBQ brunch was provided by Michael M which was enjoyed by all. Four divers then did a second dive at the Gravel Loader. Strong NE wind made the surface choppy but underwater it was clear with no surge. There is something magical about swimming in and amongst the pylons with the schools of fish.

The second trip was on 2 February and had 9 divers and several support crew. Again beautiful weather with similar conditions and lots of sharks. It was interesting to just sit and watch the sharks cruise up and down the gutter and periodically rub themselves on the sand bottom - presumably to remove parasites. Lots of muffins and cakes and sweet things for morning tea were enjoyed by all. Again three divers then did a second dive at The Gravel Loader with similar conditions to the previous week.

All in all a fantastic two days of diving.





Donna & Lynne



Donna and
Ian.



Grey Nurse Shark Observations

Text and Photos Lynne Tuck

At the beginning of February, Ron Walsh organised a club dive to Bass point. It was a good turn out with 10 or so divers.

I've always loved diving with the nurses and love to plant myself near a sandy patch to see if I can watch some grooming behaviours. On Thursday they didn't disappoint. In the past I have sat in the one spot for an hour and seen nothing, but on this day once most of the divers had headed further out, I observed quite a few grooming behaviours, you may have seen the video compilation I put together on the St George Scuba Club Facebook page.

Just to add some background, I was a founding staff member of Sydney Aquarium, where I witnessed some amazing animal behaviours. I have also seen some of those behaviours in the wild. I was a Senior Aquarist and Senior Mammal keeper from 1988 to 2000 (seals arrived in 1992) I was in Oceanarium 1, the shark tank, at least 4 times a week doing regular cleaning, feeding and maintenance duties. I am not a marine biologist, just an enthusiast that loves anything to do with the oceans.

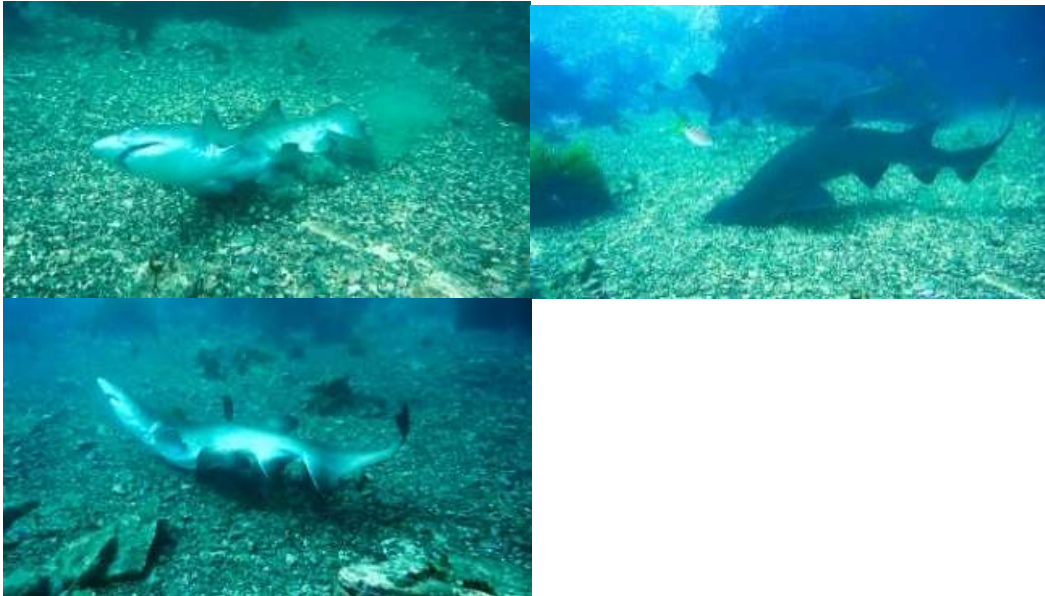


Here are some of the behaviours I witnessed:

Grey Nurses mating: This is a very violent affair where the male bites onto the female's pectoral (side) fin and holds her there while he does his business. One of his two claspers, which are modified anal fins that deliver the sperm. The sharks sink to the bottom of the tank with the female trying to get away. The females get pretty messed up with mating injuries and scars from the males attention. Female sharks are always larger than the males of the same species.

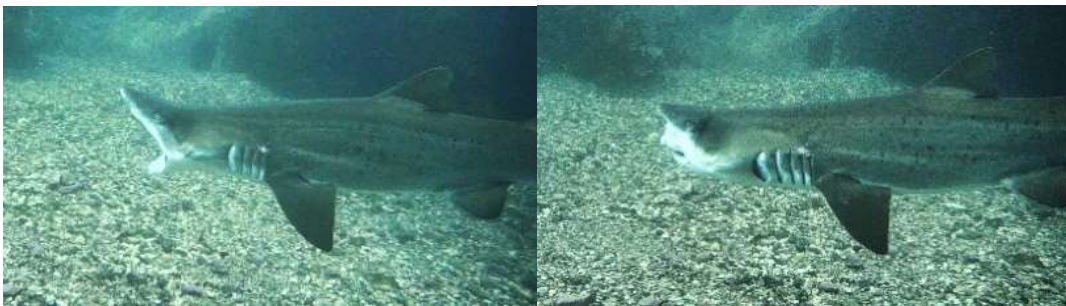
Sharks hunting: When we used to put new fish in the tanks for display (we had two boats for collecting) it was time to rush down into the tunnels to see what "survived" I saw our very large female Grey Nurse "Josephine" catch a 2 foot yellowtail kingfish and with a flick of her tail she had ripped it in half like it was butter. Even though nurses don't have teeth that rip, they use their body weight and flick their prey to rip it in half. Before I witnessed this I believed that nurses had grabbing teeth and would only catch fish that they could swallow whole. This made me respect them a whole lot more!

Sharks grooming or scratching: It is interesting to watch what positions they get themselves into to rub different parts of their body. If you find a sandy spot where they are scratching, stay out of their way and be patient, hopefully they will perform! Some days when the water has been dirty you can see sediment resting on the sharks, I believe they groom in the sand to get rid of loose sediment or parasites that may have settled on their skin or maybe they are just having a good scratch.



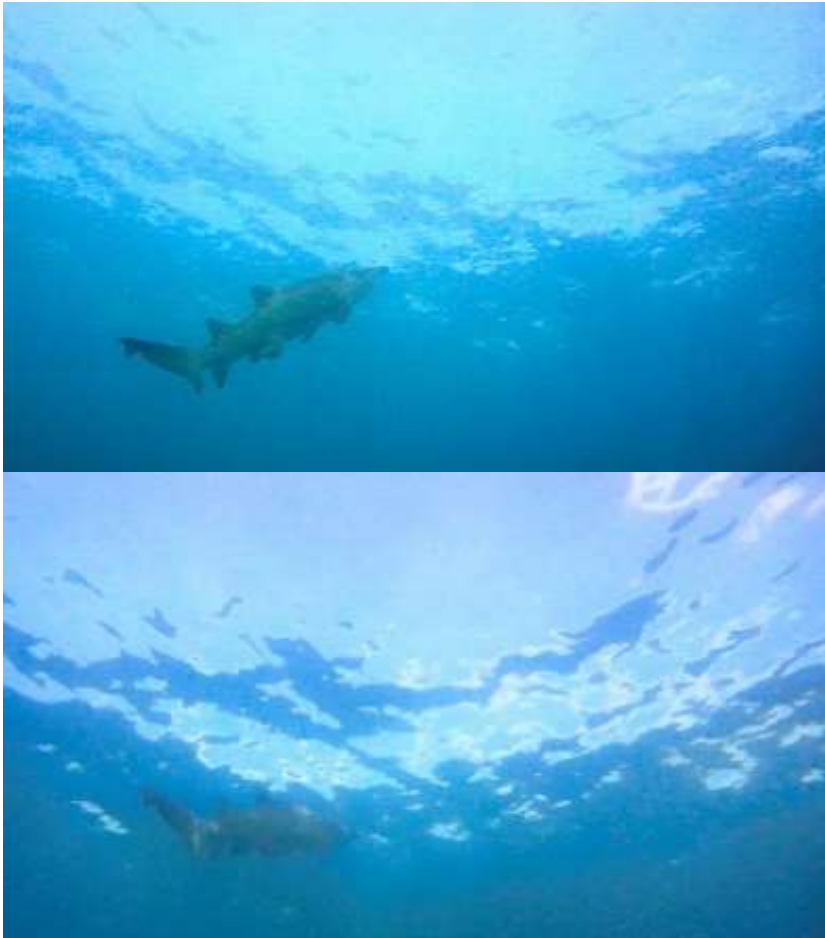
Cracking their tail: This can happen when a shark is startled or disturbed by something. They take off superfast and there is a loud cracking sound that startles everyone! If you are close enough you can even feel the water movement. I have also heard it called tail popping.

Throwing their jaws or yawning: It's always a thrill to see this. In the aquarium we often used to see teeth fall to the bottom of the tank with this behaviour. I think they do it to stretch and / or to clean out any food or loose teeth that get stuck in the folds of tissue in their mouth. I don't believe it is a yawn, but I often hear people describe it as such.



Gulping air at the surface: Sharks do this to adjust their buoyancy. I observed two on the club dive racing for the surface. If I notice a nurse that seems negatively buoyant (sometimes they are literally scraping the bottom), it is a sign they will head for the surface to gulp air soon. Once they have gulped a mouthful they expel what they don't need and return to neutral buoyancy. Unfortunately on this day the first one that raced for the surface, didn't actually gulp it must have been teasing me! The second time my ISO was too high and pointing at the sun so it is a bleached video, but you can see the big splash as it gulps a mouthful of air. I was swimming very hard to keep up and get closer but it easily outpaced me even though it didn't look as

though it was swimming hard! My daughter and I were lucky enough to witness this at the gravel loader a few years ago in beautiful clear water.



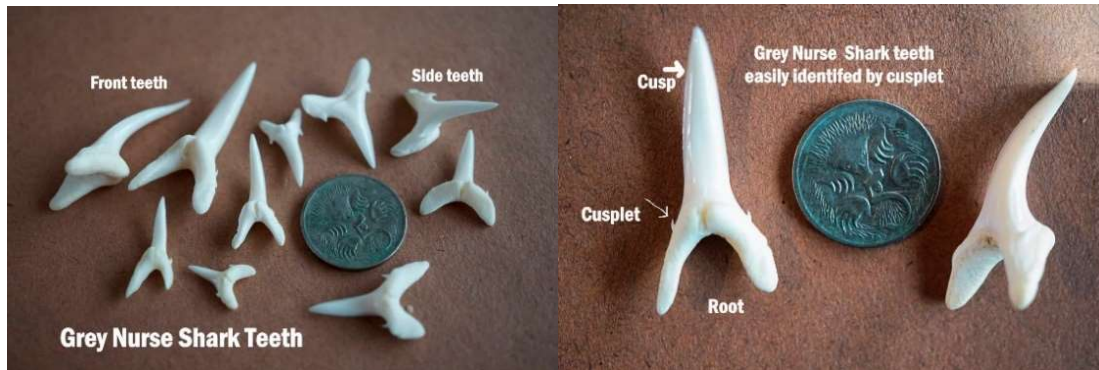
Feeding the sharks and rays: This was always one of my favourite jobs. There were some aquarists that didn't like doing it. Some got bored with it, so I was in there more often than most.

At the beginning of summer it was always an exciting few weeks. The water would get warmer and the nurses and dusky whalers would all enjoy a good feed. In winter they didn't eat anywhere near as much. It was always important to feed the nurses from directly in front, not from the side as they would lunge. I think because they could not judge how far away the food was? It was always a good idea to have several fish in your hands when feeding the whalers as they would come at you from all different directions at the same time. It was a rule that you did not force feed, only if a shark came up to you, did you feed it. Squid and bonito were the sharks favourite!

Swimming new sharks: Large open water sharks need to constantly swim to survive. We transported them in a specially designed holding tub. Either on the back of the boat or the back of a truck, we had constant oxygenated water flushing over their gills. When we got the animals to the display tank they would sink to the bottom and not be able to swim. I remember the vets telling us it was due to lactic acid build up. We would have to pick the sharks up off the bottom and help them swim,

manually supporting them. By holding their pectoral and dorsal fins and someone else manually moving their tail until they started to try to get away. Sometimes they would swim for a metre or two and sink to the bottom again. Depending on the type of shark and how long it had been in the holding tub, it could take 10 minutes or two hours to get it back swimming normally. I never had a shark attempt to bite during this process.

Teeth: Shark teeth are constantly replaced. Where there are congregations of sharks, be sure to keep an eye on the sea floor for shed teeth. Stingrays are closely related to sharks but have crusher plates (or no teeth or plates at all)



Notice the little cusplet at the base of the cusp on the Grey Nurse teeth.



Notice the solid root and no cusplets on the wobbegong teeth.



Interesting that the top teeth are a completely different shape to the bottom teeth.



Port Jackson Jaws have both sharp little grabbing teeth and crusher plates.





If you are lucky enough to find some teeth, put them down the sleeve of your wetsuit. Don't put them in your BCD pockets or you might find yourself negatively buoyant, and with a holey BCD!

When we fed the sharks at the aquarium, we wore chain mesh gloves. Despite this a few people still got bitten and injured as the grey nurse and wobblygong teeth would go a fair way through the chain mesh. The seals did more damage than the sharks though. A diver at Manly aquarium got an ear ripped off by a stingray, so after that we had to wear a hood as well as the chain mesh gloves.

While working at the aquarium I dived with many different sharks, dusky whalers, wobblygongs, a beautiful large Blue shark, tiger sharks, seven gills, and a mako shark.

A lot of the open water sharks like makos and blue sharks don't do well in captivity. They don't know how to turn and avoid the walls. So we ended up releasing them. I believe aquariums and zoos have an extremely important role to play in conservation, research and education. When people visit these places it becomes personal and creates empathy for the animal, hopefully inspiring an interest or changing people's perspectives to a more positive one about sharks and marine animals.

Out of all the sharks I dived with, you probably wouldn't guess that it was the wobblygongs which worried me the most! They are lightning fast and very flexible. A large wobblygong can bite its own bum! We used to have to push them off the feed tub with our fins and they would just explode with power. One of my dive colleagues got bitten by a wobbly, he had a handful of fish during feeding time and the wobbly grabbed him and stubbornly held on. He sat on the bottom of the tank for a good half hour waiting for it to let him go. When it finally did, we had to get out of the tank because the fresh smell of blood was getting the dusky whalers excited. He had about 40 stitches!

It surprises me there aren't more people bitten by wobblys when you hear of snorkelers pulling their tails because they think they have no teeth!

Raja Ampat

Photos by Russ Jones

Russ and Peta have recently visited Indonesia and have shared these detailed photos.



Goniobranchus fidelis
— at [RAJA AMPAT](#)





Mandarin fish (*Synchiropus splendidus*)
— at **Lembeh Pintukota Besar**.



3 x exquisite Ornate Ghost Pipefish
Like most, they have fixed jaws and vacuum tiny crustaceans and plankton up their snouts. They don't have stomachs so need to constantly eat.
— at **Lembeh Pintukota Besar**.

Jervis Bay trip and Advanced Junior diver Course.

Zoran and Konstantin Vuckovic

Congratulations to Konstantin on completing his Advanced Junior Diver Course in Jervis Bay.



Worlds best photobombers.



One Wobbegong came to "inspect us", took a tour visiting every diver in a group, and passed by me.



Lord Howe Island
Text and photos Paul Soares

Paul Soares and Robyn Hodge Trip to Lord Howe Is.



On Feb 17th this year we went to Lord Howe Island for the third time for some relaxation, snorkelling and diving. As well, we were planning to not see the green soup that has plagued Sydney for the past 12 months.

Robyn does not scuba dive but does enjoy snorkelling. As usual the diving and snorkelling was excellent. The water was clear and aqua blue with the visibility exceeding 25 to 30m every day.

Most days we snorkelled Neds Beach , a small beach on the east of Lord Howe Is. This is a shallow snorkel of about one to two metres with a huge variety of corals and fish. Silver drummer, butterfly fish, wrasse, blue fish, small and large turtles with small Galapagos sharks occasionally cruising through.



On Saturday I dived with Aaron and the crew at Dive Lord Howe. Visited a site called Lilly's Crevice just outside the lagoon and another around the Admiralty Islands. Great viz and a fifty metre swim thru split/crevice with a number of painted crays and other wildlife.



On the Sunday conditions were good so we took a boat trip to Ball's Pyramid with an option of a half hour of snorkelling. A good trip out and some fabulously clear, blue water and heaps of flying fish. Last time we snorkelled here we saw big schools of fish and a good number of sharks but this time there were far less critters but the water clarity was amazing.



On Monday we snorkelled three reefs in the south end of the lagoon including the Comet Hole. Again a wide variety of coral and loads of fish and some big rays.

On Tuesday I went out to Ball's Pyramid with Aaron and Dive Lord Howe. First dive was a site called Sunken Rock about 2 km off Balls Pyramid. A drift dive with a ripping current. My occy reg free flowed on the backward roll entry and dumped 30 bar before I could get it under control. A great site, my max depth was 31m with terrain rising to within 15 – 20m of the surface. Lots of pelagic fish and some inquisitive sharks on the safety stops. The second dive was an island close to Ball's Pyramid. Again this was a drift dive but much more relaxed. The highlight was a cave about 30m long. At the far end it was packed with big painted crays just hanging around on the walls.



Wednesday was a packed day. Started with a very relaxed drift dive at Malabar Headland then back to another site at the Admiralty Islands. This second site was packed with wildlife with some especially large schools of especially large kingfish. Then back to the lagoon about 1.30 where I literally stepped from the dive boat onto another boat to join Robyn for 2 hours of snorkelling with some very cooperative turtles. Slept well!



Thursday it rained - Friday we returned to Sydney.

For those looking to dive Aaron and his crew at Dive Lord Howe are very organised and very competent. It is wise to book well in advance as on my previous visit a large group booked out all the spots in the week. Luckily Aaron put on some extra early morning dives.

This time a number of large walking groups had booked out a number of the restaurants – so again it would pay to book before you go.



Upcoming Calendar Events

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

May 2023

Friday, 5 May 2023 Monday, 8 May 2023 Boys Weekend Port Stephens Nelson Bay

Ray Moulang 0403 437 974 rayscases2@gmail.com

Sunday, 7 May 2023 Dusky Whaler Shore Dive Shelly Beach Shelly Beach, Manly

Jason Coombs 0405 302 730 jblackmanta@gmail.com

Saturday, 13 May 2023 Boat Dive Barrens Hut Yowie Bay/RMYC

Russell Jones 0412 764 195 russ.cascada@gmail.com

Thursday, 18 May 2023 Club Meeting Ramsgate RSL Ramsgate

Michael McFadyen 0407 276 556 michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info

Saturday, 27 May 2023 Boat Dive Pizza Reef Yowie Bay/RMYC

Bob Hill 0490 411 105 rrahill1@optusnet.com.au

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