

# Sea Braggin'



August September 2016

## St George Scuba Club Newsletter

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# The Big 5 Expedition

## 28 June to 4 July 2016

By Shelley Breuseker

Photos by Shelley Breuseker and Peter Flockart

Almost a year ago Steve Blume, the owner of First Stage Service and Training in Rydalmere invited us to join him on a Photographic Big 5 Safari and the idea was to try and photograph Australian Sea Lions, Leafy Seadragons, Great White Sharks, Blue Fin Tuna and Giant Cuttlefish. Peter, Mal, Ray, Greg and me from our club, plus Steve and a few of other people went, making 11 in all.



Greg and I drove to Port Lincoln as

I hadn't seen any of this part of Australia. Sydney to Port Lincoln is just under 1900km. We originally planned to do it over 2 days, but added an extra day because of the huge distances. Peter also drove, but as he was on his own he did it over 4 days. The others flew down.

The first of the Big 5 was the Great White Sharks and we boarded the Rodney Fox boat Princess II on the Monday night. We set sail at 4am the next morning and arrived in the Neptune Islands around 9am. The crew immediately started berleying while they got the cages in the water and a shark showed up almost immediately. He didn't stay long and was gone before anyone got in the water.

There is a surface cage and a bottom cage and Rodney Fox is the only operation in the world that offers a bottom cage. In the surface cage you wear a weight harness and breathe from a hooker reg but don't

have fins on. I was always too buoyant and had to hook my feet under the bottom rail to stay down. I found the surface cage too bouncy, full of little bubbles from the back of the boat and we were surrounded by silver trevally making it unlikely we would see a shark if one did come. We got glimpses of sharks from this cage.







The bottom cage is much more comfortable, you wear a weight harness, tank & backpack, no BC, and we used our own regulators. Still no fins - we didn't plan on swimming anyway. The trevallies hang around the sides of the cage and when sharks came around we got a good look at them upwards. We affectionately called the bottom cage experience "tea-bagging".

We spent 3 days at the Neptune Islands taking turns going in the cages and everyone got to see sharks. 1 down.

At the end of the 3 days we motored back to Port, had dinner and slept on board. The next morning we had breakfast on board, then went over to the hotel and placed all our bags in one hotel room. We immediately boarded another boat to Swim with the Tuna.

There are a lot of Tuna farms in the gulf around Port Lincoln. You can see them on Google Earth and those who had flown in saw them from the plane. The farms are just a sea pen full of Tuna, but 'Swim with the Tuna' is a sea pen that is set up with change rooms, a café and an underwater observatory. They provide 7mm wetsuits and booties, masks and snorkels. However we all brought our own masks, snorkels, hoods and gloves. The gloves were a good idea as the Tuna are known to mistake fingers for food.



We entered the water with the Tuna and a lady with a bucket of pilchards started throwing them at us,



trying to land them about a metre in front of us.... not always successfully. We tried to swim in 7mm wetsuits with no fins or weights. It was hilarious. We just bobbed with our feet in the air.

The Tuna are over a metre long and swim really fast all the time. It was amazing with so many fish in the water zooming past that not one of them bumped into me, but there was one fish with only one eye that bumped into some of the guys.

After swimming with them for about an hour we all lined up and they threw in the rest of the pilchards in one go in front of us. It was mayhem! This was a really fun day. 2 down.



The next day we divided into two groups and went to dive with the Sea Lions on a much smaller boat. The group we were in went second. We bounced along for 45mins and observed that we were now half way back to the Neptune Islands, to dive with the Great White's primary prey in the area. The bay they took us to is very shallow and because the Great Whites attack from below it is relatively safe. The weather had deteriorated by the time we got there, it was surgy and there was a lot of sand and seaweed in the water column. The Sea Lions were on the beach or in the shallows and weren't interested in coming out to play. We wondered if they knew something we didn't. The first group had more success and calmer weather. So for us it was 2 out of 3. But the others had 3 out of 3.





The following day we drove up to Tumby Bay and dived under the jetty looking for Leafy Seadragons. The water temperature at Port Lincoln and the Neptune's had been 16 - 17°C but here it was 12° C and there was a cold wind blowing. We were in the water for over an hour and we eventually had success thanks to Mal's keen eyes. He found a beautiful specimen swimming over seagrass. It kept



swimming and turning away from me, but as more divers surrounded him, he couldn't turn away from everyone so we got some nice footage. After the dive we discovered that Steve and Glen hadn't seen one. 3 out of 4 for us.

We were supposed to drive the 270km up to Whyalla the next day to dive with the Giant Cuttlefish. There was dissent in the ranks as some wanted to dive with the Leafies again. I could understand the reluctance to do a 540km round trip, but Greg, Peter and I had to go to Whyalla that night anyway. I thought about it overnight and eventually relented. We could always dive with the Cuttlefish the next morning, then continue on our journey home afterwards. Plus we don't have Leafies in Sydney, but we do have Cuttlefish.



So the next day we returned to Tumby Bay and we were again successful at seeing a Leafy Seadragon. This time it was in amongst some seaweed that was the perfect disguise for it, and made for some beautiful photos. Another Leafy was seen at the end of the jetty and Mal found a pair of them together some distance from the jetty. Everyone got to cross Leafy Seadragons off the list.

The wind had increased and got colder overnight, there had been rain and by the time we exited the water after the dive the wind was howling from the south. We drove up to Whyalla and

checked into the motel, then we drove out to Cuttlefish Drive to check out the dive site. Cuttlefish Drive is 22km out of Whyalla and it is a narrow red dirt road in the middle of nowhere. We started driving down it but I could feel the car losing traction and the road was just sticky, slippery mud. We have an all-wheel-drive but I have no experience driving on dirt and as the sun was about to go down decided not to proceed in case we got stuck. We could see the wind was blowing straight onto the beach and the chop



on the water was very messy. I reversed 200 metres back out onto the sealed road and as I slowly drove off we could hear the mud flying off the wheels. We didn't bother going back the next day.

Our tally at the end of the trip was only 3 out of 5, but we'd had a fantastic time with a great bunch of people and I'd seen a whole lot more of Australia.

I've posted our videos on Facebook, emailed the links to the Club and shown them at the Club Meeting. But just in case you missed all of that, here are the links:

Great Whites <https://vimeo.com/174076538>

Swim with the Tuna <https://vimeo.com/174347209>

Leafy Seadragons <https://vimeo.com/174650891>



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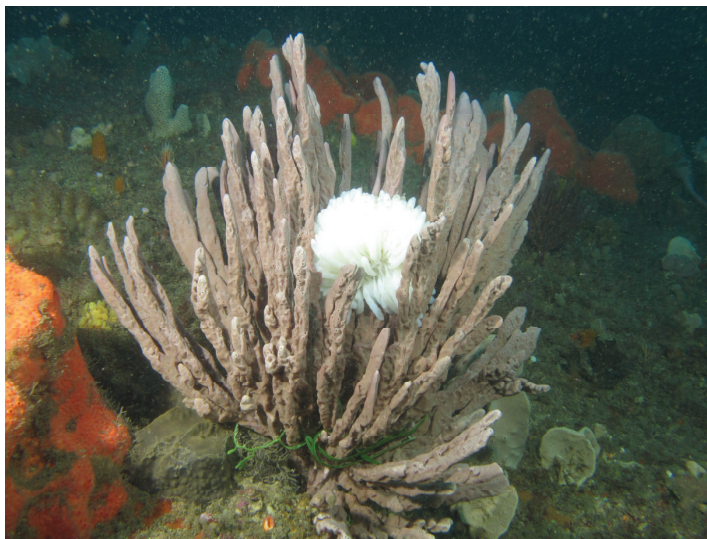
# Marley Sponge Gardens

## 30 July 2016

By Peter Flockart

Photos by Wayne Heming

This was a club dive with 2 boats however only one made it down. That was Wayne Heming's boat. We anchored in 25m in, sloppy sea conditions. We all geared up and rolled in. One diver aborted due to ear problems and rest continued on. Water temp was 17.8 degrees and vis about 10m. We swam up the gutter past a variety of sponges and gorgonians to the top of the reef. Here it rises some 4m and is about 20 in length. Then it was back over the undulating rocks that slope downwards to the sand at 26m. With bottom time left we swam south and found another deeper gutter also



with a 4m wall. This is the southern end of the Sponges Gardens.

On the dive apart from sponges we saw lots of squid eggs on the many sponges and noted that there were lots of squid still laying. In the gutters where quite a few pregnant PJ's. After a quick look here we returned to the anchor and up to deco. This only the second time we have dived this site and know there is so much more to see and explore. On our first dive earlier in the year we found a brilliantly coloured nudibranch – *Miamia mangnifica*

No whales were seen although we could hear them.

Dive 2 for the same day after a surface interval was Middle Ground - Depth 31.2m

Reverse profile dive but Ok. Here the seas were flatter than at Marley some hours earlier. Looking over the side on anchoring vis looked Ok but on descent it turned out to be murkier at around 5 to 8m with a slight north to south current running across the reef. Due to the reduced vis I reeled out while the others attempted to take photos which proved difficult in the murk. However we were lucky to find a take photos of a blue gurnard. Also lots of algae in the water and after a 30min bottom time we ascended to our deco stop.



# The Split at Barrens Hut

## 13 August 2016

By Peter Flockart

Photos by Wayne Heming

This had been supposed to been a club dive to the Tuggerah. I had 3 boats full but Mother Nature decided not to play nice and the winds that had been forecast for later in the day arrived earlier. This meant short sharp swells at around 1.5m.

We got as far as Marley and turned towards the Sponge Gardens, dropped anchor and found that there was a roaring current. At this point Dave Casburn stopped near us and we told him that we weren't going to the Tuggerah due

to the surface conditions. We had tried Marley Sponge Gardens but had had a roaring current so we were going back to The Split.



Here the current wasn't as bad, so we dropped anchor and descended. Visibility around 5-8m, temp 15°. Some nice PJ's in the Split, one Pineapple Fish under the ledge, and a Donut Nembrotha at the northern end. A good dive in spite of the conditions. However on releasing the anchor and ascending to deco we noted that the current had increased substantially.

Dave Casburn had tried to do Middle Ground but had also found the current undiveable

and had aborted as had Michael in Mak Cat.



# The Boys Weekend

## Port Stephens/Broughton Island

**21-23 May 2016**

**By Ron Walsh**

**Photos by Chris Heath, Steve Zhao and Ron Walsh**

The annual Boys Weekend was once again held at Port Stephens on the weekend of 21-23 May 2016. The organiser was Ray Moulang and there were 10 divers—Ray Moulang, Ron Walsh, Chris Heath, Corey O’Keefe, Simon Hoad, Ian Roffey, Steve Zhao, Ian Griffiths, Phil Rose and Geoff Ward.

All arrived Friday/Friday night and most of us stayed in cabins at Halifax Park Caravan Park with Simon and Corey making their own arrangements. Dinner Friday night was at West Diggers club at Nelsons Bay where despite forecasts of large seas optimism was high.

We were up bright and early Saturday morning and at the dive shop at 7am. Plan for the day was for a double boat dive to Broughton Island with Let’s Go Diving, which is located at the marina at Nelsons Bay. After filling in the obligatory paperwork we were off. Once clear of Port Stephens we were greeted with no



wind but a large rolling SE swell meaning that a number of dive sites would not be diveable including the Looking Glass.

As expected once we arrived at Broughton Island our option for diving was North Rock and the famous Shark Gutters. After anchoring and a dive brief we submerged and spent the next 60 odd minutes playing with the grey nurse sharks as they cruised up and down the gutters. Visibility was not as good as in previous years being only 10m, and there was a bit of surge from the large swell even though North Rock is mostly protected from a SE swell. There were also large schools of bullseyes and yellowtail, adult bannerfish (making for some colour), port Jackson

stevenIMAGE©

sharks, cuttlefish and the resident blue groper.

After a surface interval including soup, coffee and nibbles we did a second dive at the same location, with the same critters though there appeared to be more sharks in the main gutter than for the first dive.

After a leisurely trip back we washed dive gear, showered and that night had a fantastic club sponsored BBQ including the obligatory prawn skewers and steaks and several refreshing drinks.

The following day was planned to be a repeat of the Saturday with a double boat dive to Broughton Island. This time there were 6 divers as 4 of the divers decided that due to the conditions and the limited dive sites with the SE swell that they would prefer not to dive North Rock again. And the first dive was at North Rock due to the conditions.

The visibility was not as good as the previous day due to the large swell but there was less surge and there were more grey nurse sharks in the gutters along with the schooling yellowtail and bullseyes.

Rather than dive North Rock for a 4th time for the weekend it was decided to do a drift dive at North Cabbage Tree Island as the 4th dive. Interesting without being anything special is how to describe this dive. Lots of barren rocks, sand, with some sponge covered rocks at various intervals. Small schools of yellowtail, mados, a couple of wobbegong sharks, and a couple of green moray eels.

After a leisurely trip back we again washed gear then relaxed and that night went to the Thai restaurant in Shoal Bay for dinner. This restaurant is recommended as the food is excellent and the prices reasonable.

Chris Heath and myself decided to dive The Pipeline on the Monday with an entry time of around 9am. Conditions were calm, visibility

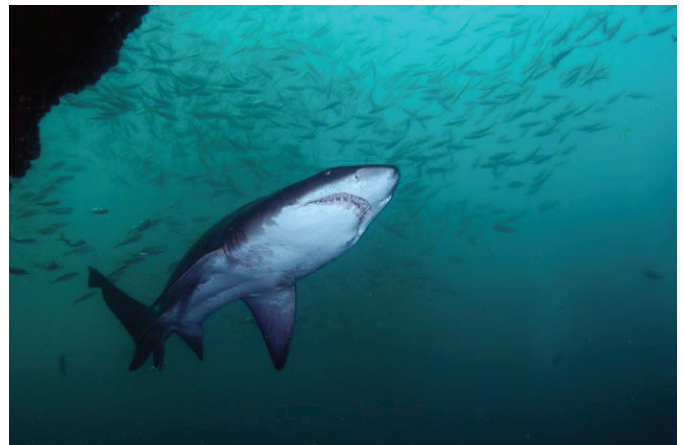






was over 10m, and lots and lots of little critters were seen. Various nudibranchs including gold spot and Collingwood chromodoris and red lined flabellina, blue ring octopus, cuttlefish, too many seahorses to count, moray eels, etc.

After a lazy pack up and lunch we hit the long road back to Sydney after another fantastic weekend. Many thanks to Ray Moulang for organising and looking forward to next years.





## Tabaggi South

### 20 August 2016

By Peter Flockart

Photos by Wayne Heming



This was an exploratory dive. On the south side of the headland in an area normally too rough to dive we anchored about 15m from the cliff base on an almost flat sea.

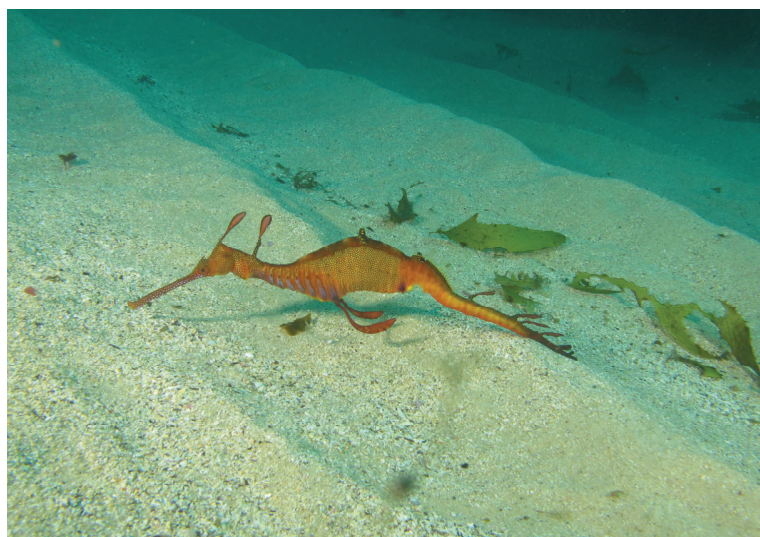
We dropped onto a flat rocky area at 8m that in turn fell away to 21m down a sheer cliff face. The bottom is a mixture of rocky area and flat sand. We found a large octopus lying flat on the sand. Initially I thought he may have been eating something but when he moved he had just been lying in a rock filled depression,

odd? Wayne and I then swam slowly south along the wall. It was pocked marked with ledges and crevices which are fairly shallow in horizontal depth although the odd one extends well back into the cliff face. On the bottom are several piles of rocks that form caves and swim throughs. Some of these held pregnant PJ's.

There was not much in the way of soft sponges but we did see a few of the usual nudis and one small orange Gorgonia. On the whole it was nice cruisy dive with no current and quite good vis of around 10 - 12m in water of 17.8 degrees.

Surface interval was in at the steps before heading out to Whale Watch platform for a second dive.

After descent to the anchor we swam up to and thru the cave seeing a small school of sea pike and bulls eyes. Wayne found a small sleepy cuttlefish on ledge but not much else. We continued out to the sand where we found a small stingaree and a very dopey weedy. Well that took 20mins, so back at the anchor we decided to swim north-west along the shelf at 20m. This took us over a bed of seaweed and then onto a rock wall cut that cuts fairly sharply back into the wall to form an amphitheatre of sand. The overhang over the shelf cuts deeply back and was home to a myriad of fish. Time was now 55mins and in 17 degree water I was feeling a bit cold so we retraced our path back to the anchor and proceeded to deco before surfacing after a dive time of 60minutes into the warm sun.





## Live aboard Trip December 2017 (not 2016)

### Raja Amapat in West Papua

#### Organiser: Bob Trudgeon

A number of the club's members have mentioned a liveaboard dive trip to Raja Amapat in West Papua is on their "bucket list"

I have kicked the ball with enquiries to Mermaid (boat Mermaid 1), Aggressor & Black Manta for December 2017, Sorong to Sorong. I mentioned a group of 8 as a carrot for discount. Below are basic details from replies received. The comparisons are based upon "budget" cabins. There are other "delux/master cabins at a higher cost.

1. Mermaid 10 days - 9 nights 3 to 12 December 2017 3300 euros less 20% discount - 2640 euros - approximately AUS \$3900.
2. Aggressor 10 days - 10 nights 11 to 21 December 2017 US \$ 4500 - 8 guests, 7 paying & 1 free - 12.55 discount - US \$ 3900 - approximately AUS \$ 5250. In addition to being more expensive, the dates are close to Xmas.
3. Black Manta 8 days - 9 nights first Raja Ampat trip is 21 to 29 December 2017 rates yet to be determined but indication is approximately US \$ 3000 less 10% discount - US \$ 2700 - approx AUS \$ 3600 - shorter period & more expensive than Mermaid.

Six members have indicated they wish to do the Mermaid 1 liveaboard. Although 8 participants will attain the discount, it would be preferable to have at least 10 people indicate a willingness to overcome any late cancellations

Rather than list details of itinerary, boat facilities etc , "Mermaid Liveaboards" is an informative web site. There is also comment on trip advisor.

Please also note:

1. I shall not be doing a group booking & each person would have to book direct.
2. Should a participant withdraw after payment, it would be that persons obligation to find a replacement.
3. Air flights are additional cost

If you are interested please contact Bob

# Dive Club Calendar

## September 2016

Date	Description	Location	Organiser
3 September	Boat Dive	Osborne Shoals	Bill Rowland
4 September	Shore Dive	The Leap	Jason Coombs
10 September	Boat Dive	Barrens Hut/The Split	Greg Blackburne
17 September	Deep Wreck Dive	TBA	Caroline Stojanovic
21 September	Club Meeting	Rowers on Cook	Greg Blackburne
24 September	Boat dive	Wollongong	Alan Davies
25 September	Boat Dive	M&K Reef	Dave Casburn
30 September to 3 October	October Long Weekend	South West Rocks	Jane Scarsbrook

## October 2016

Date	Description	Location	Organiser
3 October to 13 October	Overseas Trip	Tulamben, Bali	Eddie Ivers
8 October	Deep Wreck Dive	TBA	Peter Flockart
15 October	Boat Dive	Cape Banks	Shelley Breuseker
19 October	Club Meeting	Rowers on Cook	Greg Blackburne
22 October	Boat Dive	Barrens Hut/The Split	Greg Blackburne
29 October	Shore Dive	Shiprock	Paul Pacey
29 October	Boat Dive	Pistol Crack	Peter Flockart

Thursday Night Dives – every week – email sent out early in the week advising location and time

Regular Shore Dives – advice is via email or facebook

## Your Committee

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Vice President	Peter Flockart	<a href="mailto:vpresident@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au">vpresident@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au</a>	
Secretary	Aidan Sleiven	<a href="mailto:secretary@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au">secretary@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au</a>	
Treasurer	Roney Rodrigues	<a href="mailto:treasurer@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au">treasurer@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au</a>	
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