

Sea Braggin'



May 2017

St George Scuba Club Newsletter



Snorkelling with Whale Sharks in Donsol, Philippines

Philippines Trip — Whale Sharks in Donsol

By Chris Heath

Photos by Ron Walsh

The tour party of 8 including one non diver arrived in Donsol from Ticao Island after five days of diving with manta rays and whale sharks.

The transfer was unfortunately wet with rain most of the way, this did not dampen the spirits too much as the Elysia Resort was a little gem.

We settled in and had dinner at the resort restaurant which provided a generous range of choices which required a little interpretation but all was good.

Next morning the local organiser had the transfer tricycles ready and off we went for our first whale shark snorkelling experience.

The experience starts with a registration and a brief video on the local area and the history of whale shark experience.

Off to the boats.

We were separated into two boats with four to each and a in water guide. After getting settled into a search pattern with another 1/2 dozen or so boats the hunt was on.

After about an hour all the boats started to converge, this was it!

The closer boats started dropping snorkellers into the water and the mayhem started. Not exactly what was expected. Our boat guide after we got back on the boat decided a different plan on the second pass, we held off till the majority of boats had dropped there snorkellers and they had dropped off the chase. We were dropped in and our guide then put us on the nose of



the whale shark which was moving along at about 3 metres. The water was a little murky but 'Wow'.

Our second boat also got the same where Ron Walsh started to develop his plan to get some good pics. After several drops we were still keen but our shark wasn't and moved away. Our boat was lucky and we actually found a smaller one the the first and we got a few drops on the whale shark by ourselves.

Our time was up and we headed back to the beach and our return to the resort. After a quick clean up six of us went up the road to get some money changed and a lunch experience at a local cafe.

Dinner that night was good as we were now aware of the choice dishes.

After dinner we all travelled down to Ogod for a 'river cruise and firefly' experience, there is that word again.

The high speed tricycle ride being a highlight just in itself. The fireflies preformed and lite up the trees that they inhabited like Christmas tree lights. Our boat guide explained all the facts and even captured a few for us to photograph.

The next day was similar to the first but no video. Same guide but different boat. We only encountered one this day and it tender to stay a little deeper. The local researcher were very interested in this guy as he had netting on his left pectoral fin.

After return to the resort, a quick lunch, final pack and off on the road for the next Philippines experience.



Anniversary Dinner

4 March 2017

By Ron Walsh

In March each year the club celebrates its anniversary with a social night held at a local restaurant.

This year it was held on Saturday 4 March at Doytoa Thai restaurant in Sutherland expertly organized by Dave Burns. There were 25 members in attendance, including 5 life members, with all enjoying the fantastic food and jovial company.

The order of the night included social drinks from 7pm and a banquet meal from 7:30. Entrees consisted of Thai fish cakes, curry puffs and golden chicken wings, with mains being pad thai, Doytoa seafood special, BBQ chicken and red duck curry, all with jasmine steamed rice.

There were lots of tall tales of deeds long past that reminded the newer members present of the wonderful history associated with our dive club.

Many thanks to Dave Burns for organizing and we all look forward to next year's event.



SS Satara Dive, Forster

30 April 2017

By Bill Rowland

The one place on the NSW coast that appears to have more than its fair share of unsuccessful dive attempts seems to be Forster.

I gather part of the less than positive sentiment seems to be one operator saying "come on up the conditions and forecast are fine" but then the story (and agreed destinations) sometimes changes once folk make the 4 hour trek up from Sydney.

After consulting with Nick from Forster Dive Centre about conditions during the week, 8 of us headed up on Friday to dive the wreck of the Satara (myself, Corey, Bram, Gary P, Dave, Clint, and 2 non-members Cameron Thomas and Ben Morgan.) The weather Gods smiled on us and we were rewarded with a magnificent dive on the Satara followed by a 2nd dive at Skelton Reef.



We loaded the boat at Forster and Nick then motored down to Seal Rocks. We drove down, donned suits and fins and swam out from the beach to climb aboard. A pod of Dolphins at "Number Two Beach", Seal Rocks helped us to pass the time on the shore while we waited for the boat to arrive.

We headed off and after a 20 minute journey arrived at the wreck

The anchor landed off the wreck but all made it to the wreck and had a ball. At around 40m deep and approximately 125m long it was teeming with life. Kingfish, and Giant Trevally were in abundance along



with clouds of yellowtail and the like. A number of decent lobsters completed the picture. The stern and boilers were impressive but it was the quantity and diversity of fish life that impressed me. Some wobbies were spotted but they must belong to a different union from the Sydney ones as they left both Corey and Dave alone.

The boat comfortably fitted 8 divers (four Rebreathers, three twins, one single, and a "Broadway"? of stages

too). Viz was about 15m but seemed to me to reduce once one moved away from the wreck itself. Bram and Clint were unable to find and return to the anchor so did the right thing and shot SMBs for their ascent.

By the time they surfaced and confirmed visual contact with the boat they were a decent distance off, being pushed out by the current. As the boat brought the remaining divers aboard, we fully

expected to up anchor and go to collect them, but no. With the wind at their back but swimming into the current they covered the several hundred metres back to the boat just as the last diver came aboard and the boat was then free to collect them! Good effort, guys.



The boat motored over to Skelton Reef and after a

surface interval & soup, the 2nd dive was held, with a turtle bobbing on the surface and Gannets dive bombing with the water from quite a decent height to get to the fish some 5m or so under the surface.

Returning to Seal rocks we swam ashore and drove back to Forster to prepare for the next day. Conditions were similar the next day, and longer bottom times were enjoyed.

A gourmet BBQ extravaganza was prepared by head chef Dave, and kindly subsidized by the club for members, thank you. I am instructed to report that Corey declared he was too full to finish, so a catering badge of honour is duly awarded to Mr Casburn for generosity of servings (and quality).

My farewell present from the Philippines was an inner ear infection so I only managed the first dive on the Satara and skipped the rest. Even those who did both dives were left wanting more, so I look forward to a return visit in the near future.

Thanks to all for coming and contributing to a great weekend away. We look forward to diving with Nick again, next time



Anzac Day Dive & BBQ

25 April 2017

By Ron Walsh

On Anzac day the club held its annual dive and BBQ day, this year held at Bare Island. Conditions were nice and sunny with minimal wind, calm ocean conditions, warm water, good visibility on a run out tide.

Most people arrived early to get the good parks, with the non divers setting up the marquee and BBQ at the prime grassy site overlooking Botany Bay while those that were diving kitted up.

There were 10 divers in total, diving in two groups. My group planned to enter at Carol's plaque, head out and around isolated reef one and return.

Highlights of the dive included a yellow striated anglerfish, various nudibranchs including the pancake nudi (variable aphelodoris), black margined glossodoris and purple lined flabellina, a couple of banjo rays, a juvenile lobster in a hole, a sea spider that Donna found (and most of us missed), hinge beak shrimp, a seahorse that Eddie found, red morwongs, red scorpionfish, silver bream, plus the usual sponges, carijou and fans.



Three members became slightly disorientated and ended up with a bit of a surface swim after surfacing some distance from shore.

After packing away the dive gear we all retired to the marquee to enjoy coffee, bacon & egg rolls and corn fritters, a very pleasant way spend a relaxing lunchtime.

Many thanks to Greg and Shelley for organizing and to all those that assisted.





Anilao Dive Trip, Philippines

April 2017

By Bill Rowlands

Jasmine and I spent a wonderful 7 days diving at Buceo Resort at Anilao in the Philippines, in mid April

Arriving at Manila airport, it was then a 2.5 hour car trip to Anilao (which is at the southern tip of the Anilao 'peninsula', west of Batangas. A Google Map extract shows the proximity to Batangas and Puerto Galera, for reference.

The Diving :

We wanted for nothing !

We did 15 dives (usually 2 a day), but there were 4 dives available each day : 2 morning ones, then a 3pm and a twilight dive. You could either pay per dive or pay for an "unlimited day" of up to 4 dives per day.

The water temperature was between 25 and 27 degrees. The visibility ranged from 10 to 30+ metres.

I was a bit concerned that being a non photographer and not on a Latin first name basis with marine creatures we might get bored in a place renowned for muck/macro photography, but it was not the case at all. We had fun (and a great guide : Elmar), and went to both Coral based sites (two thirds) and sandy/muck sites (one third). Some of the highlights were seeing Angler fish big and small, a range of new (to us) Nudis including a few Pikachu nudis (*Thecacera pacifica*), sea snakes, Cardinalfish with eggs in mouth, leafy scorpionfish, Porcelain crabs, fire gobies, morays, cuttles, octopus, razor fish,

turtles, seahorses ('normal' shaped ones but also quite a few "straight" ones), ghost pipefish, rays, mantis shrimp, Lembeh seadragon, pygmy pipe horses, and my personal favourite – the orangutan crab tucked away in a sea anemone.

One day was spent visiting Verde Island, which was well worth the trip – such fantastic



and plentiful sea life, big and small.

It must have been the season of love, as a variety of nudis and fish were 'caught in the act'. Muck diving indeed... One decent sized Titan Triggerfish made a point of shoing we divers away from her nest, with a bite through the wetsuit and into the skin of the shin. It was quite spectacular (for me!) to watch the ferocity and speed of the attack, from my safe vantage point.

The whole diving process was well run : dive gear was lugged onto the boat for you (they would even assemble your rig unless you asked them not to), and there was a dedicated decently sized and equipped camera room as well. Many divers took their BCD's off in the water to make ladder climbing easier, after each dive.

To the (several!) St G boat captains who have seen fit to throw Jasmine overboard in the last few years, you will be amused to know that your services are no longer needed... Leaning over the edge of the banka boat to rinse her mask, there was a gasp, followed by a splash, followed by a scream, followed by a giggle, as she overbalanced and toppled into the water all by herself.



The Resort :

It's built into the side of a hill so there are a fair few steps to negotiate. The room was good with much needed airconditioning. Food was ok. Wifi was awful.

The whole area has a very different pace from PG / Sabang. It was a perfect relaxing dive week away.

Organising and/or attending a St George Scuba Club Boat Dive

Please refer to the document on [Organising and attending a Club Boat Dive](#) :

You can find the document on the St George website (you need to log in first) in **Downloads -> Event Planning and Catering -> Organising and attending a club boat dive (PDF version)**

http://www.stgeorgescubaclub.org.au/downloads/Organising_and_attending_an_SGSC_Boat_Dive_v1.7_16_Dec_2016.pdf

To the boat dive organiser:

Thank you for taking on the task. It's not hard, and is one of the tasks that makes for a fun club activity. I do think that everyone should try to organise a dive (both to contribute to club events, but also to understand what's involved)

Rule #1 – we do these dives at the pleasure of the Captains and their boats. Every Captain has 'preferences' (from attendees, to gear placement on board, to diving/equipment styles, etc) and these should be catered to where possible. My suggestion, until you get to know each boat, is just to say you're new to organising and to ask the Captains for anything you need to consider.

For boat dive organisers: Preparing to organise a dive

2-4 weeks before the dive, send an email to boatowners@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au seeking boat availability from the Captains for the dive you are organising.

If you are new to organising, ask them for any extra guidance / feedback and you will usually get very helpful info back.

Try to determine:

The Boat ramp from which they intend to launch (and if it is Yowie Bay, try to determine whether the meeting spot is at the bottom of the hill near the ramp, or up the hill near the school - it can depend on the time of year and how much parking is likely to be available)

Single/Double dive preferences

Any regular crew coming with the boat already

Spare spots after the Captain and crew are allocated. Due to the vagaries of the English language, don't be afraid to clarify numbers if you are unsure of the Captain's reply (as the most important thing the organiser cares about is how many remaining spots they need to fill with club members)

Any preferred regular divers who, if they are doing the dive, a Captain would ideally want allocated on to their boat.

This is not just about grouping friends together, it's also usually to make sure that there's someone capable who can help with the launching and retrieving of the boat at the ramp. In addition, it's to have someone on the surface when the Captain is diving (usually dives are done in two tranches), in case the anchor comes loose or divers drift off and need collecting etc.

The person boat minding is a boat driver.

Meet/departure time. This is important! You want to determine the time that the boat wants to meet and load its divers. **This is the time by which the divers already need to be dressed and kitted up and ready to load gear on board, with departure shortly after.** Different Captains/different wordings but you need to make sure you have the time when the boat wants pre-prepared divers to load.

Some / many Captains will reply immediately. Others need some follow up. Quite often you'll get a conditional reply "probably yes but..."

Usually about 2 weeks prior, send an invitation to the Stgeorge@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au distro list. It does not need to explain how many spaces / boats are available (as quite often you will not know at this stage). A sample email is attached in the appendix. Feel free to customise as you see fit (but a word to the wise, going too far and drafting it in the style of a lawyer offering Nigerian inheritance dives for only a modest sum can only end badly...It did yield some of the funniest replies I've ever seen, but... please learn from my mistake...)

Try to not overuse the StG distribution email list. It can support, approximately, one email per hour. If you've seen another email sent recently, wait for an hour before sending yours.

When sending the invitation, it is usually helpful to indicate the general launch area (usually Botany Bay or Port Hacking), and include the link to the specific dive site from Michael's website <http://www.michaelmcfadyenscuba.info/news.php>

It is also usually worth noting the approximate maximum depth and anything else special for the dive site.

It is normal that some people will email you to book onto a dive before you have sent the invite

The dive site is always subject to weather conditions on the day as well as the preference of the boat Captain & crew.



Upcoming Events

South West Rocks

October long weekend: 29th Sep – 2nd Oct 2017

Organiser: Jane Scarsbrook

Ladies, gents, boys and girls... I am organising another trip to South West Rocks for October long weekend as last years was successful. As most of you know, this is arguably one of the best dive sites in NSW and we have a superb time of year booked & reserved to go and check this site out!!!

Last year the trip went down a storm and everyone had a great time! Therefore I have booked out the whole dive centre exclusively for SGSC. I will amend this based off response I get to this email within the next week.

Trip details and inclusions:

3 days and 3 nights – arrive on 29th Sept & depart 2nd Oct 2017

6 guided boat dives (3 double dives)

3 nights accommodation

Free nitrox

Tanks and weights - Steel tanks too ;-)

Refreshments between dives

Continental breakfast daily

Use of sheets and pillows

Cost:

Bunk house accommodation usually \$480 with club discount **\$433**

Twin share/private rooms (*limited*) usually \$540 with club discount **\$486**

With this booking being a long weekend there will be **limited availability** – a deposit of \$50 to the club will secure your spot. Please then pay the outstanding amount 4 weeks prior to departure (1/9/2017) to save me chasing folk last minute. Also email me on jrscarsbrook@hotmail.com or facebook me when you pay your deposit so I can liaise remaining availability with the dive centre.

Dive Club Calendar

June 2017

Date	Description	Location	Organiser
3 June	Shore Dive	Shark Point, Clovelly	Ian Roffey
4 June	Boat Double Dive	Wollongong	Natasha Naude
10 June	Deep Dive	TBA	Peter Flockart
11 June	Shore Dive	Bare Isle or Kurnell	Paul Pacey
13 June	Club Meeting	Rowers on Cook	Greg Blackburne
17 June	Boat Deep Dive Exploratory	Middle Ground Deep	Peter Flockart
24 June	Shore Dive	Fairy Bower	Jason Coombs
25 June	Shore Dive	Oak Park or Shiprock	Eddie Ivers
30 June to 2 July	Dive Weekend	South West Rocks	Ray Moulang

July 2017

Date	Description	Location	Organiser
1 July	Deep Dive	TBA	Peter Flockart
8 July	Boat Dive	Osborne Shoals	Jason Coombs
9 July	Shore Dive	Bare Isle or Kurnell	Paul Pacey
11 July	Club Meeting	Rowers on Cook	Greg Blackburne
15 July	Boat Dive	Wattamolla	Shelley Breuseker
22 July	Boat Dive	Yellow Rock	Natasha Naude
23 July	Shore Dive	Oak Park or Shiprock	Eddie Ivers
29 July	Dry Dive	Pro Diving Services	Jane Scarsbrook

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

Upcoming Presentations

13 June: Philippines Dive Trip – Ron Walsh

11 July: Diving Truk Lagoon – Peter Flockart

Your Committee

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Giant Pacific Manta Ray, Ticao Island, Philippines