



Sea Braggin'

St George scuba club newsletter Oct 2014

www.stgeorgescubaclub.org.au



Photo of Pygmy Pipe Horse taken at the Steps Kurnell by Ed.

What's on...

O/S Interstate	Local	Check the newsletter
Palau Oct 19	Frenchman's Bay Oct 12	regular boat / shore dives
Yongala Nov 16 to 23		Night dives on Thursdays

When	Event	Contact
Deep Dive Birchgrove Park	11 Oct	Ray Moulang
Frenchman's Bay Boat dive	12 Oct	Jason Coombs
19 Oct to 3 Nov 2014	Palau	Dave Casburn
16 Nov to 22 Nov	Yongala Great Barrier Reef	Mike Scotland
3 rd Wed in Nov	Club Meeting	Natasha Naude
weekly	Shore dives	See calendar
Thursday nights	Night dives	Michael McFayden

Articles submitted by Michael McFayden, Natasha Naude, Wayne Heming and Mike Scotland.

Recent Night Dives by Michael McFadyen

Since early September the club has had some great Thursday night dives. On 11 September we had about 6 dive Bare Island Deep Wall. We saw six RedIndian fish (a new record), sea horses and a huge bull ray near the cave. The next couple of weeks had bad weather but on 2 October we dived again. This time we did Bare Island Isolated Reefs. This turned out to be a brilliant dive. Once again RedIndian fish were in large numbers, this time the consensus was we saw a total of seven, another new record. We also saw a couple of big belly sea horses, a lot of squid, some octopus and cuttlefish, a solitary Vercos tamja (first one I have seen for months) and a free-swimming Conger Eel.

On 9 October we dived the Deep Wall again. This time we saw only one RedIndian fish (where do they go), a couple of sea horses, at least four pygmy pipefish, more squid and cuttlefish.

The club dives every Thursday night weather permitting. The dive site chosen depends on sea conditions and tides, but probably 75% of the dives are at Bare Island. Afterwards we always go and have a pizza before heading home. With the sun now setting later, the meeting time is moving towards 7:30 pm, which it will be for all summer. Come along and join us for some great diving.

Wednesday Boat Dives by Michael McFadyen

Most Wednesdays the club has boat dives. Up to two boats are available for this (*Le Scat* and *Aquanaut*), which means 11 members, can enjoy a mid-week dive. Most weeks these are very popular. As long as we can get four members in total and the weather is okay, then the dive will be on with one boat. The dives are very popular with the retired members as well as those who work shift work, so get in early if you want to come (you can always contact Phil Short or myself well in advance to put your name down). Some weeks the dives might be on Tuesday or Thursday if the weather is not looking good for Wednesday.

On 24 September we had two boats and nine divers. We headed out to Barrens Hut/The Split. On this dive we encountered a large fishing net that had many horned sharks (similar to Port Jackson sharks) caught in it. A few were dead but many were alive. Ian Gowan (visiting from Port Macquarie) and I managed to cut free six sharks. Later, Phil Short and Jane Scarsbook also came across the net. They attached a surface marker to it and later hauled it up onto their boat. They freed another two sharks and then took the net back to shore to dispose of it.

On 9 October (a Thursday) we again had two boats and nine divers. We headed out to Marys Reef (named by Phil S after his wife). The visibility was probably the worst we have had for many months, perhaps only 5 to 7 metres. However, we again had a great dive. This is a very nice wall down towards Marley Point that has some great sponge life, with many small gorgonians and lots of sea tulips. After the dive some had a humpback whale pass only metres from the boats. Unfortunately the divers still in the water did not see it, even though it passed straight over two of them.

Remember, get in early if you want to go on these dives as sometimes we have more interested than we can accommodate.

Michael McFadyen <http://www.michaelmcfadyenscuba.info>
Michael McFadyen's Scuba Diving

Frenchmans Bay Sunday 12 October

Whale Watch Platform by Natasha Naude

I went out on Le Scat on the first run, leaving 8am with Michael, Nancy, Jo, Julien and Caroline K. We initially set out for Minmi Trench – I was looking forward to diving there for the first time, but as we reached our marks the water looked thick and green and we decided to continue on to Whale Watch instead. Wayne Heming had tried Bypass Reef at first but apparently there was a bad current and they ended up at Whale Watch also. The water looked a little green but better than Minmi. There was very little swell and little wind (but that didn't stop the three boats at the site from wanting to cosy up during the dive – Michael said he spent most of his time pushing them all apart!)

Nancy, Jo and I went down the anchor line to find no current, and the green water gave way quickly to a nice 10-12 m viz. Within a couple of minutes I had spotted a weedy sea dragon, and shortly after that we crossed paths with Greg and Shelley, diving from Wayne Dyer's boat. There were lots of Port Jackson's around, with some appearing to be pregnant. We bumped into Mike Scotland, who took a photo of Nancy with a PJ which of course I decided to photobomb. We pootled around the site at a leisurely pace, wishing it was a bit warmer than the 15 degrees showing on my computer.

I saw several different types of nudibranch, all familiar, and Nancy pointed out two small giant cuttlefish. Apart from the weedy sea dragon, the find of the day was a large eastern blue devilfish which was swimming around in the open water not far from its overhang, very near to where our anchor was sitting. While Jo took some GoPro footage of the devilfish I saw a large shape, which turned out to be a rather large bullray swimming past and around us. We gave chase for a little while and then Nancy and I commenced our ascent up the shot line, while Jo made the most of her nitrox and pootled around some more. As we ascended we went through the murky layer that had looked green from the surface, but it wasn't too dark and we went through it quickly. It was a great dive – cold but calm, good viz and plenty to see.

We returned to Frenchmans Bay to have bacon and egg rolls while the next boat load went out. When they returned we enjoyed burgers and snags and salads and great company in the beautiful sunny weather. After lunch we headed down to the water's edge so Mahla could have her first dip in sea water. She enjoyed it but what made it more special were the two pods of dolphins we spotted in the bay, just beyond the moored boats. So fantastic to see dolphins within Botany Bay. They cruised up and down for quite some time, attracting quite a crowd of people watching from the beach. It was a lovely ending to a top day out.

Our thanks to the organizers and boat owners and to everyone who pitched in preparing or cooking the food. Thanks to everyone who helped us keep Mahla entertained and looked after for the day too – she had a ball!
Natasha Naude

Frenchman's Bay Boat dive

Text and pictures Mike Scotland

I would like to say a big thank you Jason for organizing this day to Frenchman's Bay for our free boat dive. What a fantastic idea! There were about fifty divers participated. Many thanks to the members who provided their boats for divers.

Thanks also go to Peter Flockhart for organizing the BBQ and his helpers who assisted with the cooking, cakes and salads.

The pictures are Nancy and Tash, Peter F, Phil S and a Mosaic Sea Star.



St George Scuba Club Picnic Day

Text and photos by Wayne Heming

Today is where members get a free boat dive on one of the members' boats. Four Boats headed out today, I made 3 runs all to the Whale Watch Platform. The first run Rudy, Michelle, Ian and myself left Frenchman's Bay at 7:30am and headed to Bypass Reef, after stopping and dropping a weighted line down about 5m it was evident there was a raging current, the line with a 9lb weight was almost horizontal. With only limited time we decided straight away that Whale Watch should be better. We headed straight over there.

The anchor dropped 5m east of our normal spot, with vis around 5-8m it was pretty

easy to navigate around. We headed south to the main cave, then further onto the next cave east around the boulder and up through the grotto, west through the amphitheatre and around past the sponge garden and around to nudi rock. A lot of fish life around including a school of reasonable sized Kingfish many PJ's, Pike, Cuttlefish and even a Moray Eel.

I hear the second dive was just as good, Eda, Maxine, and I think Jane all had a great dive, I was boat sitting. However on my third run, Rudy and Myself along with Leo and Michael had a spectacular dive here, with 5 Blue Devil Fish. One in the main cave, one in the second cave, one in the grotto, one under a ledge near the sponge garden and one in the very small cave on the north western end. Got to be some kind of record.

A great day had by all

Wayne

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Rarer Sea Slugs

Text and photos by Mike Scotland

Most divers love Sea Slugs. They do bring a lot of pleasure to nature lovers and underwater photographers. Many Sea slugs are very common. I have selected a few of the more unusual Sea Slugs that I have encountered over the last few years, mostly from around Sydney.

The Honey Okenia was photographed at the Five Islands off Wollongong. Okenia mellitus has beautiful cerrata filled with toxic stinging cells. It is also known for its ability to voluntarily shed cerrata to escape predators.

Philinopsis is one of the Aglajidae predatory sea slugs. They eat Bubble shells by swallowing them whole. This one was photographed at Bare Island.

The Purple Lined Nembrotha is one of the Sea Slugs that cannot withdraw its gills into a crypt or pouch like most Sea Slugs. Dorids can pull their gills and rhinopores in to little pouches or crypts. They are known as Cryptobranchs for this reason. Nembrothas and Tambjas cannot do this. The Purple Lined Nembrotha feeds on Solitary Flask Ascideans. Ascideans are bio-accumulators of toxic heavy metals and Sulphuric acid. They also have other toxic self-defence chemicals. It is probable that the Purple Lined Nembrotha has serious toxic capabilities. One famous marine Biology lecturer demonstrated the toxic nature of Sea Slugs at the start of a lecture on Nudibranchs. Apparently, the lecture had to be discontinued as his mouth became swollen and partially paralysed. Avoid mouthing sea slugs. This one was photographed at Inscription Point at Kurnell.

The Ornate Cadlinella I photographed at Octopus Island in Fiji. It is known for its very toxic containing concentrated toxins from the sponges and Tunicates it feeds on. Cadlinella also has Sulfuric acid glands along its mantle to deter would be predators.

Verco's Tambja feeds on Blue Bryozoans. It experiences wild population fluctuations depending on the food source. Verco's Tambja is a perfect example of using a common form of sea life to find the Tambjas. Look at the Blue Bryozoans and you are likely to find what is feeding on it. Look at Soft Corals to find Cowries, Fan Corals to find Spindle Cowries and so on. These Verco's Tambjas were photographed at Shiprock.

The Magnificent Ceratosoma used to be known as Miamira magnifica. They are different to most sea slugs in that the anus is not situated inside the gill flower. Instead, the short tail just behind the gills has the end of the alimentary canal in it. It is a major anatomical difference. This photo was taken at Shark Point Clovelly.

The Pink Phyllidia was found at the Yasawa Islands in Fiji. Like all sponge eaters, it contains sponge spicules and toxins and is highly toxic to would be predators. The pink colour is unusual.

Golden Jorunnas were photographed at Inscription Point in Kurnell. They are seen here doing what Nudibranchs do best. It's head to toe and away we go. Nudibranchs have their reproductive opening in the right side just behind the head. Most of them are both male and female. When mating, they cross fertilise and exchange sperm. In some larger sea slugs, you can see the genital opening on the front right neck region. When Sea Slugs are coupling, they line up head to toe sometimes for days at a time. Golden Jorunnas are a good example of where to go if you want to further your knowledge of Sea slugs. Once you get past the Dorids and Aeolids stage, you might like to look a little closer. Due to the lack of detailed books around, a good place to begin is to check out the gill flower. Count the number of branches on the gills. Soon, you can easily separate, your Jorunnas from your Chromodorises and Bennets Sea Slugs.

I have more information on my web site on Sea Slugs in my Marine Biology and Dive Sydney sections. My intention is to provide help with ID of Marine life.
www.mikescotlandscuba.com



Behrens has an excellent book on Sea Slugs. (You can get it from www.fishid.com (a must for keen fish and reef identification) Also Kuiters's Nudibranchs of the World and of course Neville Coleman.



Annual events in the sea

Text and photos by Mike Scotland

The sea has its own annual cycles. There is a 'calendar' from the sea for various animals mating and so on. During late September and early October, baby Port Jackson sharks can be seen around Cronulla.

Adult PJ's also congregate to mate during late winter and early spring. These baby PJ's were photographed at Gibbon Bommie early Oct 2014.

At the moment, there is a female Octopus at Shiprock, which has eggs. She will guard and care for her eggs for around ninety days. I estimate around Christmas time, her eggs will hatch. During this time, she does not feed. She will dedicate herself to her progeny. After that she will die a slow and painful death, as she will be so weak that fish will peck her to death. I call it death by a thousand bites.

Cuttlefish mate in September. Below is a pair of mating *Sepia mestus* from Shiprock. The male shows its characteristic mating colour pattern.

Weedy Sea Dragons mate around September to December. There are males around carrying eggs underneath their tails. These take about three months to hatch. You see them around Christmas with some eggs already hatched. The baby WSD

is about two cms long. They develop curled up within the egg. Incidentally, the male develops a special conjunctival tissue, which grows around the egg and nourishes it from its blood supply.



What your editor is up to in Oct 2014

For those people who read dive magazines, I have 2 articles in Dive Log October, www.divelog.net.au and

one in Sport Diving on Shrimps and Prawns www.sportdiving.com.au.

One in Ocean Geographic on Evolution in Lembeh. www.ogsociety.org.

Michael McFadyen also has a story on Scapa Flow about the SMS Markgraf.

Tide Tables

Next time you renew your car rego, you can grab a free set of Tide tables from the RTA office. For people planning dives at Shiprock, there is a time lag of fifteen minutes. The time lag is 30 minutes at Lili Pilli after High Tide. (fyi)

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Please send items for the newsletter as separate files. Any photographs should be sent as separate files, rather than inserted into the article. Please don't insert a copyright symbol or put your name in the photo.

Important Notice from the Editor.

Members are asked to send in a photo or two and a short trip/ dive report once a year. I have made 5 requests for articles to be submitted and only three members responded after nearly four weeks. It is our magazine and we need to support it for the benefit of all members. If you have not sent in something in the last year, it is your turn. So get onto it.

Next newsletter will be late Nov, after our Yongala trip.