

Sea Braggin'



October 2015

St George Scuba Club Newsletter

Nelsons Bay Camping Weekend 5&6 September 2015

By Bill Rowland

Photos: Donna Cassidy, Jane Scarsbrook, Ron Walsh

On September 5th & 6th, Ron and Donna, Nancy, myself and new member Noel Chia had a weekend's camping and diving at Nelson Bay. Jane, who lives nearby, joined us on Sunday.

We met early Saturday afternoon and did the Pipeline shore dive. A wonderful site, with a lot to see (thanks to some great spotters in the group). Entering on the time of Fort Denison high tide, we spent 72 minutes seeing Stingrays, Nudibranchs, a Blue Ringed Octopus, many Seahorses and small Cuttlefish.

One in the group swam near an Octopus, who then decided to move to quieter surrounds. As the Octopus swam away, a Numbray swooped out of nowhere and attacked. After a bit of a struggle, the octopus was no more.

Sunset drinks and nibbles on the beach saw a beautiful sunset, and dolphins heading past on a few occasions. A variety of seafood, cheeses, and





twisties, as well as Ron and Donna's wine in crystal glasses and oysters consumed with proper forks, certainly added some decorum to the evening. Very couth indeed, and it was followed by a BBQ dinner (thanks to the club), cooked by Ron.

The Halifax campsite is well setup, and was surprisingly full for a normal weekend at the start of September.

On Sunday morning we were at the dive shop at 7. The boat was fantastic - a large Cat with space for 16+ divers. We were each assigned a number (apart from 2 di-

vers who 'just slipped through the net' and 1 because, well, they had a rebreather...). In addition to the St Georgians, there were two other groups booked that day

Very friendly crew, but with an organisational approach was kindergarten-esque. We got down to the marina - a couple of divers had boarded and were ordered off the boat, "because we had to board the boat in numerical order". We duly complied and no-one ended up in the naughty corner.

The trip out to Broughton Island was pleasant and after a detailed and particular safety / dive brief, we jumped in at North Rock.

Passing through the Pomfret Soup we were right in the gutter with numerous Grey Nurses cruising around. Ron led the group admirably and after 59 minutes and 59 seconds we were back

on the surface (The crew said as soon as our dive time exceeded 60 minutes the police and rescue authorities have to be called, apparently).



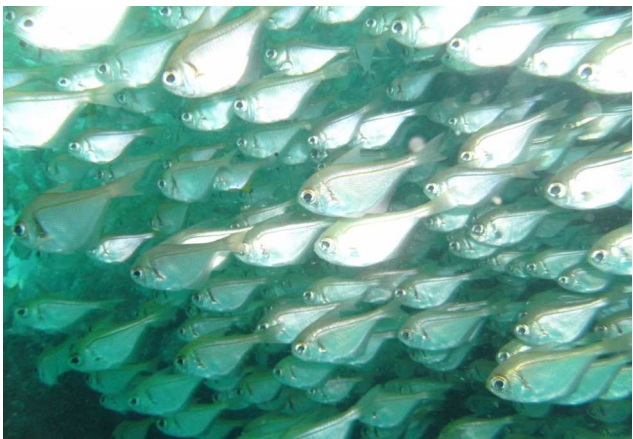
Jane and I spent some time perched on a ledge in the gutter (along with a PJ who didn't appreciate my intrusion) and it was nice to just spend 10 minutes watching the GNS in a natural state, under a ceiling of Pomfret.

After a surface interval, the 2nd dive was at "The Amphitheatre" which is adjacent to North Rock (there was too much surge for the Looking Glass site, unfortunately). This was a guide-led dive, who set a cracking pace. We made it to a gutter with their own set of sharks and returned to North Rock.

Hopefully the photos will do more justice to the beauty, and quantity, of marine life at both sites than these meagre words.

We returned back to shore via the seal colony. After a gear rinse and nice hot water showers, we enjoyed some hormone-free, organic, free range, sustainably caught fish and chips, and then braved the traffic back to Sydney.

Thanks to Ron, Donna, Jane, Nancy, and Noel for a great weekend. A special thanks and commiserations to Natasha for organising the weekend, and a babysitter, and was looking forward to her first dive together with Digby since 2012, but was then thwarted at the last minute by family illness...



Night Dive Bare Island Isolated Reefs 10 October 2015

By Ron Walsh

Photos: Gary Dunnett, Ron Walsh



The club night dive and the first for a number of weeks was held at Bare Island on 8 October 2015. The cold weather has certainly deterred a number of the divers with several planned dives not proceeding. With the weather warming up there were 2 divers – Gary Dunnett and myself.

It was still light when we arrived – ahhh the joys of daylight savings. Weather was overcast with a slight NE wind. There was a reasonable swell rolling so with a run out tide the plan was to entry and exit at the boat cutting and

dive isolated reef one. Water temperature was a balmy 19.2C and visibility ranged from 4m to 8m.



After entering at the boat cutting we sank to the sand in 3m and headed along the reef line out to the isolated reef. On the sand were several stingarees and sole, and it was noted that the fin in the sand has nearly all been exposed.

Past seahorse rock and down to 13m Gary started flashing his torch at me to indicate that he had found something interesting. There was a large lobster – certainly dinner plate size - free walking along the bottom. It didn't seem to mind us too much so we were able to take a

couple of photos although macro lens and large lobster are not a good combination. Also in this area

there were several bright pink Atkinsons Okenia, Bennetts Hypselodoris, Sweet Ceratosoma and "opera house" nudibranchs.

Approaching isolated reef there was a bit of current that affected the visibility but it improved once we reach isolated reef. The white carijou corals were all out in bloom, and there were heaps of tiny hermit crabs. Other creatures sighted included red and blue morwongs, octopus, cuttlefish, eastern frogfish,



mado schools, various leatherjackets, green morays, southern sea anenomes, but alas no red indian fish or pygmy pipehorses.

Once back into the shallows we were buzzed by a large squid – they seem to be attracted by the dive torches.

Exit was interesting. A combination of mid tide and a reasonable surge made it difficult to stand and remove fins though we both managed eventually.

Pizza was had at a new shop that has recently opened in the restaurant area at Bare Island. As we were leaving we saw the “open” sign” so we stopped to check it out. Pizzas are quite nice, prices are reasonable and they are normally open to 10pm which will suit the night dives perfectly.



Lembeh Strait and Bunaken Marine Park North Sulawesi Indonesia 5th September to 26th September 2015-10-13

Part 1: Lembeh Strait

Edited by Paul Pacey

Photos by Chris Heath, Eddie Ivers, Paul Pacey



Introduction

Like so many other members of the St. George SCUBA Club I like to dive somewhere new at least once a year. After many discussions and much coffee with other club members we decided to travel to North Sulawesi in Indonesia to dive the famous dive spots of The Lembeh Strait and Bunaken Island. The capital of North Sulawesi is Manado which can be reached by flying Australia -> Singapore -> Manado. Once you arrive in Manado it's about 2 hours car and boat travel south to Lembeh Island or about 2 hours car and boat travel north to Bunaken Island.

Eddie and I decided that, if we were to dive in the Lembeh Strait, it would be silly not to also dive at Bunaken Island as it's so close. So we decided that 2 weeks in Lembeh Strait and 1 week on Bunaken Island should do the trick!

The guilty party were...

Michelle Lee, Deb Cook, Chris Heath, Eddie Ivers, Steve Boyd, John McPherson, John Prior, Dave Casburn, Ian Hittman and Paul Pacey (me).

This trip report will be done in two sections with this first section only covering the Lembeh Strait part of the trip the first 2 weeks). This trip report is written by all the team – all I did was write the introduction and collate it.

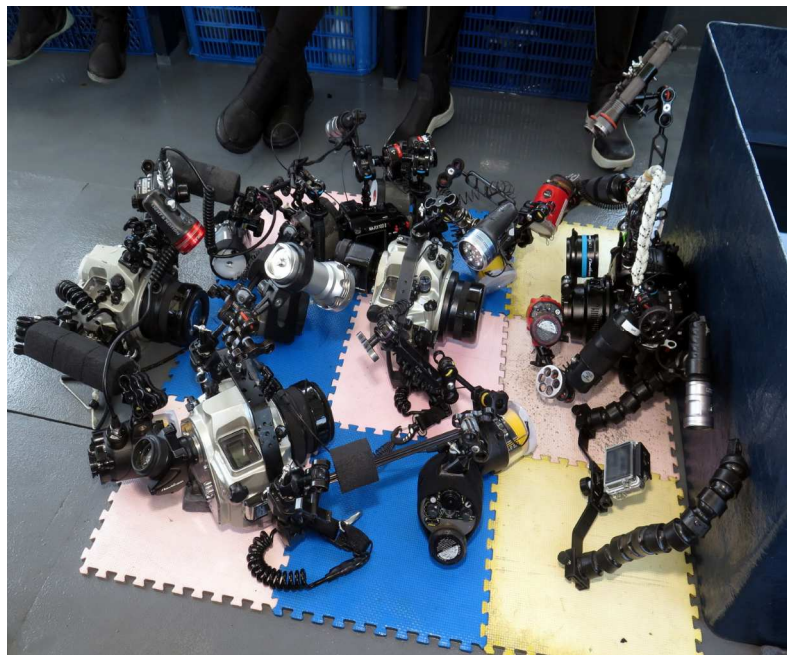
Upon arrival at NAD (Nomad Adventure Divers) Dive Resort on Lembeh Island our feet had no sooner hit the jetty when we had a cool drink in our hands and were whisked into the waterfront dining terrace for an introduction briefing about the resort, the diving and, of course, filling in the paperwork. The Dive Manager is Serge and the entire operation runs like a German watch – these guys are seriously organised.

The NAD accommodation is very comfortable with 24 hour power, air conditioning, and a huge camera room with heaps of power points. We were all settled into the beachfront units of which there are 10. The resort also has 5 Bungalows set slightly higher on the hill behind the resort and these are very nice with great views from their balconies looking across the Lembeh Strait towards the North Sulawesi mainland. The resort has many dive boats and they are really well set up with plenty of room, a toilet and they can easily reach the most remote sites in less than 30 minutes.

The food served in the waterfront dining area is excellent with great variety too. We were served fried bananas on arrival and most people immediately realised that dieting at NAD was going to be tricky!

NAD also has a policy of one guide for every two divers!

It's no wonder that NAD scores impressive reviews on Trip Advisor.



The daily routine kicks off with breakfast being served from 6:30am. Many of the staff travel over from the mainland and arrive at 7:20am then the boats leave for the first dive at 7:30am (I told you these guys are organised). Better still, everyone goes about their tasks with a huge smile on their face. Are you getting the impression that I really liked (loved) NAD?

Diving in the Lembeh Strait is all about muck diving and it's said by many to be the best muck diving in the world. I don't know about the validity of that claim but I can tell you that Lembeh Strait is like Tulamben (Bali) on steroids! There is some totally amazing marine life to be seen here and you will see it!

Now, we came here to dive, so let's get on with it as we've got at least 38 dives to do...

Day One: Paul reports



Dive 1: Nudi Falls, Dive 2: Police Pier, Dive 3: Sarena Besar

An easy 10 minute run across the strait sees us moored alongside a wall on the mainland. The dive site is Nudi Falls which has a beautiful coral garden along the wall but the coral is not why we are here. No, we are much more interested in the black sand and rubble slope running down to our maximum dive depth of 20 metres. Eddie and I were diving with our dive guide Abner. Abner, at a mere 52 years of age, is said to be the oldest dive guide working in the Lembeh Strait. I wonder why

they put him with Eddie and me? Anyways, we win, as Abner has the eyes of an eagle. As soon as I dropped to the bottom I found two beautiful Morose Tambja nudibranchs and was peering at them intently when I noticed Abner signalling to "forget about those things, let's go find some good stuff". We hadn't gone 5 metres when Abner points out an amazingly tiny (20mm long) black Painted Anglerfish. While Eddie set about frying the Anglerfish with Inon's finest I cast my eyes around and, bingo, there's a nice Leaf Scorpion fish just sitting on the sand in the middle of nowhere. I look around me and see our divers with heads down, bums up and camera strobes going crazy. Dive time so far – 5 minutes! I am already regretting not bringing my new camera (I was just testing the new housing on this dive).

I next found a pipefish and Abner spotted another tiny red Painted Anglerfish right alongside the pipefish. Eddie and his camera are soon overworked. The whole dive continues like this. We also saw a few types of Nudibranchs which I've never seen before in 15 years of diving.

Vis was 15 metres and the water, at 26C, is a bit colder than I, and others, are expecting. NAD did warn us that the water has not warmed up this season so far.



Back on board we have everyone gushing about the things that they saw and photographed (I sat quietly for a change).

After morning tea/coffee and delicious home made cake we headed to dive site two which was Police Pier. It's only a few minutes run to the Police Pier where we actually tie up to a pontoony thing in front of a Pearl Farm slightly to the west of the actual Police Pier.

When we drop to the bottom we discover it's covered in detritus discarded from the pearl farm over the years and quickly realise what a perfect environment it is for small critters to hide in. Abner rummages around and finds two of the most beautiful Harlequin Shrimp you could imagine. Eddie is busy again. I notice other divers gathered around something and swim over to find that they are looking at the biggest Frogfish that I have ever seen, it is huge but I can't get near it because of the fence-like array of strobe arms in the way.



Later we come back and I find that there are in fact two Frogfish there and they are both huge. Abner easily finds another couple of Painted Anglerfish. I haven't been able to find any yet. Another totally awesome dive.

After a scrumptious lunch back at the resort we head out for our third dive at Sarena Besar. Which is an island directly out from NAD resort. This time I've got the camera in the housing so I'm sure that there will be nothing to see but, again, Abner has other ideas. He was finding Painted Anglerfish faster than we could examine and photograph them. We also found more types of Nudi's that we've never seen before as well as a few Striped Pipefish. Abner also got a Long Armed Octopus to show us some party tricks involving an old Coca Cola bottle.

After returning to the resort Michelle, Steve, Eddie and I headed out to check out the house reef. This is quite a pleasant dive but I would not rate it any where near as good as the three sites that we dived today.

Day Two: Steve reports...

Dive 1: Hairball One, Dive 2: Telak Kambatu (TK1), Dive 3: Aer Prang 2, Dive 4: Night dive

Today diving started on time with everyone on the boat at 7:30am and eager to get going.

Whilst we started kitting up for our first dive I, and everyone else, became very concerned about my room and dive buddy John Prior. John had decided to wear Deb Cook's Shark Skin top. Only after much persuasion from Deb did John agree to remove the extremely tight fitting top which was then returned, reluctantly, to Deb. We're definitely going to be keeping an eye on John for the rest of the trip.

All the dive sites today were on black sandy slopes with vis between 15 and 20 metres. The average dive time for each dive was 70 minutes for most of us.

The diving today would be best described as spectacular muck diving with numerous species of Cuttlefish, Crabs, Octopi, Nudi's, etc spotted by our guides and ourselves.



John McPherson and Deb were the first to see both a Wonderpus and a Flamboyant Cuttlefish which they saw on the first dive. They readily told us about their sightings between dives. Another interesting sight on the first dive was a Coconut Octopus which had made its home inside a glass jar and was happy to pop in and out of the jar for photographs.

The third dive of the day was probably the best as we all saw at least one Flamboyant Cuttlefish which for most of us was the first time we'd ever seen one of these colourful

creatures.

Also spotted today were Ghost Pipefish, Mantis Shrimp, and Frog Fish. Some people also saw some Flamboyant Cuttlefish eggs which were ready to hatch.

Dave was completely overcome with joy at finding his own Flamboyant Cuttlefish and has about 1,000 photos' to prove it.

Deb (I can't get enough diving) Cook, Michelle and John McPherson lined up for a night dive which they said was spectacular. Highlights were a monstrous crayfish and numerous Spanish Dancer Nudibranchs.

Day Three: Dave reports...

Dive 1: Rojos, Dive 2: Pante Parigi, Dive 3: Pintu Colada

The dives start with the usual dive briefings detailing what the dive site is laid out like (coral, rubble, reef, etc) and what we're hoping to find at the dive site. However, it is not so much the layout of the site but the various types of creatures that you find at each site that sticks in your mind.

All the sites today were black sandy slopes with rubble outcrops.



Just some of the things we saw were Flamboyant Cuttlefish, Mototi Octopus, and Hairy Shrimp (if your eyes were good enough to see it). Ornate Ghost Pipefish, two different types of Frogfish, Mantis Shrimp and Boxer Crabs.

The variety of creatures that you can find on each of the sites is amazing. Consequently the camera action here is huge with me averaging 600 photos per day over three dives.

This place is truly special but you need to have a camera capable of super-macro as the guides keep finding smaller and smaller critters. We're only on day three and some of the critters the guides are now finding are the size of a rice grain. But this place is so special because of that.

Day Four: ? reports...

Dive 1: Aer Bajo 3, Dive 2: Telak Kumbatu 3, Dive 3: Serena Patah

Dave broke the espresso coffee machine today. John Prior was close to tears when he found out about it.

Day Five: Eddie reports...

Dive 1: Nudi Retreat, Dive 2: Nudi Retreat, Dive 3: Critter Hunt

Due to Lembbeh being in the same time zone as Singapore sunrise is before 6:00am. In my view, this is the best time of the day in an equatorial climate and it's also the best time for me to prepare my camera for the day ahead!

Breakfast is at 6:30 with a choice of eggs any which way, bacon if we haven't eaten it all the day before, fresh fruit. Then we get ready for a 7:30am boat departure.

The first dive at Nudi retreat has a varied topography of wall, sand and rubble.

We saw lots of Nudi's, Shrimp, Soft Coral Crabs, Pygmy Seahorses and an Ornate Ghost Pipefish. The coral growth on the wall was spectacular.



This site was a pleasant change from the black sand muck dives which do have a much more diversity of critters but lack the colour and fish of the coral wall system.

Highlights of today's dives were the Pygmy Seahorses, Urchin Shrimps, Electric Clams, Soft Coral Nudi-branch which I've never seen before, Soft Coral Crabs,

Everyone was so impressed with Nudi Retreat that we decided to do it again for the second dive!

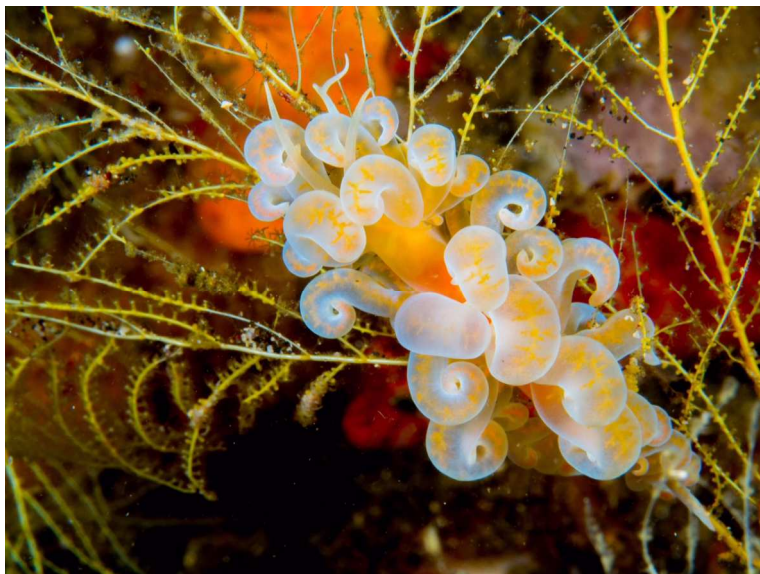
Today's third dive was at Critter Hunt. Our first find was a Painted Anglerfish and another Anglerfish soon followed. Then Anemone Shrimps, some strange black and white striped shrimp then I found a Blue Ringed Octopus and Abner found another one soon after, followed by another two! Then followed a Blue Ribbon Eel, another Anglerfish, a fifth Blue Ringed living in a bottle, and a Morose Tambja Nudibranch. This dive site (Critter Hunt) would rate as one of the best so far.

Day Six: Ian reports...

Dive 1: Tanjung Kabur, Dive 2: Aer Bajo 1, Dive 3: Aer Prang 1, Dive 4:

The day started well... I sat on the foredeck of the boat for the trip to the dive site and Michelle joined me. I was just saying to her "Don't lean on the cabin window as you may break...". Unfortunately, I didn't finish the sentence before Michelle's bum took out a big section of the (already cracked) window and Michelle nearly ended up falling through into the cabin. Oh well, you can't beat bad luck. The wind blowing up the Strait today was probably the strongest that we had seen so far with white caps and spray.

The first dive site was Tanjung Kabur which is Indonesian for "Cemetery on a bay". Luckily it was sheltered from the wind.



It was the usual deal. Backward roll, get camera, descend to the bottom in 5 to 6 metres then follow the dive guide down the sloping bottom to about 20 metres looking for critters along the way. I'm into Macro and there were Clingfish, Shrimp and tiny Crabs on Sea Stars and small soft corals or Anemones. Soon we saw a Blue Ringed Octopus which put on the full glowing display. Then we saw a Mimic Octopus followed by a Wonderpus Octopus which is like a Mimic but is brown and white striped. There were various Sea Horses, Ghost Pipefish and many species of Nudibranch.

Back at the boat there were 3 tiny white Pygmy Seahorses living in the weed on the side of a small bommie. They were difficult to photograph due to their location under a ledge and the fact that the three of them could fit on your pinky finger!

The second dive today I dived for 82 minutes and returned to the boat with 60 bar – this is easy diving (we are all on Nitrox).

We saw a large Frogfish and managed to get 3 photos of it yawning. What a mouth! Next was a tiny sleeping Cuttlefish who got upset with my strobes and gave his ink a go. Then followed a Flamboyant Cuttlefish that was very patient, a tiny crab carrying a hairdo of weed on top of his body, two different Moray's – one green and one was yellow, Sea Cucumbers, Segmented Worms, Ctenoid crabs and the most rewarding of all, a tiny orange Painted Anglerfish who was the perfect subject for my 60mm macro and super-macro diopter lens.

What a great day. Lembah is critter heaven and I cannot believe how many different Nudibranch's there are in this small area.



Day Seven: John McPherson reports...

Dive 1: Aer Bajo 2, Dive 2: Pantai Parigi 1, Dive 3: Jahir 1, Dive 4: Mandarin Fish

The day is off to a bad start as we've now been running without the Espresso machine for 3 days.

The water temp is only 24C for our first dive at Aer Bajo 2 which surprisingly had poor vis today. Saw some Nudibranch's, Robust Ghost Pipefishes. We spent most of the dive unsuccessfully looking for a Mimic Octopus.

On to Pantai Parigi for our next dive which is also on a black sandy slope. Saw various Nudibranch's, Scorpion fish, Yellow Gobies, Anemone fish, Flamboyant Cuttlefish and Porcelain Crabs.

The third dive at Jahir also showed up a Mantis Shrimp clutching a ball of eggs.

Paul - John wrote quite a bit more but I could not read it. He does work in health care after all.

Paul – this evening some of us also did a dive at the dive site called Bianca to see the Mandarin Fish. This was fantastic. You turn up near dusk and kneel on the sand in front of a staghorn coral reef. As you watch, the Mandarin Fish are courting as they swim through the coral maze. Once they decide to mate they rise up from the coral towards the surface laying their eggs and fertilising them as they go. This is amazing to watch. At one stage one of our dive guides swam up to me and pointed out that I was almost leaning on a tiny Clown Anglerfish that had wandered over to watch the mandarin Fish show as well.

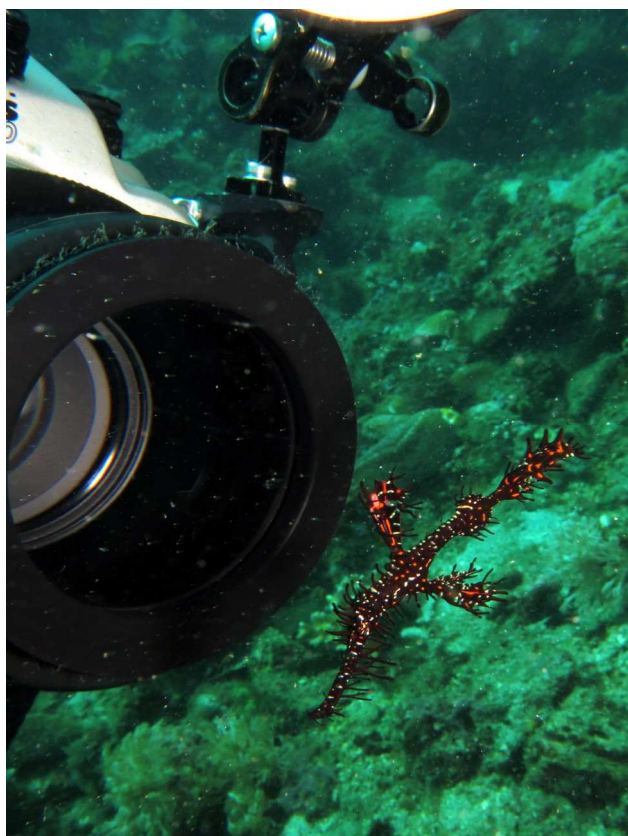
**Day Eight: John Prior reports...**

Dive 1: Angels Window, Dive 2: Binuang, Dive 3: Tandu Rusa, Dive 4: Mandarin Fish Dive at Bianca

Weather was 22C to 24C, partly cloudy with wind gusts to 20 knots.

We set out east along the Strait heading for Angels Window which is near the entry to the Lembah Strait. There is a point which has a pinnacle that rises to about 5M below the surface and under the pinnacle is a swim through cave which is lined with large Gorgonian Fans. Vis was over 10M.

For our second dive we headed to Binuang which is named after the nearby village. The dive site is another black sandy slope from 2 to 24 metres deep. The dive sites near the villages seem to have a bottom coated with a fine silt layer so you have to carefully watch your



buoyancy. Abner had found a large Frogfish and was tempting it with a dead mackerel that he found somewhere. It was the first time I had seen a fish running along the bottom.

Paul - I witnessed this Frogfish baiting myself and it was totally hilarious to watch as the Frogfish actually "bounded" across the bottom to get to the bait.



The third dive was to Tandu Rusa (Staghorn Deer). Again a black sandy slope from 5M down to 20M. This was a particularly sad dive for me as I flooded my camera just before the dive started.

I couldn't read some of John's writing after this point – I think he was crying as he contemplated the anguish of making the insurance claim for the camera – Paul.

The Frogfish at this dive site were very co-operative and would actually pose for photos (sigh).

Conclusion: Angels Window was the pick of the dives for the day as it had calm water protected from the strong wind. With a nice cave to swim through and nice corals and clouds of fish which you don't see much of on the sandy slope sites.

End of Part 1



Dive Club Calendar

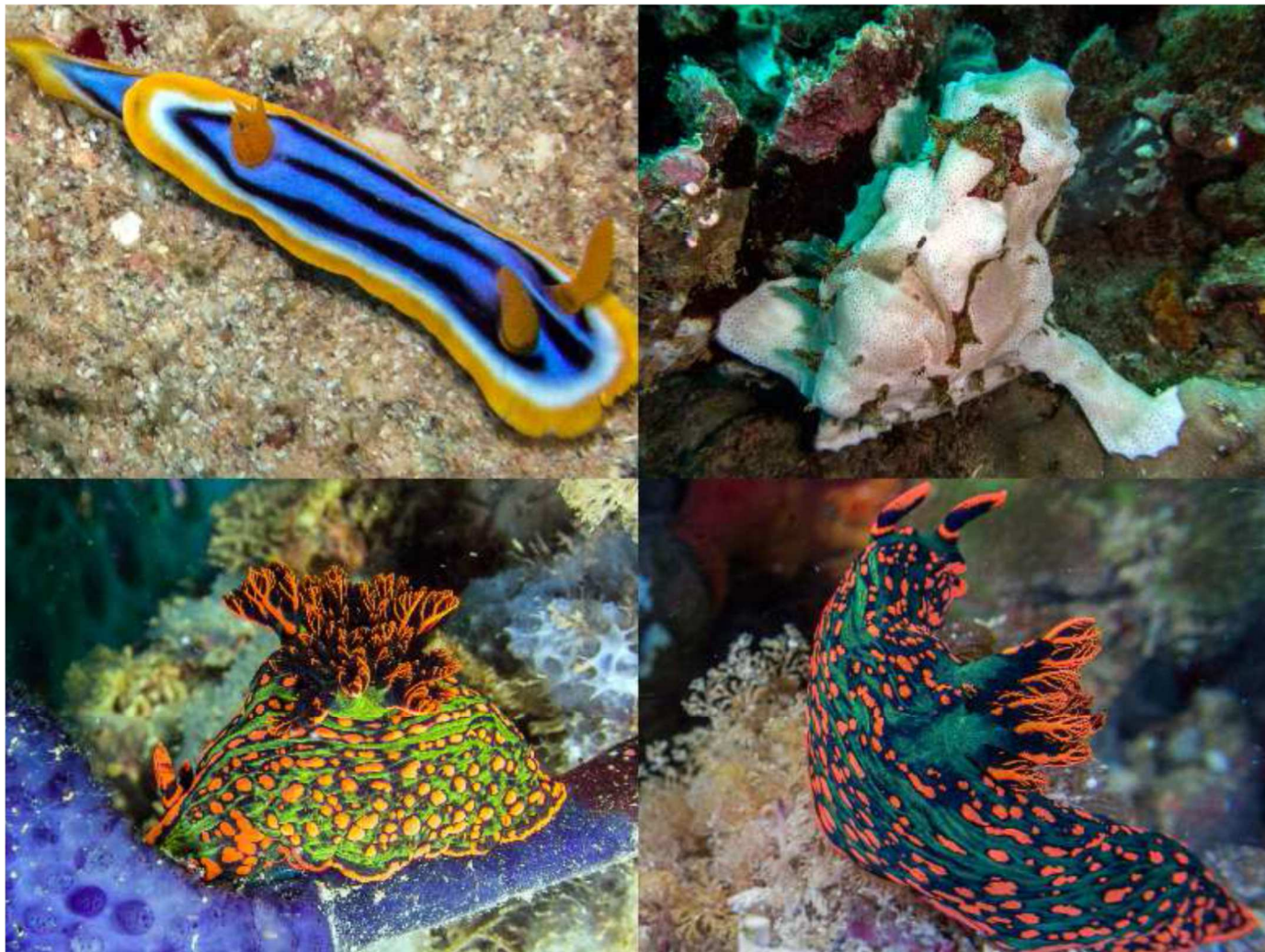
October 2015

Date	Description	Location	Organiser
2-5 October 2015	Weekend away	Seal Rocks	Ray Moulang
10 October 2015	Boat dive	Barrens Hut/The Split	Ron Walsh
17 October 2015	Deep dive	SS Annie M Miller	Bill Rowland
18 October 2015	Shore dive	The Leap	Eddie Ivers
21 October 2015	Club Meeting	Rowers on Cook	Natasha Naude
24-25 October 2015	Camping weekend	Honeymoon Bay	Ron Walsh
31 October 2015	Boat dive	Pizza Reef	Tricia Henry

November 2015

Date	Description	Location	Organiser
1 November	Shore dive/BBQ	Bass Point	Jason Coombes
7 November	Shore dive/BBQ	Oak Park	Nance Scoleri
8 November	Boat dive	Pizza Reef	Tricia Henry
8-14 November	Live aboard on Kalinda	Yongala & GBR	Mike Scotland
10 November	Calendar Planning Night	Rowers on Cook	Natasha Naude
14 November	Deep dive	The Tuggerah	Peter Flockart
15 November	Boat dive/BBQ	Frenchmans Bay	Natasha Naude
18 November	Club Meeting	Rowers on Cook	Natasha Naude
21 November	Boat dive	Whale Watch Platform	Shelley Brueseker
22 November	Deep dive	TBD	Gary Perkins
28 November	Boat dive	Wedding Cake Isle/The Sharks	Bill Rowland
28 November	Shore dive	The Leap	Ron Walsh

A couple of photos from Michael Roelens at Ningaloo Reef



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