



Sea Braggin'

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

April 2008

Solitary Islands Trip 2nd – 7th March 2008 By Ron Walsh

It takes about 7 hours to drive to Mulloway, a sleepy little north coast town located just north of Coffs Harbour.

Mark Ridsdale had organised a weeks diving for club members at the North Solitary Islands with Dive Quest Mulloway from 3 to 7 March 2008. I had been told this week is a great occasion and it did not disappoint.

I arrived late on the Sunday, just in time to unpack the car and then head to the Woolgoolga Hotel for dinner. All up there were 12 divers and one who wishes he could but had a crook knee (my commiserations Paul!).



© Ron Walsh

Monday we were up bright and early, to the dive shop to fill in all the paperwork and load the boats, launch off the beach, and head out to North Solitary. There was a large swell running but we got out there reasonably dry. Dive site was anenome bay (there were no real other options), where we saw lots of anenomes and anenome fishes, and a mantis shrimp. Vis was around 10m.

The second dive was cancelled due to the large breaking waves coming around the point into

Anenome Bay. The trip back took around 90 minutes, punching the large swell and strong SE wind, and we all got very wet. That night we had the club sponsored steak night, and it was lucky we had a large BBQ!

Tuesday morning we arrived at the dive shop to find the dive cancelled. So most of us went for a walk along the beach and to the ice cream shop. On the way back we received a phone call "did we want to dive NW Solitary and the swell had started to die" So we packed the boats and headed out, looked at the green water but still decided to dive.

Vis was 2m at best, really good for spotting the small stuff as any big stuff would not be able to be seen unless it bumped into you. A number of us did a second dive just to confirm how bad the first dive really was!

To make up for the dive, dinner that night consisted of a BBQ full of beef ribs, washed down with fine red wine.



ANOTHER BOAT!

Rumour is that Dave Casburn has placed an order for a new boat. It will be about three months before it is on the water, but it will be a great addition to boats available for diving.

Wednesday we headed out to North Solitary, easy 35 minute run. First dive was the Mackerel Run, with 15m vis, turtles, large schools of big-eye trevally, spanish dancer, and more anenome fish. Second dive was a drift into

Anenome Bay from the east, with 10m vis and lots of anenomefish. Trip back was into the swell and wind again and took well over an hour. To celebrate blue water we had Mark's special garlic and chilli prawns for dinner and more red wine.



Thursday the seas had calmed considerably and we dived Fish Soup with it's large schools of trevally, goatfish, sweetlips, bullseyes, with 20m vis. Second dive was a drift from Anenome Bay around to the east side of the island, which is quite a spectacular wall. Another spanish dancer, and lots and lots of morays! Since we were near Woolgoolga we decided to have curry that night, with Dick and Mark preparing a fabulous meal, all washed down with lovely red wine.

Several of the group decided to head home on the Friday, several more to travel down the coast and dive at Fishrock. The remainder were treated with the best diving day of the trip. You could have water-skied to North Solitary and back, both trips done in just over 30mins. First dive was a drift along the eastern wall, then through The Slot to the southern side of the island. Vis was in excess of 30m, we saw a white tip reef shark, large wobbies and eagle rays. Second dive was the Mackerel Run starting from Anenome Bay. Turtles, large trevally schools, mantis shrimp, banded shrimp, and coral trout.

All up it was a fantastic trip, with the diving getting better as the week progressed, and each dinner time a session of fine food and fine wines. I would very much like to thank Mark for organising, and for those who went - Mark R, Peter F, Phil R, Paul P, Dave C, Heinz B, Peter T, John C, Dick F, Eddie I, Clint E, John P - for a great week and great company.

Ocean Trek Trip 8th – 10th February 2008 By Brian Byrnes

On the Friday evening we (Peter Flockart, Mark Ridsdale, John Conolly and Brian Byrnes) made the easy drive down to Huskisson on Jervis Bay. We had all arrived by about 9 pm, and were ferried out over still water to Ocean Trek by Mick, our co-host for the weekend.

The Ocean Trek can be a little crowded when full, but this weekend we were very lucky in that it was half empty, and so there was lots of space. Notable among our fellow passengers was one John, who was celebrating his 50th year diving.

The weather was clear and fairly calm, but on the Saturday there was a swell from the south, and we spent the day diving in sheltered waters near Bowen Island, near the southern entrance to the bay.

The first dive site was Fall Rock, which was rocky. Perhaps the highlight of this dive was a friendly Blue Groper. But otherwise, we weren't crowded out by the local fish life.

Next came a drift dive from Cross Rock to Weedy Valley. This time there were quite a few fish around, including large schools of Yellowtail Scad. John saw a large Wobbegong hiding in a cave. And Peter reported seeing both a Blue Devil and a Weedy Sea Dragon.

The third dive that day, at the evocatively named Aztec City, was the best of the trip. Near the start of the dive Peter found a small cuttlefish, and John a large Blue Devil. We swam past several Old Wives, saw a pair of Eastern Talma, and came close to an improbably colourful and carelessly-painted Six-spined Leatherjacket.



Short-tailed stingray – by Brian Byrnes

An intimidatingly large Short-Tailed Stingray swam close by, seemingly completely unfazed by the two scuba divers watching it. We were buzzed by large Blue Groper, who just kept coming back. There was a Giant Cuttlefish lurking under a rocky overhang, and it seemed quite happy for divers to approach.

And then there was the cute, juvenile Weedy Sea Dragon swimming out in the open, feeding on some very small things in the water column above the sand. And after we came close, it just kept right on feeding. I think the fish around here are kind of used to divers.

That evening, before a roast lamb dinner, our fourth dive was at Murray's Sandline Dropoff. This was billed as a nursery area. And right near the anchor, some divers did see a small Port Jackson Shark. Also near the anchor were schools of remarkably friendly juvenile Chinamen Leatherjackets.



Diver with sea dragon – by Brian Byrnes

It was only later that I learned about their sharp teeth and piranha-like feeding tactics. During the dive we came across several juvenile Fiddler Rays, and a few different kinds of Sea Pen, not to mention piles of colourful cockles.

For entertainment that night we had a huge electrical storm out to sea. Combined with the otherwise clear, dark sky peppered with bright stars, it was a memorably dramatic display.

On the Sunday morning we headed north to the ever-popular Whorehouse, just north from the

appropriately named Point Perpendicular. The water looked promising on the surface. But in the event, the visibility wasn't great, and there didn't seem to be a whole lot of life.

And the water definitely felt cold. But the many large rocks here can certainly make for an interesting dive.

The second dive that day I skipped, but John reported it was well worthwhile.

On the whole, it was an enjoyable diving weekend on Ocean Trek. Thanks to Peter Flockart for arranging it, and for Lyn, Mick and crew for their hospitality.

Gadget Corner

Just as the sea starts to cool off ahead of winter here's one to warm you up.



Hotsuits of Australia have developed the first "Heated Wetsuit". They have two versions of their heat belts, a chemical version (basic heating system – 1 hour heat time) and a battery powered version (advanced heating system -2 hour heat time). The later incorporates a waterproof rechargeable battery.

Check them out for yourself at their website:

<http://www.hotsuits.com.au/>

Tasmania Trip February 2008 by Michael McFadyen

As most would know, Kelly and I went to Tasmania for all of February for a diving and camping trip.

We left Sydney on 2 February and after visiting Cradle Mountain and part of the West Coast, we ended up at Sisters Beach on Saturday 9 February. This is located on the north-west coast, between Wynyard and Stanley. Here we met up with James Parkinson, President of the Tasmanian Scuba Divers Club, and five of his members.

Using their Club boat, we did four dives over the weekend. Two were done at Sisters Beach on

the Saturday. The first was off some small rocks about 500 metres from the shore and the second near some smaller rocks closer to the shore. Both were very nice dives, with lots of colourful sponges, jewel anemones and more. The fishlife was also quite good and on one dive we saw a couple of crayfish.

On the Sunday we did two dives off Rocky Cape. Again, these were both very good. Water temperature was about 19°C and visibility between 20 and 25 metres.

From here we travelled to Strahan, then to Queenstown, Lake St Clair, Lakes Pedder and Gordon and then on via Hobart to Cockle Creek, the southern most spot you can drive to in Australia. I had though that we might have been able to dive here but it was too shallow and mostly sand. We then went to Bruny Island for a few days and again, we found no spot worth trying a dive.



Handfish – by Michael McFadyen

It was now Thursday 21 February and we headed back through Hobart to the suburb of Bellerive. On the beach in front of Hobart's cricket ground, I did a dive (Kelly was suffering hay fever). This was recommended by James as the best spot to see handfish.

As soon as I entered the water, I saw an eagle ray and within a few minutes, the first of three handfish. There were also lots of bastard trumpeters, starfish and small rays. Visibility was not that good, five metres at the most, but the water was nice at 18°C.

From here we went to Eaglehawk Neck. On the Friday we did two dives. The first was one of the best dive sites I have ever done, Cathedral

Caves. This is a series of arches and caves that is simply amazing. The second dive was not as good, but we saw at least a dozen large crayfish in one cave. Visibility was over 25 metres on the first dive and about 15 on the second. Water temperature was about 17°C.



Handfish – by Michael McFadyen

The next day we were supposed to dive the wreck of the SS Nord but a huge south-westerly change overnight put paid to that. Luckily we did not go out on the reef dive, as we later heard that one of the divers, an Irish tourist, ended up in a critical condition in Royal Hobart Hospital.

The next day we headed to the Freycinet Peninsula and on Monday 25 February we did a boat dive at Bicheno at The Steps. This was very dirty in parts but a nice dive. The operator, Bruce, was very apologetic about the conditions.

That afternoon, instead of another boat dive, we did a shore dive at Waubs Bay. This was excellent, with two very large sea horses, sea dragons, squid and more. A great dive. Water was about 17.5°C.

After returning to Freycinet for some bushwalking, on Wednesday 27 February we did another boat dive at Bicheno. This was also not too bad, although the visibility still had not returned to normal from the previous weekend's bad seas.

On the way back to Devonport to catch the ferry, I did another dive on Thursday at Eddystone Point. It was only average, although people have told me the boat diving near here is excellent.

All in all, we did 5,163 kilometres, 11 dives, and had a fantastic time. So much so that Kelly is planning a dive trip to Eaglehawk and Bicheno for the Club for next March.

REGULAR EVENTS

Monthly Meetings

The next meeting of the St George Scuba Club will be held on 16th April 2008 at the St. George Rowing Club, 1 Levey Street Wooli Creek at 8.00 pm. Come along about 7 pm and enjoy a meal at the bistro.

Thursday Night Dives

If you do not currently get the email each week advising the location of the dive, please email michael@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info and advise that you would like to be added to the list.

Please make sure that you let Michael McFadyen know if you are coming in case the weather means we need to move or cancel the dive.

Other Dives

Many other dives are advised in the news section of the Club's web site.

If you are interested in a dive, have a look at the news section a few days before a weekend and you may find others already planning a dive.

You can also place your own news item there (but remember it may take time to appear as it needs to be authorised by a web site administrator).

UP AND COMING EVENTS

Tabbegaï Boat Dive 12th April 2008

If you are interested in coming, please contact Kelly McFadyen Ph. 0410599186.

Bare Island Shore Dive 13th April 2008

Meet above the bridge at 8:45am for a drift dive along the back wall. Please let me know if you are coming, so I can let you know if we need to cancel.

(brian.byrnnes@pobox.com, 41982 2243)

Boat Dive – Long Reef Deep Wreck 19th April 2008

If you are interested in coming, please contact Peter Flockart Ph. 9371 0265.

Montague Island Awa Trip 24th – 27th April 2008

Boat Dive – Long Reef 4th May 2008

If you are interested in coming, please contact Dave Casburn Ph. 0405 186184

Shore Dive – Shark Point 10th May 2008

If you are interested in coming, please contact Ron Walsh Ph. 0409 225 683

Undersea Explorer Away Trip

Robbie Mapstone is organising another trip to the Great Barrier Reef and Osprey Reef on the liveaboard *Undersea Explorer*. There is an article on this web site and are lots of photos from previous trips in the Photo Gallery if you would like to see what the diving is like.

The dive trip starts on Saturday 10 May 2008 at Port Douglas and goes for 6 days, coming back to Port Douglas on Thursday 16 May. You will get the chance to do about 22 dives. You will need to stay in Port Douglas till at least the Friday afternoon before flying home.

The cost will about \$1728 (depends on numbers and discount) plus some costs on board (fuel levy, marine parks fee and any drinks you buy). This includes all food and dives.

You will need to organise your own flights to and from Cairns (there are Qantas and Virgin Blue flights about 10:30 am from Sydney) and should be able to get for about \$160 each way.

Six people are already confirmed for the trip. If you are interested, contact Robbie Mapstone now by phoning him.

If you want to see more about the diving and previous trips, go to [Michael McFadyen's Scuba Diving Web Site](#) and look up the Queensland section of the Australian pages.

Morton Bay Trip on Big Cat Reality

Unfortunately, Big Cat Reality is booked out for the week-end that we had planned (18-21 July). However, they have spots available on the week-end of 8th – 10th August.

The cost is \$600 which includes:

- 8 Dives
- Tanks and weights
- Accommodation and all meals aboard Big Cat Reality, Fri (night), Sat, Sun + breakfast Mon
- Transport to and from Brisbane Airport
- Dive Master Services (required in QLD)
- Fuel levy

More info about the boat and diving can be found at <http://www.bigcatreality.com/>

Flights to/from Brisbane to be booked individually in addition to the above cost.

Please contact Kelly if you are interested in this trip.

OTHER NEWS

New Members

Welcome to new members who have joined in the past couple of months; Richard, Melinda, Simon and Gary.

Thank you Heinz

Thanks again to Heinz who loaded his ute up for another tank testing run.

Port Stephens Away Trip

Superb shore dives. Great boat dives. Warmer water. Yes, it has it all.

The trip is for the weekend of August 2nd & 3rd. The plan is an excellent shore dive each morning on the high tide, followed by a stunning boat dive with ProDive the afternoon.

The accommodation and boat dives will cost about \$220 each (depending on numbers).

To secure a spot contact Brian Byrnes (brian.byrnes@pobox.com, 41982 2243), and pay a \$50 deposit to Mark.

Palau Trip – Oct / Nov 2008

Dave Cash is organising this trip. Please contact him for details on 07 5486 184.

FULL

Sydney Tides April 2008

Day	High	Low	High	Low	High
TUE 1	5:00 AM EST / 1.39 m	11:51 AM EST / 0.44 m	5:54 PM EST / 1.13 m	11:29 PM EST / 0.57 m	
Wed 2	5:54 AM EST / 1.46 m	12:35 PM EST / 0.37 m	6:39 PM EST / 1.25 m		
Thu 3		12:24 AM EST / 0.48 m	6:43 AM EST / 1.53 m	1:15 PM EST / 0.30 m	7:21 PM EST / 1.38 m
Fri 4		1:15 AM EST / 0.39 m	7:30 AM EST / 1.59 m	1:53 PM EST / 0.24 m	8:02 PM EST / 1.51 m
Sat 5		2:04 AM EST / 0.30 m	8:16 AM EST / 1.61 m	2:31 PM EST / 0.21 m	8:43 PM EST / 1.63 m
Sun 6		2:53 AM EST / 0.22 m	8:02 AM EST / 1.60 m	2:09 PM EST / 0.21 m	8:25 PM EST / 1.73 m
Mon 7		2:43 AM EST / 0.18 m	8:49 AM EST / 1.55 m	2:49 PM EST / 0.24 m	9:09 PM EST / 1.79 m
Tue 8		3:36 AM EST / 0.16 m	9:40 AM EST / 1.45 m	3:31 PM EST / 0.30 m	9:55 PM EST / 1.80 m
Wed 9		4:32 AM EST / 0.18 m	10:34 AM EST / 1.34 m	4:16 PM EST / 0.38 m	10:46 PM EST / 1.77 m
Thu 10		5:34 AM EST / 0.22 m	11:35 AM EST / 1.22 m	5:08 PM EST / 0.46 m	11:43 PM EST / 1.70 m
Fri 11		6:41 AM EST / 0.27 m	12:42 PM EST / 1.13 m	6:09 PM EST / 0.54 m	
Sat 12	12:46 AM EST / 1.62 m	7:53 AM EST / 0.32 m	1:58 PM EST / 1.08 m	7:22 PM EST / 0.59 m	
Sun 13	1:58 AM EST / 1.54 m	9:07 AM EST / 0.34 m	3:17 PM EST / 1.10 m	8:44 PM EST / 0.60 m	
Mon 14	3:13 AM EST / 1.50 m	10:12 AM EST / 0.35 m	4:24 PM EST / 1.17 m	10:01 PM EST / 0.57 m	
Tue 15	4:21 AM EST / 1.48 m	11:04 AM EST / 0.35 m	5:15 PM EST / 1.26 m	11:04 PM EST / 0.51 m	
Wed 16	5:16 AM EST / 1.47 m	11:47 AM EST / 0.35 m	5:59 PM EST / 1.36 m	11:57 PM EST / 0.46 m	
Thu 17	6:03 AM EST / 1.46 m	12:22 PM EST / 0.35 m	6:37 PM EST / 1.47 m		
Fri 18		12:44 AM EST / 0.42 m	6:45 AM EST / 1.44 m	12:54 PM EST / 0.36 m	7:12 PM EST / 1.55 m
Sat 19		1:26 AM EST / 0.40 m	7:22 AM EST / 1.42 m	1:24 PM EST / 0.37 m	7:45 PM EST / 1.62 m
Sun 20		2:05 AM EST / 0.38 m	7:59 AM EST / 1.39 m	1:53 PM EST / 0.38 m	8:17 PM EST / 1.66 m
Mon 21		2:42 AM EST / 0.37 m	8:35 AM EST / 1.35 m	2:23 PM EST / 0.41 m	8:50 PM EST / 1.67 m
Tue 22		3:20 AM EST / 0.37 m	9:13 AM EST / 1.30 m	2:54 PM EST / 0.45 m	9:24 PM EST / 1.66 m
Wed 23		4:00 AM EST / 0.38 m	9:53 AM EST / 1.25 m	3:27 PM EST / 0.50 m	9:59 PM EST / 1.61 m
Thu 24		4:43 AM EST / 0.40 m	10:36 AM EST / 1.19 m	4:03 PM EST / 0.55 m	10:38 PM EST / 1.56 m
Fri 25		5:28 AM EST / 0.43 m	11:22 AM EST / 1.13 m	4:43 PM EST / 0.60 m	11:20 PM EST / 1.50 m
Sat 26		6:18 AM EST / 0.46 m	12:13 PM EST / 1.08 m	5:29 PM EST / 0.65 m	
Sun 27	12:07 AM EST / 1.44 m	7:11 AM EST / 0.48 m	1:10 PM EST / 1.06 m	6:24 PM EST / 0.68 m	
Mon 28	1:01 AM EST / 1.41 m	8:09 AM EST / 0.49 m	2:13 PM EST / 1.07 m	7:29 PM EST / 0.69 m	
Tue 29	2:02 AM EST / 1.39 m	9:06 AM EST / 0.47 m	3:17 PM EST / 1.13 m	8:43 PM EST / 0.67 m	
Wed 30	3:07 AM EST / 1.41 m	9:57 AM EST / 0.42 m	4:11 PM EST / 1.23 m	9:52 PM EST / 0.60 m	

The Committee for 2007 – 2008 is:

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Please send items for the Newsletter to me by the 28th of the month