



# Sea Braggin'

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

September 2008

## Cancún

August

By Steve Shaw

Sue and I have just had a fantastic time in Mexico with a great group of people. However, after three weeks visiting the major archaeological sites from Mexico City to the Yucatán Peninsula I didn't know my Aztec from my Olmec. We finished our tour in Cancún which is something of an American playground on the Caribbean coast of the Yucatán where we had four days to ourselves before the trip back to Australia. A dive shop called Scuba Cancún was offering dive trips to a cenote which is the local name for a sink hole. The Yucatán Peninsula is one vast, flat limestone plateau, much like the Nullabor geologically and, like the Nullabor it has any number of flooded caves and caverns, some of which are accessible for diving. Unlike the Nullabor however, the Yucatán is covered in dense jungle in which many of the Myan ruins are still waiting to be discovered. Where the roof of one of these caves has collapsed it forms a cenote.

I booked myself on to this tour and was collected at the hotel only an hour late (*Note to travellers, Mexico time is clock time + 1 hour!*) After about an hour on the highway and 15 minutes bouncing down a jungle track we arrived at a group of cenotes all linked to the same cave system. We geared up in 2.5mm shortie suits and only 6lb of weight for fresh water then jumped in to what looked like a black hole. There is very little life in the in the cavern water due to the lack of nutrient but at the cave entrances where the light penetrates, some weed and algae grows which supports a bit of fish life. The clarity of the water is amazing and viz is reckoned to be over 100m but as the caves twist and turn, the longest straight stretch would only be about 40m but even at this distance the far walls could be clearly seen in the torch lights. There is a safety line running right through the cave system but this is a reference point only and not for grabbing hold of. It is there to be followed back to daylight for anyone who becomes, lost, disorientated or separated from the group.



Jungle Cenote - By Steve Shaw



Entering Cavern - By Steve Shaw

We were given a set of signals specific to cave diving then we dived in single file behind the guide with a maximum 2m space between divers. The dive lasted about 35 minutes and went to about 50 feet (Americans still use imperial depth gauges). We swam very slowly keeping away from the silt on the bottom of the cenote and passed groups of stalactites and stalagmites and swam between massive limestone blocks which had fallen from the roof. There were many distinct fossil shells and even a couple of urchin shells exposed in the cave walls, clearly displaying the marine origins of the limestone. After the first couple of minutes and a couple of bends there was no more daylight until we came to a section where the roof had collapsed. The light streaming in was given a strange bluish tinge by the cave water and was a fantastic sight after the blackness of the cavern.

We exited the water where we entered and after warming up in the sun while the second group dived we were ready to dive again. We went in the same place as before but followed a different path through the cavern. After 15 minutes of blackness we surfaced in another cenote. This had tree roots growing down through the roof of the cave from the jungle above until they reached the water surface. This was the Rainbow Cenote, so called because of the beds of bright green algae growing over the boulders which supported a fair amount of fish life. After 5 minutes at the surface we dived back down the hole through another section of the cavern until we surfaced back at our starting point. With water temperature of about 24°C and very slow swimming it was good to warm up in the sun again.



**Rainbow Cenoté - By Dave Shaw**

A really strange phenomenon encountered in some parts of the caverns is the presence of a layer of saltwater which nobody really explained how it came to be there. Also, this layer could be either above or below the freshwater layer, again difficult to explain. This is known as a halocline and swimming through it causes the two layers to mix which produces all sorts of weird refractions in the torch light. It is easy to see how people could become disorientated by this bizarre effect.

After the second dive we had a late lunch of Mexican sausage and chilli sandwiches then it was back to the hotel where I was dropped off at about 4.00pm. This has been a new experience for me and one that I thoroughly enjoyed and would recommend it to anyone in a position to try it. Be aware though that this is cavern diving and may not be covered by standard travel insurance as some companies consider it to be a 'hazardous or extreme recreational activity'.



**Exit Point With Safety Line - By Steve Shaw**

Back at the hotel, Sue had worn herself out sunbaking and walking between the Caribbean beach, the swimming pool and the poolside bar. However she had somehow found time in her busy schedule to book us on to some reef diving the following day with a dive shop just down the road. We arrived early to be fitted with wetsuits, tanks etc and then we were off. This was a very laid-back operation with a skipper, guide and just five divers. The weather was hot, the sea was flat, the water temperature was 26° and the viz about 30m. We dropped in for a drift dive onto a flat topped reef at about 55 feet. There wasn't much hard coral except for some large hollow barrel corals but there was a great variety of soft corals. There was also gorgonia everywhere which was a very unusual bright purple colour. Many of the fish genus that exist on the east coast of Australia were all readily recognisable here with angelfish, butterfly fish, coral trout, sweetlip, boxfish, damsels, tangs, surgeonfish parrotfish and wrasse being abundant. At a species level though they generally had a very different colour pattern to the ones we are familiar with. We saw some little speckled morays and one very large green one in a cave with a cleaner shrimp walking around on top of its head.

On the second dive we visited another reef a bit further out which had large schools of jacks and sweetlip just hanging around. There were no large pelagics but we saw some big grouper and came across about a dozen very large parrotfish, all about 1m long. They were grinding away at a patch of very bare rock and the crunching, scraping noise was enough to put your teeth on edge, like the fingernails down the blackboard effect. On this dive Sue took the drift dive principle just a bit too far and drifted off! At 30m I could clearly see the whites of her eyes and she wasn't making much headway against the current. I went to collect her and dragged her closer to the bottom out of the current and we rejoined the group. One thing I didn't find here was nudibrancs. It looked like perfect country for them but I didn't see a single one of any species though I'm sure they must have been there somewhere. After our two dives of 35 and 45 minutes we

headed back to Cancún for a bit of R&R on the beach. The following day I called Sheila who I knew was due to arrive in Mexico sometime soon. She was still shopping in LA (where else would she be?). I gave her all the details of the diving we had just done in case she had the opportunity to do the same once she arrived in Cancún. This had been a great way to finish off our holiday in Mexico.

## Port Stevens

### August By Brian Byrnes

Port Stevens is famous for its wonderful shore dives amid rich sponge gardens, teeming with fascinating critters. Seven club members (Brian Byrnes, Paul Pacey, Bob Trudgeon, Michael and Kelly, and Janine Jenkins and Mark Ridsdale), headed up on an August weekend to check it out.

The best dive of the trip was on Sunday morning, when we dived the pipeline. It was one of those dives where there seemed to be something to see everywhere you looked. We saw blind sharks, green morays, mourning cuttlefish, a white's sea horse, tiger pipefish, and any number of strikingly coloured nudibranchs, including a black and yellow Conspicuous Polycera spotted by Paul.



Conspicuous Polycera - By Brian Byrnes



**Mourning Cuttlefish - By Brian Byrnes**

The weekend got off to a rocky start. On the drive up on Friday afternoon we were hit by a storm. Right through that night there was a very strong wind, which was still blowing strongly on Saturday morning.

That morning we drove down to check out conditions at the pipeline, which is quite a sheltered spot. The entrance and exit here is via a rocky shore, and that morning there were waves breaking on it. So, despite the small pod of dolphins swimming near the entry point, we decided not to give it a miss. Instead, we went to check out Fly Point. Here, the water was still choppy, but it was safe to enter. Mark and Janine decided to check out one of the local coffee shops, but the rest of us went in the water to see what it was like beneath the surface. It was actually quite a good dive, with visibility of about 7 metres and lots of things to see, including green morays, a couple of the large and distinctive short-tailed ceratasomas, some cute mourning cuttlefish and a little sea hare, leaking bright purple ink. The biggest problem on that dive was the strong current. We went in just before the forecast high tide, but the tide turned late, and it was only at the very end of the dive that the current slackened. In fact, we had the same problem on the Sunday dive at the pipeline.

So we did shore dives on the two mornings. We had also hoped to do a couple of boat dives, but the large swell made that difficult, and so the planned boat dives for the weekend were a wash-out.

On Saturday evening we all met up at our cabin at the caravan park at Soldier's Point, where we shared a tasty Thai takeaway. Mark set Janine on fire that night. Fortunately the smoke was noticed before the stray cigarette butt actually caused her jacket hood to burst in to flames.

On Sunday morning the wind had abated so we did the pipeline dive, and then headed back home after a weekend with good company and a couple enjoyable dives. We must do this again.

## **Ski Weekend**

### **22-24 August by Michael McFadyen**

Over the weekend of 22 to 24 August, the Club ran its yearly ski weekend. Kelly, her Dad Tomas, Mark Ridsdale, Janine Jenkins and myself went down Thursday night. We were staying at Eddie Iver's lodge at Jindabyne. This is a great place to stay and very comfortable.

Friday morning saw snow falling in Jindabyne. We headed up the slopes to Perisher Valley. Kelly, Tomas and I skied all day. We varied our skiing between Guthega, Blue Cow and Perisher. Mark and Janine mostly skied Perisher. It snowed for most of the day but it was not too bad. This was the first time I had skied for over 10 years so I was surprised at how quickly I got back into it.

Friday night saw Eddie, Mike Scotland and Jessica McInnes arrive. Mark cooked up a great prawn dish for dinner. Bram Harris also arrived but he and his wife Glenys were staying elsewhere.

The next day all but Mark headed up to Perisher to ski. Today was perfect, with sunny skies and only a slight wind. Kelly and I met up with Bram, Jessica and Janine at Blue Cow. Unfortunately, on our second run of the day, Janine had a very serious accident. After some excellent work by the Ski Patrol officers, with Jessica and Kelly looking after Janine till they arrived, Janine was taken to Perisher Valley and later helicoptered out to Canberra. Mark was summonsed to Perisher and then went to Canberra. This accident was quite a shock

to us all and we took some time to recover enough to ski.

Janine suffered some severe injuries and required a number of operations to repair her broken leg and other injuries. As I write this, she is still in hospital and will be for some time.

Later that day, we meet up with Mike and Eddie, as well as Dave Burns who had by now arrived. We skied for the rest of the day, but we all were quite subdued.

That night, after a day marred by Janine’s accident, Kelly cooked a great meal. Bram and Glenys also came to dinner. We had quite a few drinks waiting for Mark to ring. He called and let us know how Janine was and later that night he came back. We were quite relieved by his reports of Janine’s condition which was far better than we had thought it would be.

On Sunday we had even better weather. Mike and Eddie decided to go cross-country skiing while the rest of us headed to the slopes. Kelly and I spent time at all the Perisher Blue resorts, meeting up with Jessica and Tomas at Guthega. We also later caught up with Bram for some great skiing.

Dave was not sighted and he went home. The rest of us stayed the night and again we had a great meal, this time Jessica cooked up a great soup and we finished off Kelly’s spaghetti. We again had quite a few drinks, I think the shock of Janine’s accident was still on our minds.

Kelly, Tomas, Jessica and I went home Monday. We visited Janine in Canberra Hospital and to be honest, we were astounded by how better she looked that we expected.

Janine’s accident put a bit of a downer on the weekend, but we still enjoyed the excellent snow.

### Lady Elliot Island Teaser

By Michael Wright

Peter Trayhurn is currently enjoying some great diving at Lady Elliot Island and has been kind enough to send some picture postcard photographs of what this little

piece of paradise has to offer. A full report will be in next month's newsletter.



Hawksbill Turtle - By Peter Trayhurn



Sunset at Lady Elliot Island - By Peter Trayhurn



Moray Eel - By Peter Trayhurn

## REGULAR EVENTS

### Monthly Meetings

The next meeting of the St George Scuba Club will be held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 at the St. George Rowing Club, 1 Levey Street Woolli 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](mailto: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 time to appear as it needs to be authorised by a web site administrator).

## UP AND COMING EVENTS

### Foster Weekend Away - September - 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>

I have a booking for 8 Divers for this weekend, diving with Ron Hunter out of Fisherman's Wharf.

Its really great diving up there, I will arrange the Sitara wreck dive, usually on the Saturday if there are enough divers to go out.

Other spectacular dives include

THE PINNACLES

EDITH REEFS

SEAL ROCKS SHARKS

PLEASE CONTACT DAVE BURNS PH. 9531 4403 IF YOU ARE INTERESTED.

## Spectacular Diving in Beautiful Downtown Sydney

For all those that could not make it to New Guinea and its wonderful warm water and million metres viz - here's an alternative. We are scheduled to Dive the Red Flag at Long Bay on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September. Boat positions filling fast. Contact Ray by e-mail [rayscases@aol.com](mailto:rayscases@aol.com) or in person or mobile to confirm your spot.

### The Wanderers

This dive has been postponed from Monday 6 October to Sunday 12 October. This is a deep dive and can only be done by experienced divers with suitable equipment. This dive is to 39 metres on the top of the reef and drops to 45 or so metres. The dive is suitable for members who have previously dived with the Club to 30 or so metres at places like Middle Ground and who want to advance to the deeper wrecks. If you are not a regular deep diver with the Club and are interested, contact Michael McFadyen to discuss. For those who dive deep with the Club, contact Michael to book on the dive.

### Bombo Dive

Sunday 26 October. Please contact Dave Burns if you are interested

### Thailand March 2009

Feeling adventurous - the following is some prices for a trip to the Simian Islands leaving Phuket for 4 days (5 Nights) on a liveaboard. Total of 4 days diving = 16 dives. the average cost per dive after discount assuming 28 baht :\$Aud is about \$56.00.I have dived with these guys before and now they have a new boat which looks great.

Obviously it would be great to stitch this excursion with an extended holiday. There are deals to be done or alternatively those that wish to stitch their own deal due to frequent flyers and timeshares can do so.

Indicative cost assuming Aud:28Baht and after 20% discount is detailed below.

The boat with all in cost is \$900 - \$1000 for the 16 dives.

Deals regularly offered is stay 8 nights, including airfares and transfers for about \$1300 - \$1400. Add some spending money (Guys add \$1.50, girls \$1500.00) and that would be about right. I guess a budget of \$3000 will see you sloshed, well feed and some tailor made gear to bring home.

Check out the website [www.diveasia.com](http://www.diveasia.com) the new boat comes on line in November 2008.

Thinking about the trip SM 28 - 14th - 18th March 09.

What I have done in the past is to arrive in Phuket in the AM of departure of the dive boat - check what I gear I don't want with the hotel I am booked to stay with when I get off the boat. Spend that day at the hotel (pool etc) and then get picked up and delivered back to the hotel - works well

For those that are serious a deposit will be required say 25% of the Dive boat cost (\$say \$250.00) to secure your spot. Let me know whether you want a Travel Deal or whether you want to do your own thing.

Will be confirming in about 60 days time with Dive Asia - so check out your holidays and \$\$\$cash availability.

Please contact Mark Ridsdale if you are interested Ph. 0419 243717

**AGM**

The AGM has been rescheduled from September to 19<sup>th</sup> October, after the October regular Meeting.

**Calendar Planning Night**

This year's Calendar Planning Night will be held at the Rowers Club on 21 October at 8pm. The calendar planning night is where we schedule all of the diving and social events for the following year. Please come along and help plan our trips, a dive or a social event. It would be great to have more members offer to organise an event to share the load. The club will be providing finger food on the night.

**OTHER NEWS**

**Get Well Soon**

Our best wishes go to Elly Catterson who is recovering from hip replacement surgery and Janine Jenkins recovering from a skiing accident.

**Club Constitution Review**

As there have been no adverse comments on the proposed constitution changes, these will be put to vote at the AGM in October. The changes have been advised to all members with email addresses and the draft document together with explanatory notes can be viewed on the Club web site. Basically, the changes legalise the way the Club has not been operating for the past 15 years for things like committee elections, membership, notification to members etc. For any members without access to the internet, please contact Michael McFadyen and he will provide you with the documents.

**For Sale: Olympus C-5060 Accessories**

Janine Jenkins (m 0412 508 377) has the following items for sale:

Item	Paid	Used
Olympus PT-020 housing rated to 40m	450	twice
Inon D-180 Strobe with Difuser	792	once
Inon Fibre Optic Cable	143	once
Full Ultra Light Dual Tray, handle ball joint arm system	538	twice
Olympus 0.7x wide conversion lens	325	new
Olympus conversion lens adaptor	70	new
Inon UCL-165 M67 2x macro lens	275	new
Inon dual M67 lens holder	110	new
Athera optical 100 wide zoom port	660	new
Olympus wide lens and step adaptor ring for C-5060	418	new

Reasonable offers will be accepted.

## Sydney Tides September 2008

Day	High	Low	High	Low	High
Mon 1		2:57 AM EST / 0.24 m	9:02 AM EST / 1.53 m	3:01 PM EST / 0.33 m	9:13 PM EST / 1.67 m
Tue 2		3:30 AM EST / 0.30 m	9:41 AM EST / 1.56 m	3:45 PM EST / 0.39 m	9:51 PM EST / 1.56 m
Wed 3		4:02 AM EST / 0.37 m	10:19 AM EST / 1.57 m	4:30 PM EST / 0.46 m	10:30 PM EST / 1.44 m
Thu 4		4:34 AM EST / 0.45 m	10:58 AM EST / 1.55 m	5:18 PM EST / 0.53 m	11:10 PM EST / 1.32 m
Fri 5		5:06 AM EST / 0.53 m	11:39 AM EST / 1.51 m	6:09 PM EST / 0.60 m	11:54 PM EST / 1.21 m
Sat 6		5:43 AM EST / 0.60 m	12:23 PM EST / 1.46 m	7:07 PM EST / 0.64 m	
Sun 7	12:47 AM EST / 1.11 m	6:26 AM EST / 0.67 m	1:17 PM EST / 1.40 m	8:18 PM EST / 0.66 m	
Mon 8	1:56 AM EST / 1.04 m	7:24 AM EST / 0.71 m	2:24 PM EST / 1.38 m	9:33 PM EST / 0.63 m	
Tue 9	3:20 AM EST / 1.03 m	8:41 AM EST / 0.71 m	3:35 PM EST / 1.39 m	10:35 PM EST / 0.57 m	
Wed 10	4:27 AM EST / 1.07 m	9:54 AM EST / 0.67 m	4:34 PM EST / 1.44 m	11:24 PM EST / 0.50 m	
Thu 11	5:17 AM EST / 1.13 m	10:51 AM EST / 0.59 m	5:23 PM EST / 1.51 m		
Fri 12		12:05 AM EST / 0.43 m	6:00 AM EST / 1.22 m	11:40 AM EST / 0.51 m	6:06 PM EST / 1.58 m
Sat 13		12:41 AM EST / 0.36 m	6:38 AM EST / 1.31 m	12:23 PM EST / 0.44 m	6:46 PM EST / 1.65 m
Sun 14		1:15 AM EST / 0.30 m	7:15 AM EST / 1.41 m	1:06 PM EST / 0.38 m	7:24 PM EST / 1.68 m
Mon 15		1:48 AM EST / 0.27 m	7:52 AM EST / 1.50 m	1:47 PM EST / 0.33 m	8:02 PM EST / 1.69 m
Tue 16		2:21 AM EST / 0.25 m	8:29 AM EST / 1.58 m	2:30 PM EST / 0.31 m	8:42 PM EST / 1.66 m
Wed 17		2:55 AM EST / 0.26 m	9:07 AM EST / 1.65 m	3:15 PM EST / 0.30 m	9:23 PM EST / 1.59 m
Thu 18		3:30 AM EST / 0.30 m	9:48 AM EST / 1.68 m	4:05 PM EST / 0.32 m	10:09 PM EST / 1.48 m
Fri 19		4:09 AM EST / 0.36 m	10:33 AM EST / 1.68 m	5:01 PM EST / 0.35 m	11:01 PM EST / 1.35 m
Sat 20		4:53 AM EST / 0.44 m	11:24 AM EST / 1.66 m	6:06 PM EST / 0.39 m	
Sun 21	12:02 AM EST / 1.22 m	5:44 AM EST / 0.52 m	12:23 PM EST / 1.61 m	7:20 PM EST / 0.42 m	
Mon 22	1:15 AM EST / 1.12 m	6:49 AM EST / 0.58 m	1:33 PM EST / 1.57 m	8:43 PM EST / 0.42 m	
Tue 23	2:43 AM EST / 1.07 m	8:09 AM EST / 0.61 m	2:53 PM EST / 1.56 m	10:00 PM EST / 0.38 m	
Wed 24	4:04 AM EST / 1.11 m	9:33 AM EST / 0.58 m	4:07 PM EST / 1.58 m	11:02 PM EST / 0.33 m	
Thu 25	5:06 AM EST / 1.19 m	10:43 AM EST / 0.50 m	5:09 PM EST / 1.62 m	11:52 PM EST / 0.29 m	
Fri 26	5:55 AM EST / 1.30 m	11:42 AM EST / 0.42 m	6:02 PM EST / 1.65 m		
Sat 27		12:35 AM EST / 0.26 m	6:39 AM EST / 1.40 m	12:33 PM EST / 0.36 m	6:48 PM EST / 1.65 m
Sun 28		1:12 AM EST / 0.26 m	7:18 AM EST / 1.50 m	1:20 PM EST / 0.33 m	7:30 PM EST / 1.62 m
Mon 29		1:45 AM EST / 0.28 m	7:55 AM EST / 1.58 m	2:03 PM EST / 0.32 m	8:08 PM EST / 1.57 m
Tue 30		2:16 AM EST / 0.31 m	8:30 AM EST / 1.64 m	2:44 PM EST / 0.34 m	8:45 PM EST / 1.50 m

### The Committee is:

<b>PRESIDENT:</b>	Kelly McFadyen	6545 5596	<a href="mailto:President@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au">President@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au</a>
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**Please send items for the Newsletter to me by the 28th of the month**