



St George Scuba Club Newsletter April 2022

Donna Walsh and Red Gorgonia, Lord Howe Island



In this newsletter:

Lord Howe Island

Lord Howe Island

Sabang Beach, Philippines

Cowrie find on Lord Howe Island

Raja Ampat fluro diving

Forster Diving

Ron Walsh

Ian Hittmann

Chris Heath

Ron and Donna Walsh

Marianne Tibbitts.

Andrew Whitten

Gallery contributors. Ron Walsh, Ian Hittmann.

Lord Howe Island

Text and photos. Ron Walsh

In late March 8 members managed to escape the awful Sydney weather and diving conditions and travel to the fabulous Lord Howe Island. Located just 2 hours flight from Sydney and due east of Port Macquarie, Lord Howe Island is world heritage listed and contains the southernmost coral reef in the world. The island has approximately 250 permanent residents and only allows up to 400 tourists at any one time so it is very peaceful and relaxed.

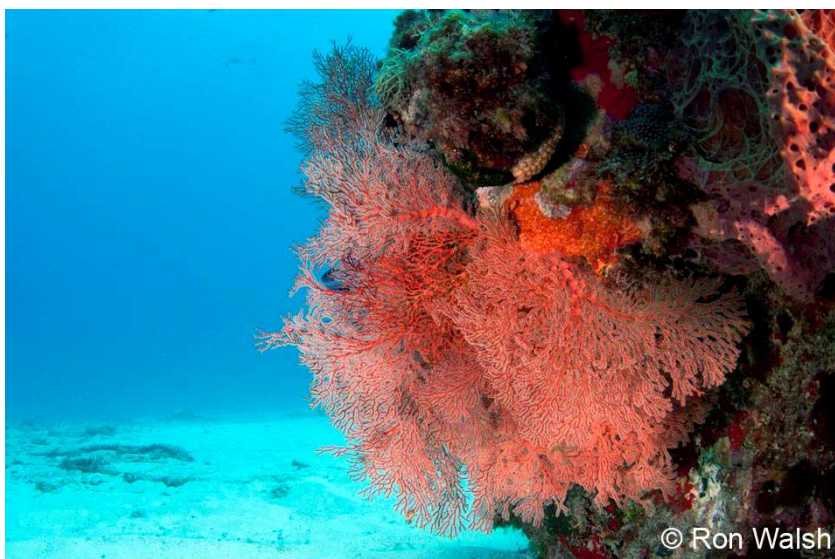
We stayed at Leanda Lei resort and used ProDive Lord Howe for our diving - both are highly recommended.

This was Donna & mine second trip (we went last year for a special occasion) and the diving was superb again. The reports of 0-1m visibility and brown water in Sydney compared to 30m+ visibility and blue water at Lord Howe Island. Aaron and Lisa at ProDive Lord Howe run an excellent operation with their main boat taking 12 divers usually for a double dive. The first two days we had strong NE winds so the diving was primarily on the outside of the lagoon with some spectacular caves and reefs explored. We weren't able to dive on day 3 due to very high winds (the dive site mooring was rated for 30 knot winds and the winds were in excess of 40 knots) but the next 3 days were excellent diving.

We saw heaps of fish, lots of corals, fantastic gorgonian fans, spectacular nudibranchs and even the odd shark.

When not diving the bush walks are special and the snorkelling comes highly recommended. And ensure you feed the fish at Ned's Beach.

Apart from Donna & myself, our partners in escape were Ian & Michelle Hittmann, Paul & Julie Pacey, Eddie Ivers and Steve Boyd. A fantastic time had by all.









Lord Howe Island

Text and photos by Ian Hittmann

At the end of March a group of 8 from the club ventured to Lord Howe Island for a 10 dive package over a period of 8 days, allowing time for hiking, snorkelling, and any bad weather. We had booked our accommodation almost twelve months in advance, as this is the controlling factor when visiting the island. We also planned our meals each night between BBQ's and booked restaurants, at least a month in advance as Covid has reduced staff numbers, and there is now a restaurant schedule which makes it easy to miss out on a nice dinner if you don't plan. Several of us had made recent trips to the island, so we knew the drill.

Unfortunately, we took Sydney's bad weather with us, but only missed one day as undiveable, which we made up with one of our rest days. Being an island, there is always somewhere to get a sheltered dive site, and there are even good dives in the lagoon if needed. All the weather was forgotten as we backward rolled off the boat for our first dive into 24°C clear blue water and could see the anchor line all the way to the bottom, and then at least another 20 mtrs in front of that. All the dives were in similar conditions. We dived several large underwater caverns at the base of the cliffs, and all the other sites were coral reefs, with swim throughs, overhangs etc with lobsters, eels, nudies. fish of all kinds, and a few Galapagos sharks, which are endemic to the island. There was no need to dive deep, because the best action was above 25 mtrs, and if you opt for nitrox in your tank, you can really extend your bottom times.

On this trip the weather was too bad to leave the island and travel the 23kms to Ball's Pyramid, but I would suggest that when you fill out your paperwork on your first day, you tick the box that says you are available to do the trip if it can be done, because it will be the best \$100 (extra) you ever spent. They did the trip twice on the day we flew out, which also meant that the weather was good enough for the plane to land and take us home on the day we had booked.

On one particularly rainy day we could see waterfalls coming off Mt. Gower, and falling hundreds of metres into the sea. as we went to the dive site. Pretty spectacular. No wonder LHI is listed as World Heritage.

Once Aaron has seen that you are a competent diver, you can just do what you want, but there was value in following a divemaster, because they really know the sites, and can show all the good stuff. The crew were helpful with camera gear, and if you requested a specific subject you wanted to photograph, they would lead you there. Because of weight restrictions on the planes to LHI, I chose to only do macro photography and use a shop BCD, because with a weight limit of 23 kgs, in two bags of 14 kgs and 9 kgs, not all baggage may go or come back with you on the same plane, and I always choose dive and camera gear, because it is valuable, and I can do without clothes for a couple of days if necessary. Luckily our flights weren't full so all our gear turned up with us.

Our group comprised Ron & Donna Walsh, Paul and Julie Pacey, Eddie Ivers, Steve Boyd, Michelle and myself. We shared three nice apartments at Leanda Lei, rode everywhere on our bikes, and if you are thinking of a trip to LHI, think at least a year ahead for all bookings, and I am sure any of the people named would be willing to give hints to make the holiday really great.





Sabang Beach, Puerto Galera, Philippines

Text and photos. Chris Heath

This is a well known location for several club members and finally is now open to Australia again after Covid.

The weather has been good and except for the Easter weekend there doesn't seem to be a large number of visitors as yet. Several of the dive resorts are now closed and appear not going to open soon, but then there are still quite a few of the old and newer non-Filipino open.

Most of the old favourites are still OK with a few modifications. Capt Gregg's got a new post fire upgrade (nice) and the Big Apple front bar has closed and relocated to the swimming pool area. The little upstairs Italian Restaurant has gone, pity about that one. Many of the Night Clubs are still there.

As for the diving it is still very good, and the usual photo targets are there. The poor old Alma Jane wreck is looking sad as one side wall has started to collapse.





First sighting of Prosinia Semperi Cowrie on Lord Howe Island

Text and Photo Ron Walsh. Phenomenal critter find by Donna Walsh

One of the many things found by Donna on our recent trip to Lord Howe Island was a small cowrie. The cowrie was found on a red gorgonian and once we got back to Sydney I went through the process of trying to identify it.

Initially I sent the photo to Dietmar Amon at Lissenung Island (as he has a keen interest in cowries) and he suggested 3 possibilities. I googled all three and after looking at iNaturalist and other sites determined that it was probably *Prosimnia semperi*. I posted on iNaturalist and the experts there have confirmed it as *Prosimnia semperi* (as best you can with visual identification) and that it is the first record of this cowrie from Lord Howe Island.

[Prosimnia semperi from Lord Howe Island, AU-NS, AU on April 01, 2022 at 10:37 AM by rondwalsh. Did I get the species correct? · iNaturalist Australia \(ala.org.au\)](#)

I sent this information back to ProDive Lord Howe for interest, they passed it on to DPI Lord Howe Island Marine Park who now wish to publish the find in their upcoming DPI Newsletter .

Donna is quite pleased.....

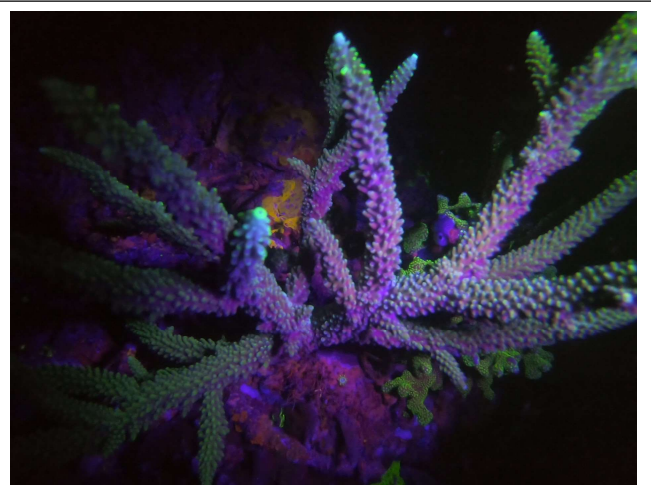
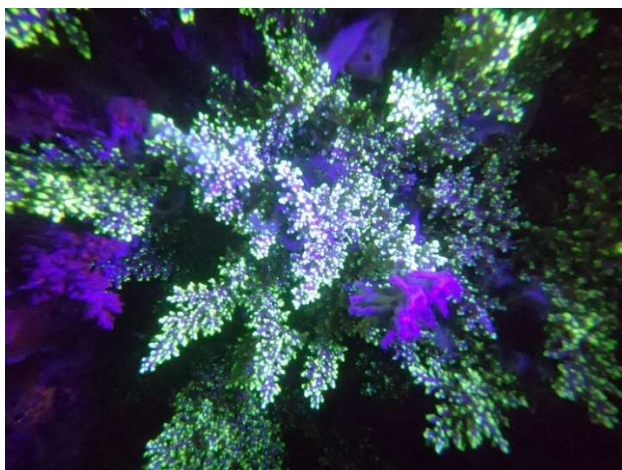
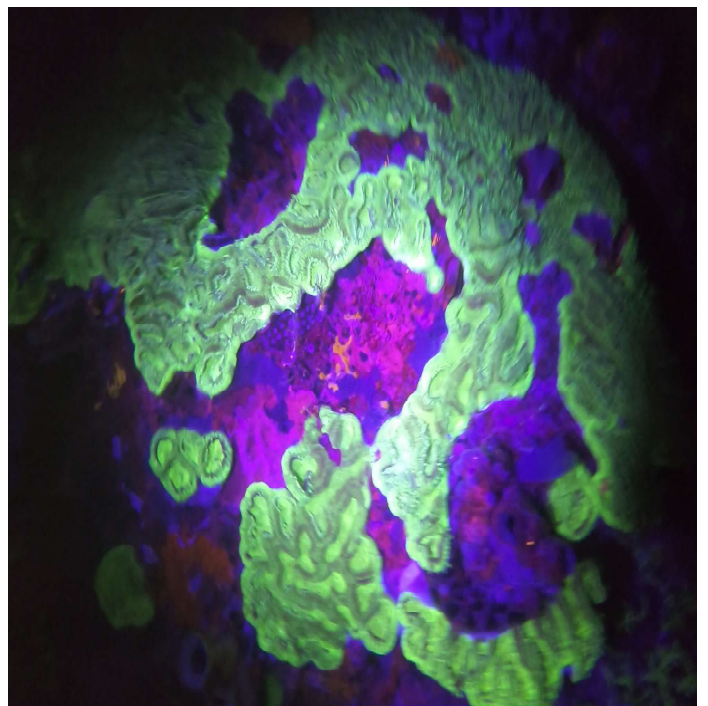
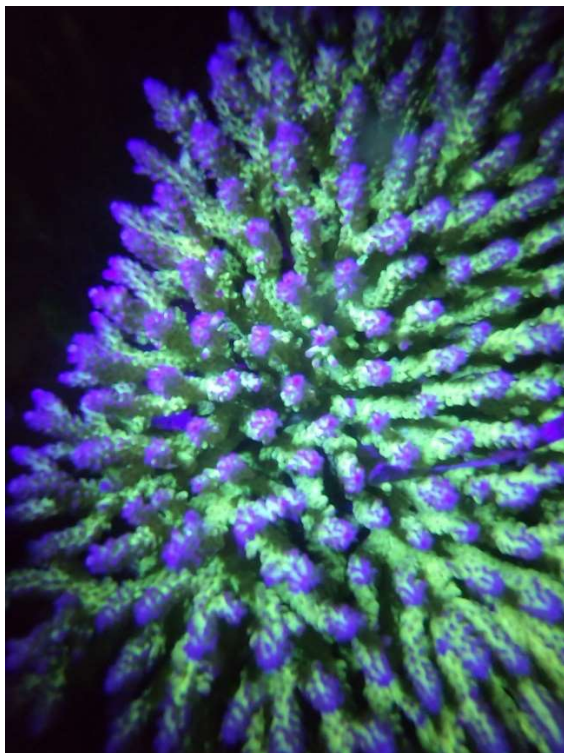


Raja Ampat

Text and photos Marianne Tibbitts.

Lying within the Coral Triangle, Raja Ampat is an incredibly rich environment for scuba diving. Healthy reefs grow strong and dense, encouraging an abundance of reef fish and large pelagic species.

We tried Fluro diving for the first time and it was right up there with the best dive ever!! It's a night dive, and you place an orange filter over your mask and Gopro lens (supplied) and hire a blue light. The results are other worldly! Corals that during the day that would not attract your attention, jump out at you during a fluro dive. A must do dive if you ever have the opportunity.



Forster Diving in April

Text and photos by Andrew Whitten

My family often holiday in Forster during the Easter school holidays and I always take along the dive gear in case conditions are good to allow some double boat dives with Dive Forster run by Ron Hunter and his daughter Gabby. Often the conditions at this time of year are brilliant with warm, clear water, sometimes in excess of 20m visibility.

This Easter weekend the sea conditions were calm however, the water flowing out of Wallis Lake entrance was Easter Egg chocolate brown and the water offshore mint green all along the coast causing the planned dive at Seal Rocks to be cancelled. One thing I really like about Ron and Gabby is they don't take people diving in poor conditions when they know the experience will not be good even though they could just easily take the cash.

There are plenty of others things to do at Forster so no big problem and I had assumed no diving at all this year but last Sunday 24th April, our last full day in town, the water miraculously cleared up after a sustained period of southerly winds. The boat went out to a popular site, local to Forster and just off Cape Hawke, called Latitude Rock Gutters.

It is only shallow with a max depth of 12m but this site is bursting with marine life. You can expect to see a colony of Grey Nurse Sharks (GNS) here cruising up and down the rock gutters every dive, varying in number from just a few up to 25 or 30. This is a big recovery from when I first dived this site in the mid-80s when it was only rarely that any were seen at all. You always see numerous Wobbegong, Southern Eagle Rays, Green and Mosaic Moray Eels and all the usual southern fish with a smattering of tropical species like Gunther's and Dusky Butterflyfish, Banner fish, Morish Idols, Moon Wrasse, etc. On this dive there were huge schools of Yellow Tail Scad so thick that they blocked out the sun at times and obscured forward vision. It was not uncommon for a GNS to emerge from the Yellow Tail right in front of your face – surprise !

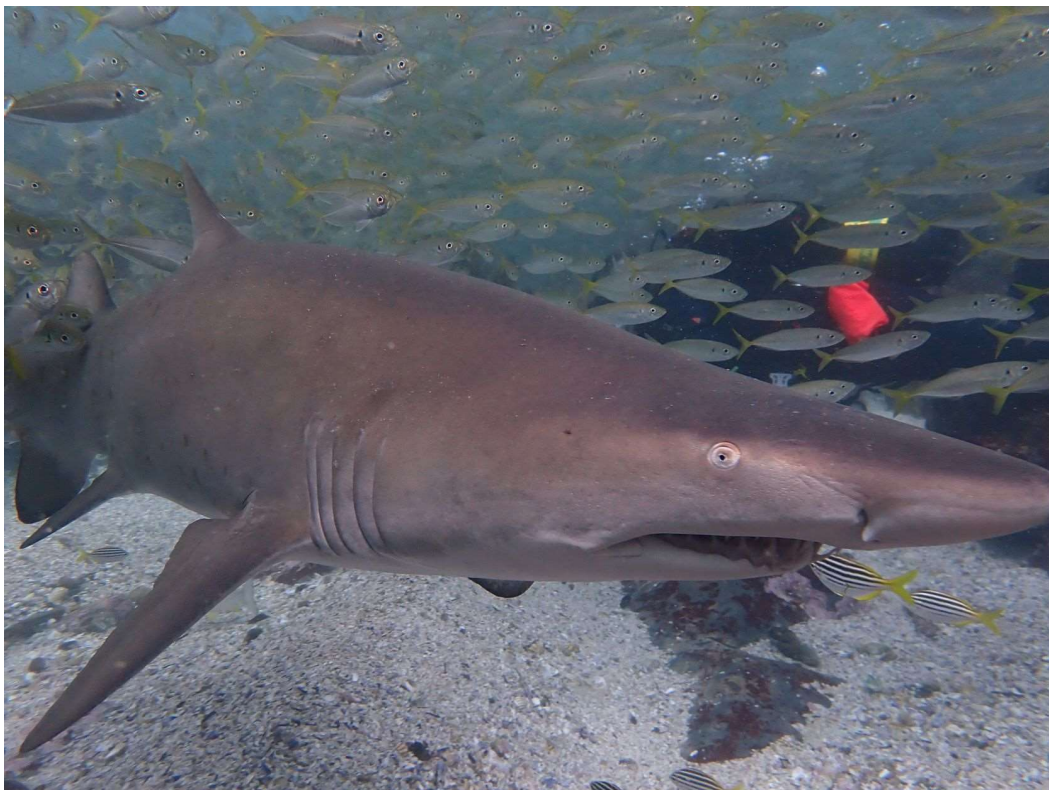
We had vis of 6 to 8m which was pretty good considering how bad it has been recently but it would have been even clearer if not so much surge stirring the bottom sediment up. The water temperature was a nice 22 degrees.

This is a site you can do over and over and still enjoy going back again. If feeling adventurous you can free dive this site from McBride's Beach which I have done several times.



Photos. Andrew Whitten – Forster dives





Gallery



Lord Howe Island dive group at Coral Café.



© Ron Walsh



© Ron Walsh



Ian Hittmann. Lord Howe Island

Upcoming Calendar Events

May 2022

★ Deep Wreck Dive - SS Undola - Meet Yowie Bay/RMYC

Date:	01-05-2022	Starts at:	7:00
Contact Ian Roffey			

★ Girls Weekend - Jervis Bay - Meet Huskisson

Date:	06-05-2022	Starts at:	6:00
Contact Tordis Bulger			

★ Shore Dive - Shiprock - Meet Dolans Bay

Date:	07-05-2022	Starts at:	9:00
Contact Michael Materazzo			

★ Shore Dive - Dusky Whaler Sharks - Meet Shelly Beach

Date:	08-05-2022	Starts at:	9:00
Contact Jason Coombs			

★ Lord Howe Island Trip - Lord Howe Island - Meet Sydney Airport

Date:	13-05-2022	Starts at:	6:00
Contact Michael McFadyen			

★ Boat Dive - Big Saigon - Meet Yowie Bay/RMYC

Date:	14-05-2022	Starts at:	7:00
Contact Phil Short			

★ Club Meeting - GRSC - Meet Dolls Point

Date:	18-05-2022	Starts at:	20:00
Contact Phil Rose			

★ Boat Dive - Pizza Reef - Meet Yowie Bay/RMYC

Date:	28-05-2022	Starts at:	7:00
Contact Bob Hill			

June 2022

★ Boat Dive and BBQ - Frenchmans Bay - Meet La Perouse

Date:	04-06-2022	Starts at:	7:00
Contact Ray Moulang/Paul Pacey			

★ June Long Weekend - NEEDED - Meet

Date:	10-06-2022	Starts at:	6:00
Contact			

★ Boat Dive - The Apartments - Meet Rose Bay

Date:	11-06-2022	Starts at:	7:00
Contact Lachlan Wright			

★ Club Meeting - GRSC - Meet Dolls Point

Date:	15-06-2022	Starts at:	20:00
Contact Maxine Hayden			

★ Boat Dive - Wedding Cake Island - Meet Hole in the Wall/Port Botany

Date:	18-06-2022	Starts at:	7:00
-------	------------	------------	------

Contact Bob Hill

★ **Week Away - North Solitary Island - Meet Wooli**

Date:	19-06-2022	Starts at:	6:00
-------	-------------------	------------	-------------

Contact Michael Materazzo

★ **Boat Dive - Osborne Shoals - Meet Yowie Bay/RMYC**

Date:	25-06-2022	Starts at:	7:00
-------	-------------------	------------	-------------

Contact Shelley Breuseker

Please submit any articles and photos to me by replying to my club emails which are sent out every month. The newsletter will be published every month or bi monthly depending on content received.

Our newer members are encouraged to submit photos and stories of their dives, which don't have to be organised club dives.

Dive stories and photos are not restricted to organised club dives. Things like "I learned from that..." recent courses, equipment and general interest diving / diving photography articles are also welcome. If you have no time for words, just send me some of your best photo's for inclusion in the gallery section.

Many thanks to all of the contributors.

Cheers. Phil