



# SEA BRAGGIN'

## St George Scuba Club Newsletter

### Diving in a Quake

*Tong Zheng*

**Page 1**

### Trip Reports

*Wooli - Ian Hittmann*

*Dive Cruise Flores to Papua -*

*Rob Chenery*

**Pages 4, 12**

### The Basin

*Spotlight on Southern*

*Dumpling Squid - Gary*

*Dunnett*

**Page 8**

### Bucked in Byron

*Digby's time in the Chamber - Natasha Naude*

**Page 17**

*Big Things photo spread*

**Page 20**

## VANUATU EARTHQUAKE

### 22 December 2012

I experienced an underwater earthquake in Vanuatu when I was diving the SS President Coolidge.

It happened on 22 December 2012. It was our last day of diving in Santo, since we have to have a whole day gap before we can get on a flight. So we decided to do a deep dive in the morning, to the Galley and Doctor's Office.

As usual, it was a long swim to the buoy. We set off at 9:12am and descended to 15-20m and kept swimming to the tourist sea gate. We kept descending from here until reaching around 50m and then we turned to the Galley. Everything was



good

at that time - there was nothing unusual.

After examining the kitchenwares etc, the DM wanted to lead us to the Doctor's Office. But on the way, I think he noticed some noises from the outside of the shipwreck, so he decided to swim out. When we could see the sunlight from outside of the cargo hole, I could clearly hear the noises. I thought it was due to the giant cruise ship passing the strait. (The "Carnival" cruise ship was stopped in Santo on that day.) The DM show some signals to me that I have never seen before. He put both his hands on his ears and was shaking his head - it was like listening to rock music with hands over your big earphones! I didn't get him - he showed me twice and gave up. Then we kept





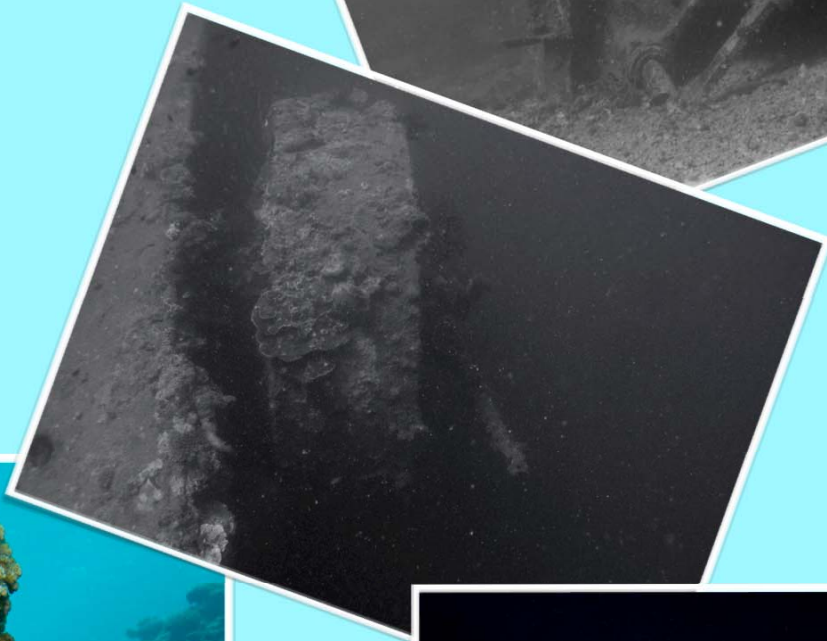
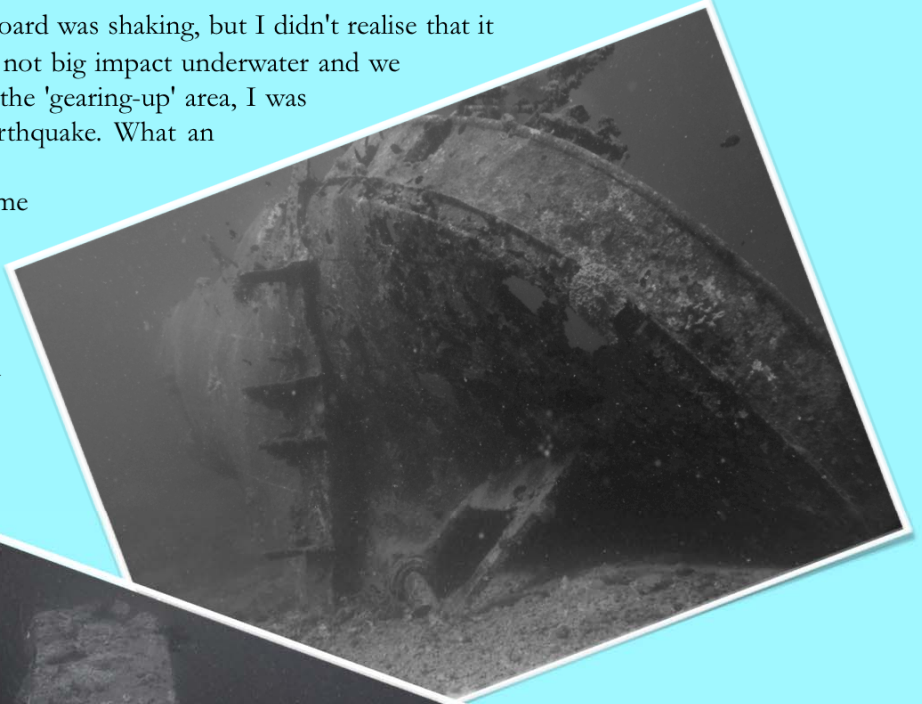
# SEA BRAGGIN'

swimming back and ascended gradually.

I remember that I could see some rusty board was shaking, but I didn't realise that it was due to an earthquake. Anyway, there was not big impact underwater and we finished our dive early. When we got back to the 'gearing-up' area, I was shocked when they told me that it was a earthquake. What an experience!

My girlfriend was very worried about me since they had felt it significantly in Luganville town. She told me the earthquake started from 9:30am, about 10-15 minutes after we descended. Afterwards, I didn't hear any news about any collapses on the SS President Coolidge.

**Tong Zheng**





*You are warmly invited to the*

## St George Scuba Club 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner



**WHEN:** Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2013 from 600pm

**WHERE:** Georges River 16' Sailing Club, Sanoni Ave, Sandringham

**COST:** \$45 per person (includes a complementary Happy Hour drink and a 3-course meal)

Purchase tickets at [www.stgeorgescubaclub.org.au/40yeardinnerbookingform.php](http://www.stgeorgescubaclub.org.au/40yeardinnerbookingform.php)

### MEMBER PRIZE DRAW:

- ✚ Overseas Dive Trip (portion of trip for one person booked with a club group overseas trip, conditions apply) sponsored by Dive Adventures
- ✚ Mid-week Dive Package (conditions apply) sponsored by Wooli Dive Centre
- ✚ Double Boat Dive for two on HMAS Adelaide sponsored by Terrigal Dive Centre
- ✚ Weekend package for two (conditions apply) sponsored by Southwest Rocks Dive Centre

### LUCKY DOOR PRIZES:

- ✚ Magazine subscriptions sponsored by Sport Diver / Dive Log
- ✚ Dive Equipment sponsored by Scuba Warehouse and Dive Imports

### RAFFLE PRIZES:

- ✚ **INCLUDES** Dinner for two at Georges River 16' Sailing Club, hampers, wine, gift packs, dive equipment and more

**Special 40th anniversary merchandise** will be available for purchase.

Keep an eye on [www.stgeorgescubaclub.org.au](http://www.stgeorgescubaclub.org.au)

**diveimports**  
.com

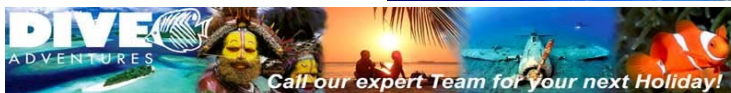
**SPORTDIVING / DIVELOG**

**DIVE**  
ADVENTURES

**WOOLI DIVE  
CENTRE**

**SCUBA WAREHOUSE**

**SOUTHWEST ROCKS DIVE CENTRE**  
AUSTRALIA  
02 6566 6474



**TERRIGAL DIVE CENTRE**





## WOOLI

November 2012

Seven club members arrived in Wooli on Sunday 11th November looking forward to a week of diving the North Solitary Islands. It wasn't the nicest weather to start the trip, with rain and wind for the long drive from Sydney, but it had all calmed down by Sunday evening, and after settling in to the diver's lodge we dined at the Wooli Bowling Club in the Chinese Restaurant. After dinner it was back to the lodge for setting up cameras and organizing gear for an early start on the Monday morning.



morning.

However, this wasn't to be as we watched from the balcony and saw the local fishermen drive past towing their boats on the way to the boat ramp, only to drive back home shortly afterwards giving us the thumbs down sign. So we did various things, like sit around and tell diving stories, go for walks, tell more stories, walk to the shop.....all the exciting things you can do in Wooli. Rob and I walked up to the coffee shop which is open 7 days to have a coffee and a bite for lunch. Only it was closed. We were told that it was closed because today was Monday and it is after the weekend. Never quite figured out the logic there, but I did see it open on Wednesday, probably because that is in the middle of the week. Or maybe not.

So Tuesday it was our first dive and we boarded "Kraken" (which is one very nice dive boat) for the trip

out to the islands. The bar at the river mouth was exciting to say the least, and we had a wet trip out and back. First dive was at the Bubble Cave, and being my first time at this part of the coast, I couldn't believe the number of anemones covering the bottom. Photographing anemone fish in the tropics is an acquired art, but at least they stay in their own anemone so you can just wait until a photo opportunity arrives and blast away. Up here the anemone fish just moves to another anemone, and keeps moving away from you as you chase it all over the ocean. So next time you see a photo taken in the Solitary Islands of a clown fish in an anemone, congratulate the photographer. They did good. Also saw a couple of pygmy wobbies, and they are even better disguised than normal wobbies.



The second dive after snacks was at the Elbow Cave, where a very large painted cray was actually sitting on top of a wobby. Lots of fish, lots to see, good viz, nice 22°C water, no current, wall to wall anemones again. My highlight (I don't get out much) was seeing a nice cluster of solitary hydroids on a wall, fanned out as the slight surge swept back and forth. Soon it was back on the boat for the very wet trip back to Wooli, and I would have loved to have taken some photos as we crossed the bar into the river, but I was alternatively hanging on for dear life and praying, as I watched waves standing up immediately behind the boat, and threatening to push us into the breakwater walls if anything went wrong. The seas had calmed down on Wednesday, and the wind was coming from the south, so we dived the northern side of the island in Anemone Bay. I agree with our





skipper Mick when he says that there are more anemones everywhere else than in Anemone Bay. My diving is usually nice and slow so I can find little stuff and photograph it, but this was for me an epic swim as we searched for grey nurse sharks at the far end of the bay. Saw several, as well as a large black cod which was easily approached. My camera is setup with a preference for macro, so don't expect to see my shark and cod photos. Eddie did get some good shots though.

The second dive was in the same place and I decided to just concentrate on a small area near the mooring, to see what I could find. It was very productive for me, but I sure miss my nitrox because I very quickly ran out of bottom time. The others came back to the boat raving about all the exciting things they had seen in the shallow area next to the shore. Oh well, maybe next time.



Thursday the weather was very calm so we went to the two outcrops north of the main island. There are no moorings here, so we decided to just dive in the gap between the two small outcrops and see what we could find. Skipper Mick said there would probably be strong currents in the middle so I left my camera on board. Needless to say, there was no current, so we swam through the gap, then back again. Because I didn't have the camera I saw two species of nudie which I hadn't seen before, as well as a wall of beautiful yellow commensal zoanthids with their polyps feeding in the slight surge. The fact that they are here is an indication of the waves and surge that must be normal in this shallow area, that certainly deserves some exploration in the future. Saw some more GNS swim past as we meandered along. It turned out to be a very relaxing and interesting dive, and we did a free float safety stop and the boat picked us up. When we located the other divers, who had gone a different way, we were told that another boat had radioed that the seas were calm enough to head north from the Solitary group and dive Sentinel Rock, which appears to be some kind of Holy Grail in this area. Unfortunately, we had only been travelling about 20 minutes when a noreaster wind sprang up with enough strength to prevent anchoring safely on the rock because of its submerged depth.

We returned to the south side of the main island to a different mooring at The Canyons. Gee, I thought the other places had lots of Anemones, but they had NOTHING on this place. The bottom was literally carpeted with them. But there were





also these impressive canyons heading from deeper water into the shallows near the island. Another cruisy dive with the camera, cut short by a lack of bottom time, with so much to see that like the other sites, one dive is definitely not enough.

Unfortunately for me, this was my last dive of the trip because I had an important appointment back in Sydney the next morning, so after changing at the wharf in Wooli, I got to drive 700 kms to home along what is loosely termed one of our national highways.

I was super impressed with the accommodation we had as it was very comfortable, very modern, and had an excellent kitchen area which allowed us to prepare dinners etc. Full marks to the chefs, because with cooking shared between 7 men, I wasn't expecting any Master Chef type culinary delights.....but I was wrong. There were no leftovers and the bar has certainly been set very high for future trips.

Ian Hittmann





## St George Ladies' Weekend 2013

**When:** Friday 1 March to Sunday 3 March 2013

**Where:** Port Stephens

**Diving:** Halifax Park, Fly Point or The Pipeline

**Accommodation:** Shoal Bay Holiday Park

**Cost:** \$130-\$170 for the weekend, depending on numbers

The Shoal Bay Holiday Park is across the road from the beach and has 4-star Villas. We can check out as late as Monday morning at 10am.

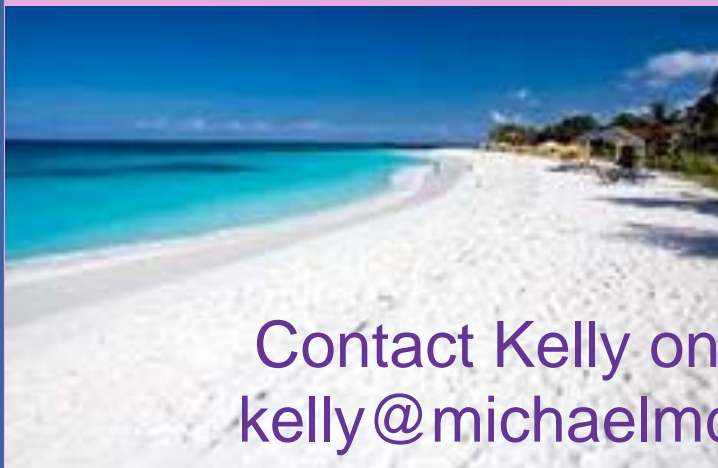
Have a look at <http://www.beachsideholidays.com.au/shoalBay.phtml> for more information.



The location of our Saturday night, club-subsidised feast is yet to be determined – maybe a nice restaurant in Shoal Bay (walking distance).

All of our ladies' weekends have been great trips away, with good diving and lots of laughs. And, lots of great food, some drinks, a little shopping and lots of relaxing. You don't need to be a diver to attend .... any female partners of STG members are welcome to come along.

So, to book your spot kindly deposit \$50 the St George Club account (BSB 062028 Acc 00800455).



Happy diving,  
Kelly

Contact Kelly on 0410 599 186 or  
[kelly@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info](mailto:kelly@michaelmcfadyenscuba.info)





## SEA BRAGGIN' THE BASIN

My primary motivation for diving is an abiding fascination with natural history. One of the consequences is that, while I enjoy many dive sites around Sydney, I am just as interested in waters that don't require scuba gear.



Last year I spent a fair bit of time in freshwater creeks, while over the last few months I've been exploring tidal creeks and mangrove forests. My favourite to date is a site in Royal National Park known as the Basin. This tidal creek is surrounded by mangroves and includes a pair of surprisingly deep holes on either side of the foot bridge linking Bonnie Vale and Mianbar.

I have a bit of a soft spot for these pools as the source of some of my earliest memories of learning to swim and snorkel. They are a place where anyone can find common species like bream, whiting, luderick and hermit crabs. However, during recent visits with mask, camera and torch I've been amazed by the variety of species that make these pools home. They include animals I've rarely seen or given scant attention to at traditional

dive sites, including Southern Dumpling Squid, Seahares, prawns, shrimp and crabs. Pulling together a series of images of these animals has been a lot of fun so I thought I'd share some of what's on offer in these pools.

### Southern Dumpling Squid

The Southern Dumpling Squid, *Euprymna tasmanica*, is my favourite inhabitant of the Basin. During the day they are inconspicuous, burying under the sand like many of the Basin's other nocturnal inhabitants. A pair of eyes can occasionally be spotted poking out of the sand as they keep an eye on passing threats or prey. However as the light dims in the late afternoon they emerge from the sand and become increasingly active as night falls.

These tiny predators display a truly amazing range of hunting behaviours. One of the most common is to locate themselves near seagrass or mangrove roots containing a concentration of shrimp. The Dumpling Squid sits on the sand, assuming an almost spherical shape with their







tentacles tightly tucked under the body. They look like just a small, unthreatening rock, although a rock with eyes scanning for any shrimp that strays close enough to capture. At other times they will sit on an elevated piece of mangrove, timber or kelp. In this position they will contract their tentacles and lay them along the length of the branch.

When I first saw Southern Dumpling Squid I thought that their primary hunting technique was to ambush their prey from hiding. This proved to be far from the case. These dumpy little animals are quite prepared to actively chase down their food well away from their daytime shelters. Free swimming dumpling squid assume a more elongated body form and behave like miniature versions of the calamari squid of the open coast, undulating the fins along their flanks to propel tentacle first towards incautious fish.

A different hunting technique can be seen as the high tide floods over the seagrass beds and into the mangrove forest. The dumpling squid assume a vertical pose with their tentacles pointing downwards. They look just like a scrap of debris drifting with the tide. When they spot a shrimp they use their fins to scull gently downwards into range, then darting those tentacles towards their prey quicker than the eye can follow.

Although a remarkable predator, the Southern Dumpling Squid would still seem a bite sized target for larger predators such as Dusky Flathead or Red Rockcod. The Dumpling Squid have several adaptations to reduce the risk of becoming a meal. One is the standard cephalopod trick of squirting a cloud of ink into the face of potential predators. They can also shed a squid shaped outline of mucus and sand as another way of confusing followers. However, their most amazing adaptation is to avoid being spotted at all. The Dumpling Squid host light producing bacteria in their bodies. By regulating the exposure of these bacteria across their skin they are able to match their silhouette with the light falling through the surface of the water. This effectively makes them invisible to a predator peering upwards for passing food. This serves a dual purpose in helping them sneak up on prey, with the bacteria even breaking up the outline of their eyes.



Gary Dunnett





## Timor Dive Trip Weekend

We will be diving with Dive Timor Lorosae (DTL).  
Check out their website at: [www.DiveTimor.com](http://www.DiveTimor.com)

We will be staying in the guesthouse, which is located alongside the dive shop right on the beachfront in Dili. Above the accommodation is the Castaway bar and restaurant. The complex has its own pool. It is located in Dili itself so it's a short walk to other restaurants, shops, markets, etc.

The four boat dives will be to Atauro Island - see the DTL website for details.

We have also arranged with DTL that we can have an optional third dive per day, which will be at Pertamina Pier. This is one of the best muck dives in East Timor. If we choose to do a third dive, the dive operator will supply a driver to take us to the Pertamina Pier (a 5 minute drive) and wait for us to do our dive before transporting us back to our accommodation. These additional dives are \$25 per diver.

The trip is limited to 8 divers and as at 13/11/2012 we have 4 spots available.

Contact Paul Pacey for more information or to book.

Contact Paul Pacey  
[Paul.Pacey@iinet.net.au](mailto:Paul.Pacey@iinet.net.au) or 0431-691173





# EAST TIMOR

## Ultimate Dive Expedition

19 - 31 August 2013

13 Days / 12 nights Ex Darwin

Diver from **\$2,090** per person

**Price Includes:** ( Non Diver - \$995 )

- Return flights ex. Darwin to Dili flying with Air North
- Return airport transfers in Dili
- 12 nights twin share bunk room air conditioned guest house accommodation at The Dive Guest House (shared kitchen and bathroom) - Dili, Sat TV, Internet Connection, swimming pool
- Breakfast daily at the Castaway Bar
- Half Day Dili city tour
- 22 Dives (6 shore local dives, 10 shore Dili surround dives and 4 boat dives and 2 complimentary night dives) Includes: tanks, weights, dive guide services, & transfers
- Australian Departure taxes ( Value: \$240.00 - subject to change

**Cost Does Not Include:**

- Travel Insurance & Personal spending monies and Excess Luggage Surcharges
- East Timor Entry visa USD 30.00 (subject to change)
- East Timor departure tax USD10.00

**Room Upgrade:**

Upgrade to Twin Share (1 x Queen + 1 x Single) - additional \$92 per person for 12 night stay

**Conditions Apply:**

Prices are subject to change without notice due to fluctuations in exchange rates.

**Booking Requirements:**

To secure your place on this expedition, you will need to complete a booking form and return it together with a non refundable deposit amount of \$300.00 per person.

Booking Reference # S12695

Date : 06/11/12

**FOR BOOKINGS AND MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT**

**DIVE**  
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YOUR DIVING HOLIDAY SPECIALIST

www.diveadventures.com.au



**Contact: Paul Pacey**  
Mobile: 0431 691 173





# SEA BRAGGIN'

## BIODIVERSITY DIVE CRUISE

**26 November -10 December 2012**

I was lucky enough to get a berth on the Mermaid 1, travelling from Maumere in Flores to Sorong in West Papua with my dive buddy of 18 years (Peter). We have done some great trips and this one was marked by often 25m viz and 30deg C water. The dive boat is the more luxurious of the two Mermaid vessels and we are repeat customers, having done the Komodo trip out of Bali a few years ago. We had 15 divers and we were the only Aussies.

We travelled via a Bali overnight stop and passed 3 volcanoes on our flight to the northern coast of Flores Is. After boarding Mermaid 1 we travelled East and our first dives were at the foot of volcanic peaks. The trip highlights that the whole Indonesian archipelago is the result of Tectonic movement from the Australian plate uplifting this part of the world.

One of the early dives was the Snake Volcano, where we encountered the Olive Sea Snake. Along the way we had to rescue 3 netted turtles. We did see a lot of Hawk Bill turtles on what were universally pristine reefs. However, the bad news was there were very few larger fish and sharks until we got to the Banda Sea and the Marine Parks of Raja-Ampat. In fact, if my observations from 42 dives averaging over one hour each are statistical, I would say reef sharks are at serious risk in this part of the world.



One of the interesting stops was Banda Naira, where the night dive explored the wharf areas for Mandarin Fish. Banda Naira is the old Dutch capital of the Spice Islands and I have pictured some of the products, including nutmeg, mace, cashews, cloves and cinnamon.



This island has an interesting history, having been swapped for Manhattan Is in colonial days. As I mentioned, the reefs were pristine and photo opportunities abound for Nudibranch photography so I include the photo of a soft coral - see if you can spot the Blue Branched Mariona.

Koon Reef in the Banda Sea was the first opportunity to see schools of pelagic fish and a mass spawning of Jacks in particular. Island stops allowed





opportunity to interact with locals and provided photo opportunity for the kids swimming under the wharf.

Fish diversity did get better in Raja-Ampat and I draw particular attention to Manta Sandy and Blue Magic, where we had the outstanding opportunity of swimming with Mantas up to 6 metres across. One of the most interesting sites was Mangrove Ridge where the Mangroves meet the clear blue water of the coral reef. All

photos were taken from a Cannon Compact and a new GoPro with no special lighting (including the “cameo” of the author).

I took over 550 shots and videos. The vessel is now stationed in the Raja-Ampat Marine park and I highly recommend it.

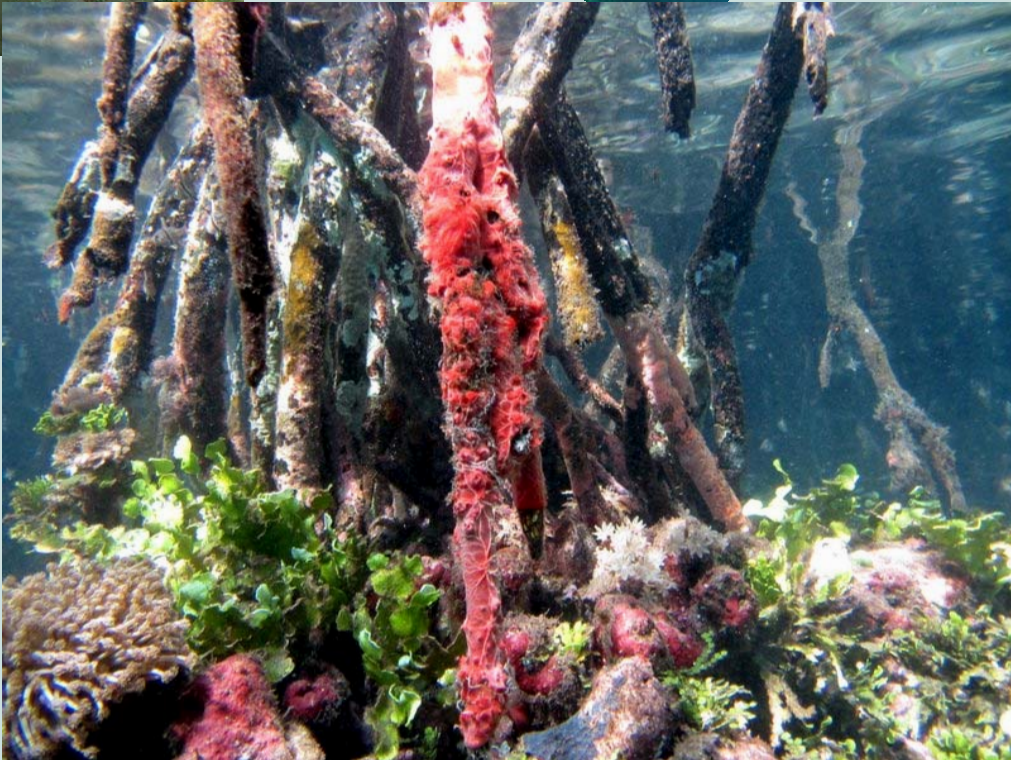
**Rob Chenery**







Rob Chenery







## Pacific Jewel “Live Aboard” Cruise and Dive Trip

Tuesday 9 July – Wednesday 18 July 2013

Cruise the Pacific and dive at each port!

The plan is for group of St George Scuba members to travel on the same Pacific cruise and to dive at all the ports along the way. With a minimum group of six divers we can pre-arrange the dive centres to pick us up directly from the wharf at each port, ensuring the maximum amount of dive time.

While in port, any non-diving partners will be able to arrange other activities either by themselves or together, making this trip ideal for members with non-diving partners!

As there is in effect no weight limit you can bring as much dive gear as you want, cameras and all. I have even taken my own lead on past trips (trim weights only)!

While many members may have dived in Vanuatu before, not many may have dived at Easo on Lifou. Lagoon Safaris is a boutique operation, in a pristine location, run from a shipping container by expat Annabelle. Lifou is part of the Loyalty Islands group: <http://www.lagoon-safaris.nc/>

With return airfares costing about the same as the whole trip it is a rare opportunity to sample diving at the Isle of Pines: <http://www.kunie-scuba.com>

In Port Vila, Vanuatu we may possibly dive with the new dive operator, Devil's Point Dive: <http://www.devilspointdive.com>

While on cruises I have scuba dived many times overseas and there is a lot to be said for it. No luggage limits; no need for non-diving days when travelling at sea level; personal fibreglass lined shower for washing and drying your gear. Also, you arrive where you dive (the Ocean) so direct transfer is possible and you get to sample multiple locations.

Finally, you have limited guilt over non-diving fellow travellers!!

Pricing and itinerary on next page...

**Contact Marc Werner Mob: 0407239080**







## Pacific Jewel “Live Aboard” Cruise and Dive Trip

Tuesday 9 July – Wednesday 18 July 2013

### Preliminary costing twin share

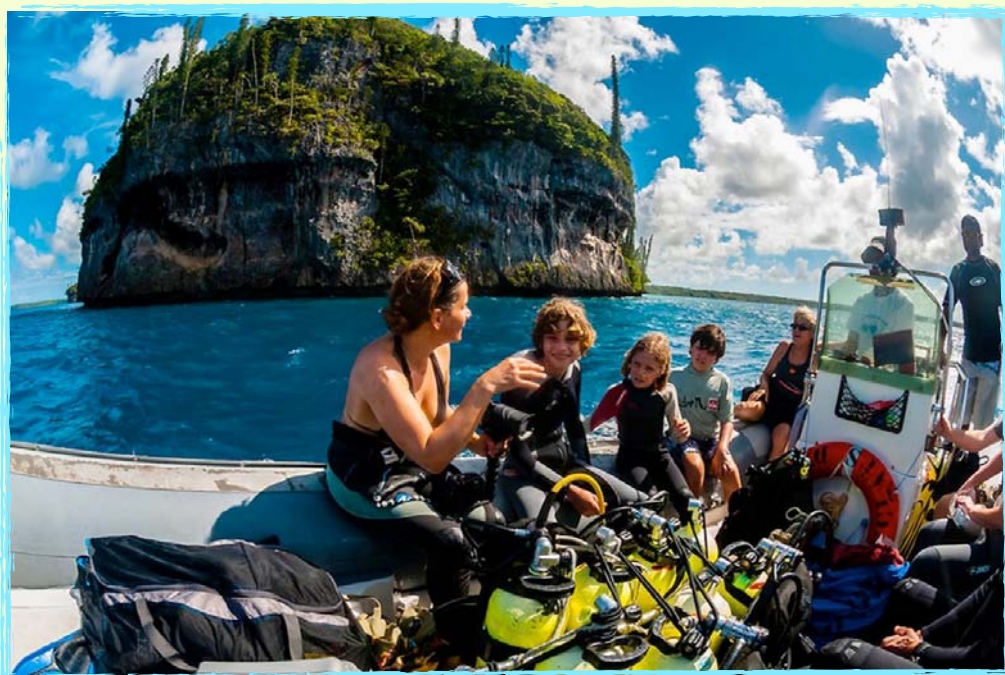
\$1200 non diver (cruise only twin share)

\$1550 diver (as above + 3 double boat dives) including tanks, weights and cruise ship transfers

### Itinerary

Tuesday	09JUL2013	Depart Sydney 1600hrs	Australia		
		at sea			
Saturday	13JUL2013	Vila	Vanuatu	TBA	Double
Sunday	14JUL2013	Lifou	Loyalty Islands	Lagoon Safaris	Double
Monday	15JUL2013	Isle of Pines	New Caledonia	Kunie Scuba Center	Double
		at sea			
Wednesday	18JUL2013	Arrive Sydney 0700hrs	Australia		

Anyone with questions on this trip or diving while cruising contact Marc Werner.



Contact Marc Werner Mob: 0407239080





# SEA BRAGGIN'

## GETTING SLIGHTLY BUCKLED IN BYRON

December 2012

Most club members by now know that, while diving over the Christmas and New Year period, Digby had a brush with decompression illness and spent some time in the hyperbaric chamber at Royal Brisbane Hospital. A lot of people asked whether Digby ascended too fast, or went too deep etc – the usual things that would contribute to getting the bends.

From reviewing Digby's dives, there is little to indicate anything problematic that would cause a diver to get bent. Digby's dives for the trip listed in the table (right).

Surface intervals between each dive were at least 1.5 hours. Safety stops of at least 3 mins, if not 5 mins, were undertaken on every dive. The dive computer shows all dives were not deco dives.

### Potential contributing factors:

On looking carefully at what we did over this dive holiday, the following points can be noted:

- On some days the later dives exceeded the depth of the earlier (but none were particularly deep).

- On the first dive Digby did without me he went to his greatest depth and used his air faster than on any other dive (depth could contribute). On this dive he felt he exerted himself more and he felt more stress, as neither he nor his buddy were familiar with the dive site and they were meant to stick with the dive group, but his buddy kept stopping for prolonged periods to photograph things, so Digby felt he should not leave him behind, and he felt a little bit stressed as they kept losing sight of the dive group and had to fin vigorously to catch up a number of times.

- Between each dive the boats were taken back to shore, put back on the trailer and taken back to the dive shop. Digby volunteered to assist

with the boat on every occasion, and stayed in the water to hold the boat steady etc.

- The boat was completely unloaded and then reloaded between each dives, so tanks could be filled/swapped etc. Everyone on the boat is meant to help with this process, but often people would walk away and Digby assisted between each dive, often unloading and reloading up to 4 or more tanks with BCDs etc.

- Hydration – while we tried to drink as much water as possible, the weather was quite warm and throughout the day we probably drank less than a litre of water each. After diving we often had a few

Dive #	Place	Date	Dive time (mins)	Max depth	Comments
182	Julian Rocks	21-Dec-12	53	18.1	Dive with Shaun Reynolds
183	Julian Rocks	24-Dec-12	54	19.1	
184	Julian Rocks	24-Dec-12	61	14.5	
185	Julian Rocks	27-Dec-12	48	18.9	Pea soup! Dive 2 a no go.
186	Julian Rocks	28-Dec-12	56	19.8	
187	Julian Rocks	28-Dec-12	52	15.1	
188	Julian Rocks	29-Dec-12	49	22.0	Dive without Tash. Dive buddy concentrated on his camera and so spent most of dive trying to keep sight of rest of dive group and encouraging the photographer to keep up.
189	Julian Rocks	29-Dec-12	53	16.3	Dive without Tash. Stuck with dive group.
190	Julian Rocks	30-Dec-12	59	14.6	
191	Julian Rocks	30-Dec-12	56	15.1	Manta ☺
192	Julian Rocks	30-Dec-12	57	14.8	Symptoms of tingling skin appeared throughout the day but not recognised as a problem.
193	Julian Rocks	31-Dec-12	62	14.8	
194	Julian Rocks	31-Dec-12	55	13.0	Leopard shark ☺
195	Julian Rocks	31-Dec-12	60	15.8	PM: tingling skin all over. Called DAN 1 Jan. Hyperbaric 2, 3, 4 Jan.





beers rather than rehydrating sufficiently with water.

- Tiredness – we were going to bed after 11pm most nights, and getting up between 5 and 5.30am to head up to Byron. We were not sleeping particularly well due to heat, unfamiliar place etc.

- Number of dives - Digby did 14 dives in total, including 11 in 5 days (8 in three days).

After doing two dives without me on 29 December, both of which Digby described as more stressful (maybe trying to make me feel better about missing out on dives while I did my camera course), we did three dives on 30 December.

### Symptoms:

Digby told me that evening he had a pins and needles, tingling feeling on his skin and gestured towards his arms. We both put this down to salt, sand, sun and wetsuit after a busy day. On 31 December we did three more dives. That night Digs said again he had tingling skin, gesturing to his upper arms. He had a headache, but no rash nor joint pain. We didn't think much more of it. On 1 January we didn't dive. Digs had a short bike ride and drank about 5 beers throughout the day, plus some water. That night he said again he still had a pins and needles feeling on his skin. He was gesturing to his arms, but I asked where he could feel it. He said it was all over his body, from the heels of his feet, to his chin, but not on his head or face.

Digs mentioned he had experienced the sensation after diving before – after a weekend of diving at Jervis Bay – but that the feeling had dissipated within a few hours of the last dive. I experienced it at JB also – but I still think the very cold temperatures (13-14 degrees, freezing cold wind and rain and a wet boat ride) contributed to that, and it was more circulation coming back to life than anything else...

By now I was starting to think it was odd, so of course consulted Dr Google (well, the DAN website actually). It mentioned tingling skin as a symptom, but commonly skin rashes or joint pain, or pain in the muscles is also associated. We had 2 dives booked for the following day, and three more each day for the two days after that. Rather than risk getting back

into the water I told Digs to ring the DAN hotline for Diving Emergency Services. Digs spoke to Dr David Wilkinson (I think) and then John Lippmann rang us back. John was on holidays but called every day to see how Digs was – he is a very kind, and very helpful man! Both agreed that Digby's symptoms were unusual – a tingling all over without rash or pain or any other symptom was inconclusive but, because he had felt it when diving before (and not at any time while not diving), it appeared to be dive-related. He advised heading to Royal Brisbane Hospital Hyperbaric Unit the following day for assessment. A quick call to lovely Dr Sarah Lockley confirmed that we were doing the right thing, although it all felt a bit excessive. If it wasn't for the 8 dives booked for the following few days we probably would have just ignored it and let it pass.

### Treatment:

After a 2.5 hour drive on 2 January We got to RBH and John Lippmann had called ahead to say we were coming. Digs was assessed with a number of neurological tests. Most were fine, but he failed the math test horribly (count backwards from 100 by 7), and the balance test. However, we've reached the conclusion that he would have struggled with both regardless! The Hyperbaric team also found his symptoms of tingling skin an unusual presentation of decompression illness but recommend getting in the chamber as a diagnostic tool – if he improved with treatment it would indeed appear to be a form of DCI.

The first treatment went to a max depth of 18m, rising to 14m, then 9m, then slowly ascending. It took 4 hours 45 mins. Symptoms started to dissipate within 20 minutes of getting to depth, but back at "home" in Lennox Head that night Digs felt tingling on the back of his arms and across his stomach and lower back.

We went back to RBH for a second treatment – 14m for 2 hours – on 3 January, but Digs still felt tingling down his arms afterwards, so we stayed in Brisbane over night (on the third floor of a hotel rather than heading sky-wards on an upper floor) and



were back at RBH at 7.30am on 4 January. Another 2 hours in the tank and all symptoms were resolved.



During his treatment, Digs had a plastic bag over his head delivering 100% oxygen (except for the period when the hyperbaric nurse disconnected it for a while and then forgot to hook him up again...) and resembled an alien from Mars Attacks! You can see the resemblance for yourselves. [If you have not seen this movie, I thoroughly recommend it. It is a pulp classic!]



Digs stayed in Lennox Head with Shaun and Sharon (thank you so much!) because RBH wanted him to stay less than 200m below sea level. He couldn't drive back with me because there are at least three mountains higher than this on the way home (thanks to Sarah and Dave Casburn for looking this up), so he had an extra week by the pool and taking it easy at the beach before catching the train home last Friday 11 January. No flying for three weeks, no

diving for 6-8 weeks (going to have another dive medical beforehand for a check up), no "exerting himself" for 4 weeks, and the absolute killer – no more than 2 standard alcoholic drinks per day for 2 weeks. Thankfully that is passed now so Digs plans on getting drunk and disorderly this weekend...

So that is the story – in conclusion, there was nothing in the dive profile that alerted us to a problem so we have had to review other factors and assume this was a slight bend. Tiredness, more exertion than usual, and dehydration all appear to be possible contributing factors. Multiple dives over multiple days would have also contributed. So we'll be more mindful in future of proper rehydration during and after dives, and perhaps stick to 2 days per day and if diving over a prolonged period, make sure we have dive-free days to break it up. Other risk-mitigating practices can be taken, like diving on nitrox with the computer set for O<sub>2</sub>, and diving to dive tables rather than computer. We'll review our diving practices in consultation with a dive doctor and hope this never happens again.

### Two positive notes:

1. We now have a brand new collection of nicknames for Digby:
  - Bubble Boy
  - Bubbles
  - Monkey Boy (I think this is a reference to Michael Jackson's pet chimp, Bubbles)
  - Mr Bubbles (don't go there...)
  - Any other suggestions???
2. On filling out our dive logs last night for the first time since July, I realised that on 31 December at Julian Rocks, **I did my 200<sup>th</sup> dive!** Yay for me! (Digby is 6 dives behind...)

A big thank you to all you wonderful friends who sent well wishes to Mr Bubbles during his time of chamber confinement. It was most appreciated.

Natasha Naude





# SEA BRAGGIN'

## “BIG THINGS” PHOTO SPECIAL



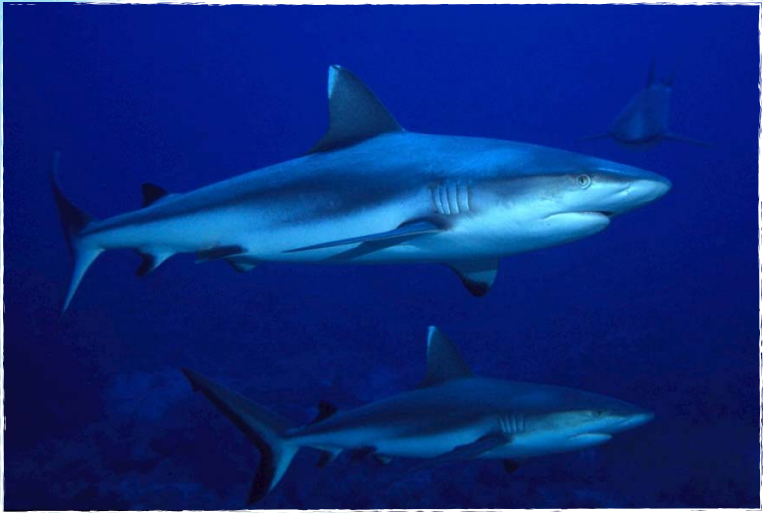
Carole Harris





# SEA BRAGGIN'

## “BIG THINGS” PHOTO SPECIAL



Carole Harris







# SEA BRAGGIN'

## "BIG THINGS" PHOTO SPECIAL



Peter Beaumont



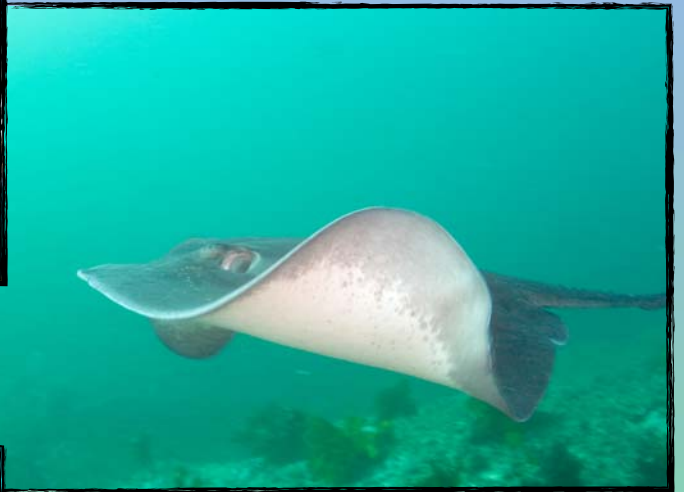


# SEA BRAGGIN'

## "BIG THINGS" PHOTO SPECIAL



Brian Byrnes



Bram Harris







## WHAT'S COMING UP?

WHEN	WHAT/ WHERE	CONTACT	WHEN	WHAT/ WHERE	CONTACT
Sat 26 Jan	Dbl Shore Dive Bare Island	Michael McFadyen <a href="mailto:michael@michaelmcfad.yenscuba.info">michael@michaelmcfad.yenscuba.info</a>	Mon 28 Jan	Shore Dive & BBQ Kurnell	Deb Cook <a href="mailto:deb.akela@optusnet.com.au">deb.akela@optusnet.com.au</a>
Sun 2 Feb	Deep dive SS Tuggerah/ Undola	Michael McFadyen <a href="mailto:michael@michaelmcfad.yenscuba.info">michael@michaelmcfad.yenscuba.info</a>	Sun 3 Feb	Carol Martin Memorial Dive & BBQ Bare Island	Natasha Naude <a href="mailto:natasha@bluecucumber.com">natasha@bluecucumber.com</a>
Sat 9 Feb	Boat Dive Wattamolla	Nancy Scoleri <a href="mailto:nancyscoleri@yahoo.com.au">nancyscoleri@yahoo.com.au</a>	Mon 11 Feb - Mon 18 Feb	Byron Bay trip	Ken Ridley <a href="mailto:kenridley49@gmail.com">kenridley49@gmail.com</a>
Sat 16 Feb	Boat Dive M&K Reef	Natasha Naude <a href="mailto:natasha@bluecucumber.com">natasha@bluecucumber.com</a>	Sun 17 Feb	Shore Dive & BBQ Oak Park	TBC

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