



# SEA BRAGGIN'

## St George Scuba Club Newsletter

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## SS YONGALA

Tim Kennedy and John Crawford dived the SS Yongala wreck on August 3rd, following two earlier dives by John Crawford on July 30th. Many St George Club members will have dived it so know it well, but there is always interest and it remains a sensible goal for people who haven't been. Although we hadn't seen the wreck in its best days as a dive site, (recent cyclones have moved it, stripped it and damaged it and rust and human activities have seen it deteriorate further), it is still a great dive.

The story of the Yongala is tragic, but in truth, sailing in cyclones is a risk best avoided at all costs. There isn't easily reached shelter on the Queensland coast and in the days without satellite technology you took the sea as you found it. It is a desolate site in many ways – an underwater paradise in what is essentially a giant sand bay with few features. Don't swim any distance from the wreck, we were warned, it is a sandy desert out there.

The fish life on the Yongala is indeed wonderful, with rays of many kinds, sea snakes, giant trevally and mangrove jacks. There are countless small pelagics and tropical fish scattering everywhere as divers move through, but the turtle that allowed us to observe closely must be perfectly familiar with scuba divers, for it was unfazed by us, sitting on the side of the wreck watchfully but without panic. Even when it took off, it did so easily and took its mollusk in a shell, firmly ensconced right on the peak of its shell, with it: the hitchhiker would feed through opportunistic changes in its location proving itself clever, we thought. There are also great sponges and corals, plenty of hiding and cleaning places for creatures who live in harmony with other creatures.

We heard whales and saw one on each day, the first one seemed to be resting or playing, perhaps feeding, but the second one was making its way south firmly and steadily.

The dive boat is old now, undoubtedly expensive to replace, but still a good boat as long as you don't mind the 'short wheel base' causing yaw, pitch and buffeting from waves, but it is dry and the shelter from the sun is good.

The Yongala Dive crew were good and went out of their way to help and be watchful. It seems to be popular – each boat was full. We had American troops on the first day, who took the ribbing about running away so they couldn't be confronted with dropping weapons carelessly with a doubtful smile, we had lots of tourists like ourselves and a few dry tropics residents who dive this site regularly.



We had good days, the sea relatively calm, although the cool end to July had been caused by south easterlies blowing right up the east coast and they were strong enough to have caused recent cancellations. We had gentle breezes as midday came and the day was good.

Getting on and off the boat is a bit exciting - it is launched on the beach, in the shallows that are quite protected by the waves on the bay because there are two or three bars, each breaking the waves down. However, to get over each bar the skipper zig zags up and down till he is sure of the break and eases through. There's no riding waves on these bars! We had easy days, but I imagine that if there is a sudden blow, then the experience is one that you wouldn't forget.

It's a great dive, the Yongala: Do it once or often, it will always be rewarding.

John Crawford and Tim Kennedy

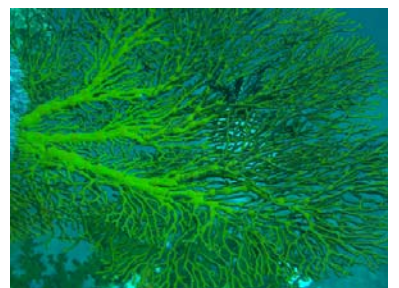
## FIJI

In August, we had a great trip to Fiji where we experienced some really good diving. This year we restricted ourselves to the main island of Fiji, Viti Levu. This is where the sugar cane business is based, where the Chinese Government is investing in Fiji to assist with the building of roads and agriculture, and where there is plenty of diving. Tim and I stayed in Denarau, at a Wyndham resort we have access to there and, having a car, drove ourselves everywhere. The first full day we took an exploratory drive to Voli Voli Resort on the north coast, a little bit out of the sugar town of Raki Raki. It is a long drive on less than good roads, and it takes nearly three hours, but that is why we made this trip, to find out how long it would take. When on the peninsula that has the resorts, we were able to determine which company to dive with and we were very happy to have chosen to dive through Ra Divers at this resort. They have two excellent dive boats as well as fishing boats for day trips. We came back two days later.

The dive boats are fast, dry, good in seas and well equipped. We managed to add a St George Scuba Club sticker to the others already showing the range of places people come from to do these dives. We went out to the Bligh Passage and dived G6, so called, and Whitford's Reef. G6 is said to be amongst the top ten dive sites in the world and it was certainly spectacular with corals, colours and fish life. However, just as we were warned, a current came up out of nowhere as we were rounding the last turn of the dive, all of us struggling to get back. We all had to drag ourselves, hand over hand, along the coral to get to the line. A few of us had less than 20 bar of air remaining after the safety stop but the dive is highly recommended and we won't forget it.

The second day of diving was also out in the Passage, but at Vatua Express which is two pinnacles covered in marine life top to bottom. It is very deep too, at least 45m, so once we got to our depth we began to circle to make our way up. We did five or six trips around, at each level finding magnificent things to see, crossing back and forth between the two parts. Once again this was a colourful and interesting dive.

The best dive for us, however, was at Beqa Lagoon, the shark dive and our second time to do this. The first dive here begins at 30m, where there are as many as 40 bull sharks in view at any time and not much else. Last year there were so many other sharks and a swirling column of other fish that it was hard to see the bull sharks being







fed. This year they were all easy to see. After 18 minutes at this depth we moved up to 10m and there silver tip, black tip and grey reef sharks were everywhere, with a really big moray eel right in front of us also being fed. We finished the dive with a safety stop at 5m with the reef sharks swirling around us, brushing our faces, between legs above and as well as below. The best part came with the second dive though. At 15m, we lined up together, lying flat on our stomachs and only a metre or so behind the crew member feeding the sharks. The bulls are trained by these guys to come in from the left to get fed, so they pass in front of the man with the fish head, turn towards us to take the fish and then swing left again with their food. So, right in front of us, very big sharks with wide open mouths, taking their food.



See Tim's video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkcGkv87m7Y>

We were told that sharks are said to have about the same intelligence as dogs, and they have to learn that they only get fed if they come in from the left. From the right and they cop a sharp rebuke on the nose from the crew. Great dives all, we had a fantastic time in Fiji and plan next year to take in Taveuni as well as the Beqa shark dives again.

John Crawford and Tim Kennedy







## BALI

June 2013

In mid-June Gary, Nancy, Ron and Donna packed their bags and headed off to the warmer climates of Bali for two weeks. Five hour flight, three hour car trip, and we arrived in the sleepy little town of Tulamben, which is located on the NE corner of Bali well away from the tourist areas of Kuta and Seminyak.

Tulamben consists primarily of one main street, on which there are about 20 dive shops/resorts of various categories, about 21 restaurants that all have similar menus and mostly attached to the dive shops, and one small general store. The town is surrounded primarily by farms (mostly rice fields) and as a backdrop has Bali's highest mountain, an active volcano Mt Agung, which last erupted in 1962.

The main diving feature is the wreck of the USAT (United States Army Transport) Liberty, a WW2 wreck that was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine and purposely ran aground so that the supplies it carried could be unloaded. The ship sat beached on the shore until the 1962 volcano eruption, which resulted in the ship sliding into the sea and it now sits just off the shore on black sand in depths ranging from 3m down to 30m. It is 120m long, is resting on its side, and although deteriorating is still a very good dive.



Tulamben is also known for its muck diving, which is code for diving on mainly featureless bottom looking for very small animals and critters – of which there are heaps.

Ron and Donna stayed at Tulamben Wreck Divers, run by an expat Australian and located in the centre of town near the Liberty wreck. The rooms are clean and comfortable, air-conditioned, and being in town, a very easy to walk to the Liberty and other dive sites and afterwards the restaurants etc. The dive operation is very well run and the staff friendly and helpful. On arrival you are allocated a dive guide who looks after you for all your diving activities.

Diving from Tulamben Wreck Divers consists of arriving at the dive shop, having your gear assembled by your dive guide while you put on your wetsuit, then walking to the dive site as your gear is carried either on the head of female porters or on a small motorbike. When you arrive at the dive site you simply put on your gear – assisted by your guide – who then proceeds to help you into the water – the shoreline is small rocks and divers are prone to falling over – and to guide you around the dive site.

Gary and Nancy stayed at Villa Alba, located about 5 mins drive north of the town. This resort is located right on the waters edge with a breathtaking view. The rooms are very comfortable, the food at the restaurant is nice and it has two swimming pools. Gary and Nancy chose this resort because it catered for rebreather diving and Gary was interested in completing a trimix course.







They have a very good set-up for putting the dive gear together, washing it and storing it. They have a well-equipped dive shop and a technical service area to repair gear. They also offer nitrox.

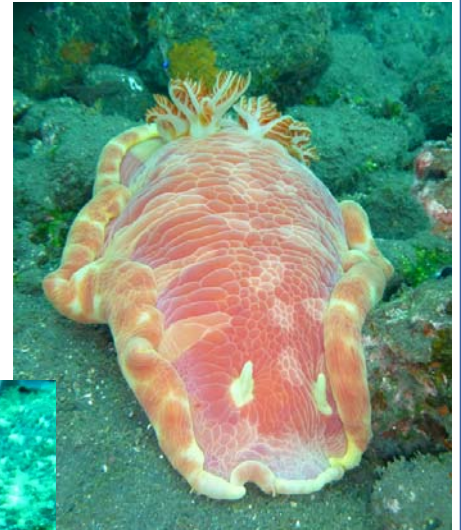
The best time to dive on the Liberty is early in the morning or late in the afternoon. From about 9am the day tripper divers from Kuta area arrive and while we were there this could be 40-50 divers. In peak season (August) it can be lots of buses and several hundred divers.

Since the Liberty has been underwater for 60 years it is covered in lots of growth and has lots of fish. There are large gorgonians, black corals (orange not white), sea whips, large barrel sponges and all manner of large soft corals. There are large fish,



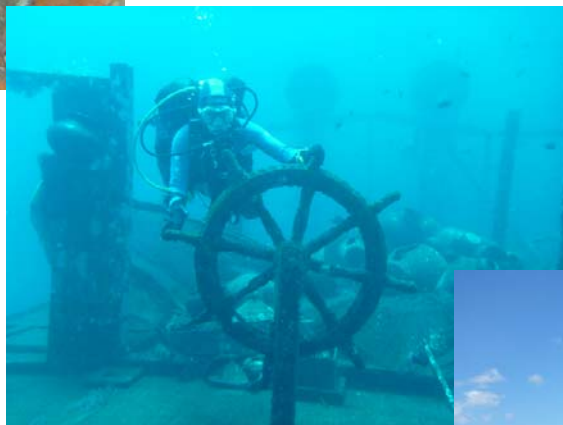
including tomato cod (relative of the potato cod), sweetlips, turtles, and a resident barracuda around 2m long. The benefit of the early morning dive is to see the big school of huge bumphead parrotfish that are only on the wreck early in the day. Smaller critters include anemone and anemone fish, mantis shrimps, crinoids, leaf fish, and a myriad of multi-coloured nudibranchs. On the slope below the wreck in around 34m are a couple of gorgonian with pygmy seahorses, both bargibanti (the pink one) and denise (the yellow one).

There are areas of the wreck into which you can safely swim. The cargo hold, although open, makes good framed photos and at other parts of



the wreck there are easy swim-throughs.

Coral Gardens dive site is a muck diving slope down to 25m. Again, easy entry off the shore, then a black sand sandy slope littered with small bommies that contain heaps of small critters. At 25m there is a cleaning station, which was governed by two coral cod. The station contained numerous cleaner shrimp, hinge-back shrimp and red banded shrimps. As you slowly swim along and up the slope you will find ornate ghost pipefish, ribbon eels, moorish idols, mantis shrimps, crinoid shrimps, numerous nudibranchs, and in







the shallower areas lots of anemone and anemone fish, particularly false clown, pink and Clarke's.

The Wall dive site is near Coral Gardens with entry off a rocky beach. You cross a sandy slope and come to a steep rock wall that goes down to 60m+. Gorgonians, soft corals, sea whips, lots of various fish including moorish idols, coral cod, puffer fish, morays, various shrimps, anemone fish, and even schooling catfish. A highlight from one dive here was a large school of yellow lined scad in the shallows.

The other dive sites in the area require a little bit of travel (10mins to 30mins). Sites we went to included:

Seraya Secrets dive site. This was 10mins by car and once again was entry off a rocky beach. This is a renowned muck dive a bit like Coral Gardens where you swim down to a cleaning station at 25m and gradually work your way back up the slope. The dive is definitely for the macro photographers, with most of the critters found being very small. When we dived here the cleaning station had a large black-spot moray in charge with numerous cleaner, hinge-beak and red

banded shrimp present. During the dives we also found 2 black anglerfish, numerous different types of nudibranchs, various shrimps, plus the usual moorish idols, coral cod, and featherstars.

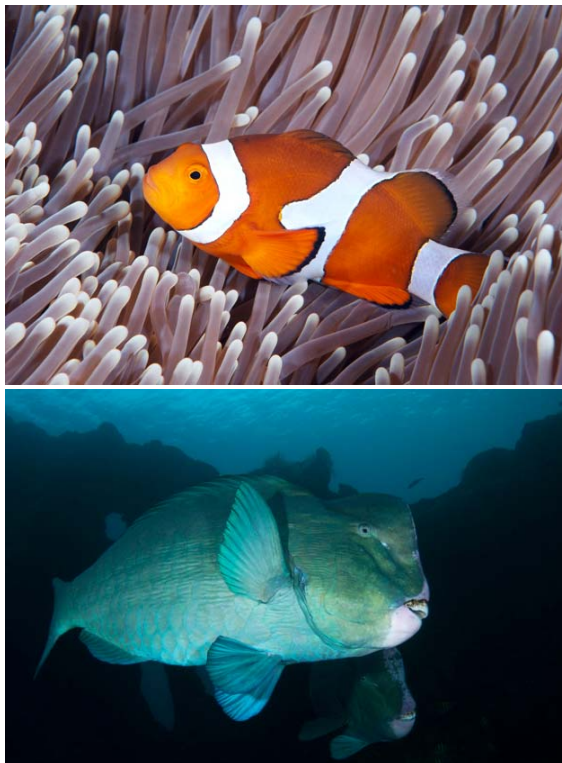
Kubu divesite is located 15 mins by car north of Tulamben. In August last year, an old passenger ship that was travelling between Jakarta and Bali was sunk there. It is easily accessible from shore after a 50m swim. The wreck sits upright at around 30m and is not too long, which makes it easy to look around. There is a volkswagen car in the cargo hold as well as many different size clay pots. On the deck, you can find two toilets and you can swim through the bridge and come out at the bow. The wheel is still there which is good for photos.

Kubu reef is another dive you can do there right off the beach. There are many big walls of staghorn corals and the visibility when we dived it was at least 30m. This reef

had many schools of small reef fish of various colours. We saw anemones with clownfish and anemone fish, eels, lobsters, yellow leaf scorpionfish and more nudibranchs. A spotted eagle ray, a cuttlefish and two bumphead parrotfish were also swimming around.

Villa Alba house reef is just off the beach at Villa Alba. It is another great spot for muck diving. The diving is very similar to Coral Gardens, with many cool critters such as two white leaf scorpionfish, a gorgonian fan with five pigmy seahorses, garden eels, and blue and black ribbon eels.

While over there Gary completed his MOD 2 rebreather course, which teaches divers to dive to 60m using trimix. This course was made up of 7 ocean dives and one pool dive to get used to the extra gear before learning and testing the new configuration. The dives and theory of the course explained the risk of







deep diving along with gas planning for the dive and bail out. During the dives skills such as loss of gas, determining problems with the rebreather and what to do once these problems occurred were all covered. All dives were completed carrying two 80cft tanks and ranged between 25 to 60m, with the last dive being a fun dive to 60m at the Drop Off and lasted over an hour.

Dining in the Tulamben area is good fun. What we found was most of the restaurants had the same menus – including the same spelling mistakes. But the meals were very nice and they were cheap. Rice and noodle dishes feature, although you could also have fish, steak, and surprisingly chicken or pork kiev. Black rice was a specialty dessert but you require a liking for sweet things to enjoy this.

Apart from diving and dining in Tulamben, Ron, Donna and Nancy went on a half day and a full day sightseeing trip.

The half day trip started at lunch time after we had done two morning dives and visited three sites: the water gardens, the king's palace, and the water palace. All very spectacular and worth visiting for their history and scenic beauty.

Our full day trip took us to the middle of the island where we visited the following sites.

The mother temple at Bedalih. Here you had to wear a sarong to gain entry to the temple (Ron looked extra special, especially with his woolly socks and joggers). We also found that unless you paid lots of money – around US\$20 each - you were not allowed into the inner temple to see a ceremony. We didn't pay,



but wandered around most of the site, and watched the ceremony from over the fence!

The lake Batur (set in an active volcano crater). This is in the high country and where we had lunch. On the crater rim there are numerous restaurants with spectacular views of the lake and the active volcano.





A coffee plantation where the specialty is coffee made from Luwak poo. Apparently the animal eats the coffee beans, it passes through them to be excreted, then collected, thoroughly washed and then roasted. Very expensive coffee and apparently has a unique flavour.

A wood carving warehouse in Ubud. The carvings here were nothing short of spectacular, although getting the wood into Australia may be a bit of an issue.

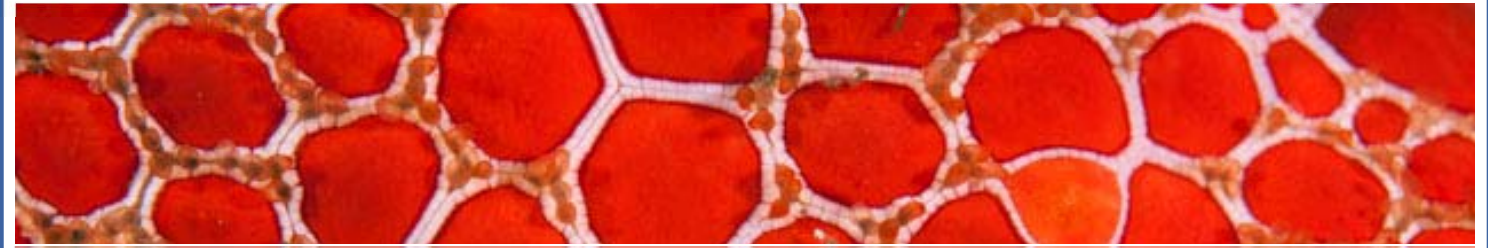
The monkey forest also in Ubud. Lots of monkeys roaming wild in a reserve. You can get up very close though don't touch them – just ask Donna!

All in all we had a really good time. The diving was exceptional, the food fantastic, the weather nice and warm, as was the water and best of all it was really relaxing. Would we go again – absolutely!

Ron Walsh







## THE LEAP



© Ron Walsh

### Sunday 10 August

A beautiful day greeted 9 intrepid divers as we gathered prior to jumping in at The Leap. Divers – Maxine, Kim, Eddie, Bram, Ron Bryant, Gary D, Ron W, and Chris Heath.

A big welcome back to Ron Bryant who we haven't seen for a long time since moving to the North Coast and now in The Gong.

The three camera types (Kim, Gary and Ron) set off in their own little world to slowly flash their way to the exit. We caught up with them in the sponge gardens where Gary was seen chasing a very nervous squid all over the reef.

Along the way I managed to find a spindle cowrie and a few basket stars but Maxine hit the jackpot when she found 2 seahorses on the one sponge (that I'd just looked at and not seen anything – d'oh!).

Now, here's everyone's two bits (well nearly everyone's).

#### Maxine:

What a great day, great viz, cold water but heaps to see. I saw a numbray, PJ shark, two big bellied seahorses, red cuttlefish hovering over the seahorses, Splendid nudi, Tasmanian nudi and heaps of Bennets and Blue Serpents. I found a total of 5 anchors, including a large one being guarded by a juvenile Weedy Sea Dragon. We also saw the usual morwongs, old wives and blue groppers. Thanks to Paul Pacey for organising the dive. The Leap never disappoints.

#### Chris:

One of the highlights was the discovery of a complete anchor, chain and rope by our intrepid dive leader Mr Pacey. Paul would have undoubtedly loved to have also found the boat attached but it wasn't to be. Having made the rope safe he lead us on our way with better than 15 metre viz. in 15 degree water.

#### Kim:

Thanks for organising the dive. It was a beautiful day, with light drift, warm water (16 degrees in winter, that's warm), terrific viz, lots to see, excellent company, and pleasant CACA afterwards. Couldn't ask for a better dive.

Sorry I sent too many photos, but that just proves how good the dive was.

And now for the "Name and Shame" department...



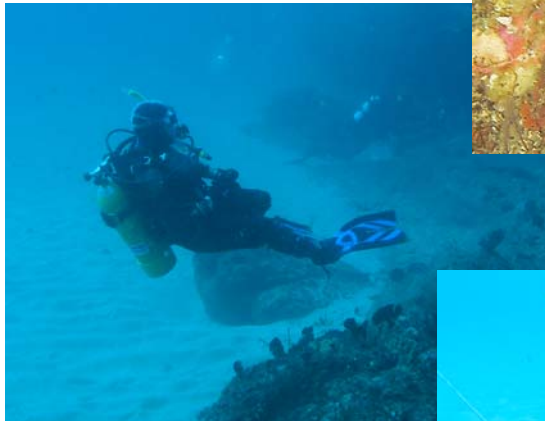


I asked all the divers to send me a couple of sentences for this report. Here is Brambo's reply...

"I'm in. I need to get wet (and I have met my 2 sentence quota)." Regards, Bram  
Arrrrghhhhh skipper, they're a difficult crew to work with and the floggings don't seem to be working!

Many thanks to Kim Dinh, Chris Heath and Ron Walsh for the fantastic photos that they sent me for this report.

Paul Pacey

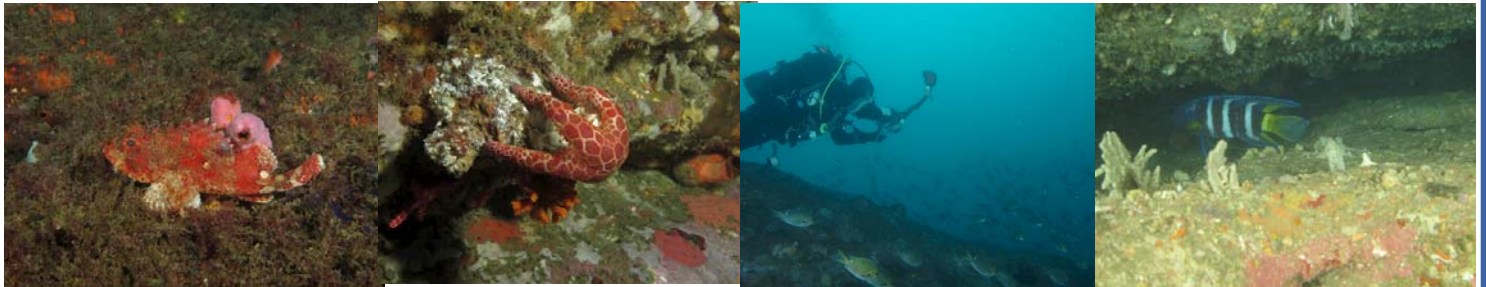






## PISTOL CRACK AND TUPIA POINT

A fantastic day on the water today took Heinz, Peter, Rudy and myself out of Botany Bay. There was a club dive on today to Pistol Crack and Magic point. I already had a full boat and we decided to dive Bypass Reef, however after dropping the anchor we noticed a very strong current so we decided to pull anchor and head over to Pistol Crack with the club boats. We arrived at Pistol Crack and no boats were there. We looked around using the depth sounder and found an interesting bottom so we dropped anchor.



After reaching the bottom we noticed quite a few overhangs and rock formations. Our first past all the overhangs didn't reveal anything outstanding, however nearing the end of the dive Peter pointed a Juvenile Blue Devil Fish, I tried to get a photo but couldn't the crevice was just too narrow. I saw Rudy swimming past so I grabbed his attention and pointed out the Devil Fish, it grew quite quickly, or rather a second larger Blue Devil came out. I managed to get a photo of that one. It was a great dive at a not often dived site. I have adjusted my GPS marks for this site 33° 59.641'S 151° 15.245'E. Visibility was around 20m but with a fair bit of turbidity in the water.

Our surface interval was in Long Bay and after a cuppa and a piece of cake, and a Lamington and another piece of cake..... Better stop there other wise we will never get a second dive in, we headed to Tupia Point. The anchor landed on top of the wall at 14m with the sand at 20m below. One thing we noticed was all the fish – there were masses of them and they were not shy of us divers. The water temperature here was a very fresh 16°. Apart from the walls of One Spot Pullers, we did come across a PJ, a pair of Moray Eels, a large Bull Ray and some varying size Cuttlefish.

Wayne Heming



## WEIRD TALES

August 29th, the Thursday night dive at Bare Island, I was lying on the bottom photographing a Red Indian fish. I went to move off, but couldn't: How come? I looked around and there wrapped around my ankle were the legs of an octopus. Held fast and laughing, I thought, "He wants me!" I had to shake and shake to get him off and at last he came free with his suckers going one by one, like a rubber mat in a bath. I'm too big to eat, he was going to have a go anyway.

Tim Kennedy





## SABAH AND SIPADAN

I recently used my Dive Adventures Voucher to go to Sabah (formerly British North Borneo). Two of us booked onto the Celebes Explorer to ensure maximum diving on Sipadan, which is not assured if you stay on neighbouring resort islands. The dive plan was 4 dives on Sipadan and overnight and night (muck) dive at Mabul Is. I did 24 dives out of a maximum 28 on air for the week.



Sipadan is no longer habited and signing on for the Marine Park was a daily event. There are a dozen sites all around the Island and only the Southern side shows any deterioration of an otherwise pristine reef and ecology. The full feeding chain was present, from



many juvenile species to large schools of Jacks and their predatory sharks, GT's and Barracouta.

Frog Fish, Leaf Fish, Pigmy Sea Horses and lots of Nudibranch were seen. Turtles were a constant sight.

Mabul Is. is best for muck diving and there were lots of opportunities to photo Giant Frog Fish - Green and Black Phase, Ghost Pipe Fish, Thorny Seahorse, Pipe Fish generally, Hermit Crabs, Leaf Fish etc.

To finish our experience we booked into a Rainforest lodge near Sandakan for two nights and we experienced the abundant wildlife including wild Orang-utans, Proboscis Monkeys, Macaques, Birds, Reptiles and wild Elephants. I visited the War memorial near the airport before flying home.

All up it was a quality experience but those wishing to repeat my experience are advised to wait for the new vessel arriving sometime next year.

I took nearly 500 photos and all photos were taken on my Cannon Compact without flash. Night shots used an LED spotlight and this worked well.

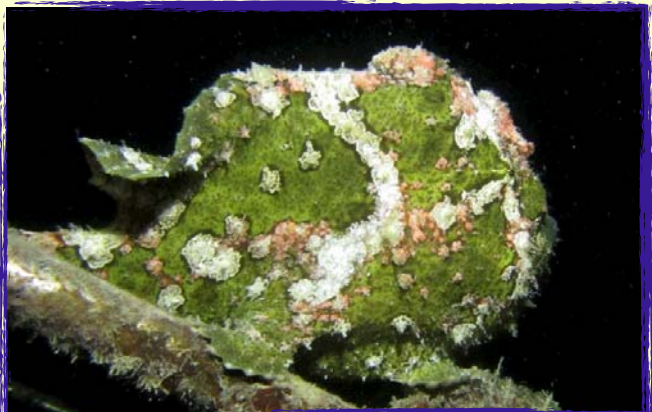


**Rob Chenery**





# SEA BRAGGIN'







## NIGHT DIVE OAK PARK

1 August 2013

It started with a phone call. With Michael away in sunny Scotland I phoned Gary Dunnett to find out who was organising the Thursday night dives for the next few weeks. Gary was not sure so we decided to plan a dive for Oak Park and work it out from there. Emails went out, there were a few interested parties, but in the end only Gary and I dived.

It was a beautiful still night with no wind. There was a little bit of swell but not too much to be worried about. When we arrived there was another group of 5 divers half kitted up but they took a lot longer than we did.

Entry was off the back of the pool – a few small waves but nothing to be worried about. Vis was quite good initially at around 10m but the further out we went it gradually deteriorated to around 5m. We followed the sand line out past reef one exploring under the many crevasses and overhangs. The giant cuttlefish are still about and we saw 3 on the way out, all hiding in the back of cracks and quite shy of our torches. We also came across several PJs free swimming – they seemed to come over to investigate our dive lights and then disappear. Gary found a flatworm – as yet not sure what one – which is quite rare for this site.

For those that know the “sword in the stone”, someone



has moved it from between reef one and two back towards the shore next to the small swim-through half way along reef one – nothing like stuffing up navigation marks! At reef two we explored the large overhangs – no large wobbeongs tonight – before turning and heading to the latrine and the cave. Found a nice dendrodoris on one of the finger sponges, a magnificent volute shell, plus other shells wandering across the sands. Near the latrine there was a large blue groper sleeping in one of the overhangs and elsewhere a couple of green morays. One thing we did find was lots of small dwarf leatherjackets pretending to be a part of the seaweed.





After exploring the cave we turned and headed back along reef two and back in along reef one. Just as we hit reef one we came across a green turtle resting under a ledge. As we approached he lazily started to swim, circling us a couple of times before heading up to the surface for air. Quite a surprise for this time of the year.

Along reef one we encountered several more giant cuttlefish before we exited next to the pool.

A hot shower followed by pizza and beer at Lilli Pilli made for a good end to a great dive.

Ron Walsh



## BAHAMAS DIVING (AND OTHER STUFF)

Sue and I have just returned from a holiday to Costa Rica, Cuba and the Bahamas. This was never intended to be a diving trip, since it was the rainy season around the Caribbean and despite Costa Rica having some of the best diving spots in the world, the runoff from the land turned the inshore waters a muddy brown and diving didn't seem like a worthwhile option. However, the rain presents other opportunities. Many of the rivers in Costa Rica are dam-controlled and at specific times of the day, the excess water is dumped into the rivers below the dams. This presents a great opportunity for white-water rafting. There had been a fair amount of rain in the Bambi River catchment and the 10am water release was going to be a good one. All the rafters including us turned up for this daily event and we weren't disappointed. The flow was such that what was supposed to be a 1/2 grade of rapids was reclassified as 3/4 level. Fortunately none of the rafts flipped in the water and everybody had a great time. The river water was pleasantly warm and tee-shirts and shorts were all that were required. After 2 hours of battling the rapids, the river calmed down and a number of us jumped ship and drifted along behind the rafts until we arrived at the lunch stop on the bank. After lunch we had about another hour of rapids where the river narrowed again and then it was back to town for a well-earned beer and a rest.

The rivers in Costa Rica have both crocodiles and their smaller relatives, caimans, so it's always best to get local advice before entering the water. The river where we were rafting only had the caimans and these generally don't





bother people. However, on our way to the Pacific coast we crossed a large river with extensive mud banks. This river is notorious for the number of very large crocodiles that call the river home. We walked onto the bridge over the river and we weren't disappointed. I've seen a lot of crocs in the top end of Australia but I've never seen so many in the one place as there were below this bridge. These were big reptiles and this was one river where you would not want to swim!

From Costa Rica we went on to Cuba, where once again the sea did



not look particularly good for diving. The country however is very interesting both historically and culturally. Lobster tail costs about \$8 and a plate sized one costs \$15. Cuba makes arguably the best rum in the Caribbean and a litre of 7-year old aged rum costs about \$12. There are no MacDonalds, Burger King, Wendy's, Subway, Pizza Hut or any other American fast-food chains.

There aren't even any American tourists since they are banned from visiting Cuba by the US government. There are a number of locations in Cuba that have dive operations and I'm sure the diving would be brilliant at the right time of the year.

Since we could not travel directly to the US from Cuba we had a three-day stop-over in Nassau in the Bahamas. There is practically no surface water here and any rain just soaks straight into the sand so runoff

from the land is not a problem. The ocean looked clean, blue and inviting so once we checked in to our hotel we inquired about doing some diving while still leaving a day free before our flight out. The local operation is known as Sturt's Cove Diving and it is a pretty slick operation. Sue and I booked on for a double dive the following day. A bus picked us up at 11.00am and took us across the



island to the dive centre. We hired all our gear except for masks and snorkels. The equipment was all good quality and I noticed that all the reg/occy combos were identical. They were Aqualung Titan combos which was just one spec level down from what I use back in Sydney. The BCs were either Aqualung or

Sequest and in good condition. Nothing had been cobbled together from whatever bits and pieces were on hand which I have seen at other dive operations over the

years. We collected our 3mm steamer suits and we were ready to go. The dive boats were big and roomy with about 40 tank racks and carried 20 or so divers comfortably. There was seating on the upper deck and room to stretch out on the bow for those wanting to improve the tan.

The first dive was at 'Wreck Reef Wall' which is three



dives in one as it does in fact contain a wreck, a reef and a wall. The wreck is an obsolete Bahamian patrol boat the 'David Tucker', which was sunk on a patch of sand at the edge of a coral reef in about 18m of water. The boat is upright and is easy and safe to penetrate. The vis was so good that the entire boat could be seen clearly from either end. After checking out the wreck we then cruised over the reef. The coral here is mostly secondary growth over old dead coral which may be the result of hurricane action over the years but that's just a guess. There doesn't





seem to be any pollution issue around here. The fish life is quite good but without the big schools of damsel fish and other little stuff so common in the waters of the South Pacific. Purple seemed to be a common colour with purple sea whips and organ pipe coral, purple flute mouths, surgeon fish and tangs. The reef ended abruptly at a vertical wall which dropped off into 2km of blue water we were told. We cruised along the edge of the wall for a while before returning to the wreck and back to the boat. The water had been a pleasant 28 degrees. I estimated the vis to be about 30m but when I mentioned it to the dive master he said that it was only about 20m and about normal for that time of year. Clearly their estimate of distance underwater is somewhat different to mine. Maybe I've been kidding myself for years!

The second dive was at a site known as 'BBC Wreck Reef'. The story goes that the BBC came to the Bahamas some years ago to make a documentary about the speed at which coral will colonise and grow. They acquired an obsolete little tug boat and sank it on a patch of sand surrounded by coral reef. Every six months or so they sent down a film crew to record the coral growth but after a few years they abandoned the idea concluding that Bahamian coral was just too lazy to be worthwhile watching! The little tug is still in almost pristine condition. Other than encrusting algae and a few clumps of soft coral it is practically growth free. This wreck sits upright in about 12m of water, is also easy to penetrate, and has plenty of schooling fish

below the decks. The wheel house is where Sue and I posed for a photograph. Amazingly, the wheel still turns!

After this dive we handed in the dive gear and the bus dropped us back at our hotel. We returned the following day to do a snorkel trip. We couldn't dive again as we were flying out early the following day. The boat took us to three different sites, all at the edges of coral reef. It was mandatory to wear a life vest but at least these were the flat bladder type which could be inflated if need be. If not, they contained no buoyance and did not impede

free diving for those who wanted to. The last of the sites was a shark feed – real tourist stuff. Everybody piled into the water and a steel box with some bait in it was lowered into the water below the boat. This attracted large numbers of Caribbean reef sharks, which look just like any other reef shark



except for being a uniform dark grey colour with no white or black fin tips. Once everyone was back on board, all the spare bait was thrown in and this was when a real feeding frenzy began at the surface. This was not a good place to decide to wash out a mask! That was our last holiday activity before departing for the US and home to Sydney.

**Steve & Sue Shaw**





## Narooma/Montague Island Seals Long Weekend Fri 4 – Sun 7 October

### **Diving:**

Narooma Charters <http://www.naroomacharters.com.au/>

The boat takes 22 people and if we get a full 22 people the cost will be \$80 per double dive! (It's normally \$100 per double).

They also take our tanks back to the shop each night, fill them and bring them back to the boat the next morning so no need to go back to the dive shop at all if you don't want to.

This year the Narooma Blues Festival is on over the October long weekend with artists such as Chris Cain, Ash Grunwald and The Holmes Brothers featured (<http://www.bluesfestival.tv/lineup/>). It's also the peak of the whale watching season so all-in-all it's a very busy weekend and accommodation is already almost completely booked out.

### **Accommodation:**

I can potentially get a booking at the YHA Hostel at a cost of approximately \$30 per person, per night (3 night minimum, so approx. \$90 in total) in the dorm style rooms (from 4 person share to 7 person share) or approx. \$42 per person per night (again 3 night minimum) in the double or twin share rooms. All rooms are en-suite and have tea/coffee making facilities and a small fridge. The owners have always been really good to us and allow us to use their back yard to wash our dive gear and also have clothes lines and a drying room for us to use. All linen is supplied and there's a big kitchen and dining room (<http://www3.yha.com.au/hostels/nsw/south-coast/narooma/>).

Given that the accommodation in the town is already almost booked out, unfortunately I would need a deposit of \$50 from you along with your booking. This can be paid into the club bank account as usual.

Narooma is such a beautiful place and diving with the seals is just the most incredible rush, I can't recommend it enough, so go on get in quick!

**Contact Caroline Corcoran**  
**[carolinecorcoran@yahoo.com](mailto:carolinecorcoran@yahoo.com) or 0450 140 795**





## SEA BRAGGIN' NORTH SOLITARY ISLANDS Sun 24 – Fri 29 November 2013

This time of year is usually pretty good for the 24 degree, blue water.

If you haven't dived here before YOU ARE MISSING OUT. This some of the most diversified and spectacular diving in NSW.

Huge anemone beds nestled in Anemone Bay and all down the western side of North Solitary. Shark Gutters and of course FISH SOUP - an unbelievable site with schools upon schools of fish.

Pimpernel Rock is also a magnificent dive that we will be hoping to do.

The plan is to arrive at Wooli (about an 8 hour drive) on Sunday 24th November and dive 4 days (Monday to Thursday) with Friday being optional as well as a safety net should a day be blown out.

We will be staying at the Wooli Dive Centre which is a very large and well appointed home.

All up cost is \$130.00 per day per diver (\$30.00 for a non-diver/ accompanying partner) – which includes accommodation, double boat dive and air fills. No nitrox available.

Maximum 14 divers - **limited spots left!**

To ensure your spot please deposit \$50.00 into the club's bank account  
St George Scuba Club BSB 062 028 A/C 000800455

Be quick as this is a MUST DO dive location.

Please email Kelly and myself when you pay the deposit.

**Contact Mark Ridsdale [msrconsulting@aol.com](mailto:msrconsulting@aol.com)  
0419 243 717**





## WHAT'S COMING UP?

WHEN	WHAT/ WHERE	CONTACT	WHEN	WHAT/ WHERE	CONTACT
Sat 14 Sept	Boat Dive Xanadu	Natasha Naude <a href="mailto:natasha@bluecucumber.com">natasha@bluecucumber.com</a>	Sun 15 Sept	Dbl Boat Dive ex HMAS Adelaide Terrigal	Nancy Scoleri <a href="mailto:nancyscoleri@yahoo.com.au">nancyscoleri@yahoo.com.au</a>
Wed 18 Sept	Club Meeting AGM	Jason Coombs <a href="mailto:j.coombs@unsw.edu.au">j.coombs@unsw.edu.au</a>	Sat 21 Sept	Deep Dive SS Kelloe	Michael McFadyen <a href="mailto:michael@michaelmcfadyscuba.info">michael@michaelmcfadyscuba.info</a>
Sat 21 Sept	Shore Dive Shiprock	Eddie Ivers <a href="mailto:eddieivers@iprimus.com.au">eddieivers@iprimus.com.au</a>	Sat 28 Sept	Boat Dive Whale Watch Platform	Ida DiCamillo <a href="mailto:edas@iprimus.com.au">edas@iprimus.com.au</a>
Sun 6 Oct	Bandana Day Dive & BBQ Kurnell	Phil Rose <a href="mailto:pvrose5@bigond.net.au">pvrose5@bigond.net.au</a>	Fri 4 Oct - SUn 7 Oct	Narooma/ Montague Island Long weekend	Caroline Corcoran <a href="mailto:carolinecorcoran@yahoo.com.au">carolinecorcoran@yahoo.com.au</a>

## CLUB COMMITTEE

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