



Sea Braggin'

St George scuba club newsletter



photo of Pygmy Pipe Horse by Mike Scotland

A big thankyou to members for sending in articles:

Natasha Naude, Ron Walsh, Rob Chenery, Michael Rolands, Peter Flockhart, Mike Scotland

Diving in December/ January

When	Event	Contact
Sun 4 th Jan	Deep Dive Undola	Peter Flockhart
Sat 10 th Jan	Boat dive Middle Ground	Peter Flockhart
Sat 17 th Jan	Boat dive SS Bombo	Jane Scarsbrook
18 Jan	Adelaide double dive	Caroline Corcoran
21 Jan	Club Meeting	Natasha Naude
Mon 26 Jan Australia Day	Shore dive BBQ Kurnell	Debbie Cooke
Sat 24 th Jan	Boat dive Mary's Reef	Peter Flockhart
weekly	Shore dives	See calendar
Thursday nights	Night dives	Michael McFayden

Club Christmas Party Sunday 7 December Kurnell by Natasha Naude

There was a great turn-out for the annual Club Christmas party on Sunday 7 December, with 45 divers in the morning and 80 people for the lunch later in the day. Dives were scheduled for three different sites at Kurnell, so there were plenty of options for those seeking to get wet. With the week of torrential rain and storms there was not much hope for good viz, but some divers were pleasantly surprised at the conditions – although colder than expected, viz was better than it has been for the last couple of years on party day!

After the morning dives, a hearty breakfast was supplied by Eda and Ray – bacon and egg rolls aplenty were dished out to the hungry hordes. Apologies to all the chefs – as I came later in the day I don't know who to thank for manning the tongs and getting it all cooked. Your efforts were much appreciated, I am sure! Dave Burns got everyone kick-started by making some good coffees and the day's celebrations were off to a great start.

Lunch was served and ready by 1pm – a delicious feast of BBQ chooks, potato bake, mushroom pesto salad, green salad and a tomato, cucumber and olive salad, beetroot, bread rolls, freshly carved leg ham and beautiful sweet school prawns. There was hardly any left overs, but no-one was left hungry so big applause to the caterers, who really nailed the quantities this year. Dave Burns also cooked up a couple of yummy Christmas cakes and I believe his mum knocked up the Christmas pud, which were served with warmed custard. A fine effort indeed!

Between lunch and lunch-dessert we drew the raffles – rushing a bit to beat the thunderstorm, which had been creeping up on us over the last hour or so.

The event organizer raffle prize of a new steel tank went to Eda for organizing the Frenchman's Bay BBQ on 30/03/14. Big congrats to Eda! And of course many thanks to everyone who organized and undertook events throughout 2014.

The Ham and Champagne prizes went to:

Ian Hittman	Ray Edwards	Jason Coombs
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Nancy Scoleri	Michael McFadyen	Carole Harris
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It's hilarious that two hams have gone to a vegetarian and a vegetarian's husband! Carole is donating her ham back to the club for one lucky second chance winner at the December meeting.

The Hamper prizes went to:

Leon Harris	Mike Scotland	Ricardo AlvesPolizei
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Mark Simpson	Dave Burns	Paul Watkinson's dad John
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The Wine prizes went to:

Paul Watkinson	Kelly McFadyen	Vera McGregor
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Michael Wright	Eddy Labour	Louise Labour
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In another twist of fate, three couples won prizes! Lucky duckies.

Many thanks to everyone who brought along their tents/canopies, fridges, tables and so on to help everyone be comfortable on the day. Thanks indeed to Dave Burns for the prawns, dessert, coffee and organising the runsheet for the day. Thanks to Deb for the chooks and potato bake and scout food tent, Paul P for his yummy pesto mushroom salad, Rox for the olive salad and Tricia for the green salad. Thanks to me for the hams! Strangely the tip of my finger is still numb from using the electric carving knife to carve the ham up! Weird. And thanks also to everyone who helped set up, cook, serve food and pack everything away. Thanks to the committee members for arranging the raffle draw.

It was a very pleasant day with great food, company and weather which behaved itself until after we packed the last bits and pieces away. A good success made possible by many hands. I hope everyone else enjoyed themselves as much as we did. Mahla certainly had a lovely time! Thanks again. Natasha Naude



Kelly and Mahla by Natasha

Christmas Party shore dive

Text and photos by Ron Walsh

Donna, Michael M, Gary P, Chris H and I did the dive from Inscription Point to the Monument. Visibility in the shallows was not very good but at depth it was a surprising 7-10m but with cold 16.7C water.

Critters sighted included lots of nudibranchs – splendid chromodoris, serpent pteraeolidia, sweet ceratosoma, Angas's glossodoris, and surprisingly nembrothapurpurnolineata (lined nembrotha) – a nice white pygmy pipehorse, a big belly seahorse, two large magnificent volutes with their eggs sacks, and a large free swimming blue jellyfish.

Toes were cold after the dive but the coffee and bacon and egg roll were a well-deserved reward.

Ron



Magnificent Volute laying eggs by Ron Walsh



Purple Lined Nembrotha by Ron Walsh

Pygmy Pipe Horse by Ron Walsh

Guadalupe Is. and San Benedicto Is.

Text and photos by Rob Chenery

Between the 30th Oct and 17th Nov I took a trip to Mexico to take up an organised trip on the Sea Escape pictured. There were 18 divers and we met in San Diego and travelled by small coach to Mexico to board the vessel. We were off to Guadalupe Is for cage diving and was greeted by a big rainbow over the island and seals on the rocks. We did not arrive until the next day and had already discovered two things. One the vessel had been extended upwards making for increased instability and it was an El Niño year which made water temperatures 4 Degrees warmer than we had prepared for. At first a few of us were concerned that the great whites would show up as the water was over 20 Degrees, but they did. Pictured are the shark cages deployed from the stored position on the top deck for transit. There was unlimited diving in the cages; one at the surface and one at 10 metres. I have included two photos of Great Whites that got as big as 3.5-4 metres in length. The more interesting action was on video. I have included the vertical shot to the GW because this demonstrates that animals normal mode of attack. That is, to stay down low in the gloom and watch for the profile of a seal where they will rise rapidly and absolutely vertically to grab the victim. This shot is gets the GW just before breaching the surface so the light balance from my compact camera was not so good.



On leaving Guadalupe Is we had a very uncomfortable 3 day trip down to CaboSan Lucas. Due to El Nino we discovered the Kelp Forrest at San Benito Is was non-existent and journeying on to Cabo, we passed Tetis Banks in the night to arrive at Cabo early where we were denied port entry for provisioning until the next day.



Great White Shark photos by Rob Chenery

One interesting seal dive was at Cabo at the point and on a fishing boat wreck. Seals guard the entrance to Cabo and can be seen to board the transom of fishing boats to be hand fed.

On leaving Cabo it was another 24 hour trip to San Benedicto Is. where we were having good diving including with Mantas. After two days we attempted to travel over night to the Socorro Is and the Roca Partida. We never got there as the Captain turned around at 4am to escape the conditions that this boat could not handle, and not before an incident with flooded bilges. The next morning there was a group meeting as many passengers had enough of this vessel. In the end it was decided not to tackle another transit at this time and to spend the rest of the trip at San Benedicto Is.



Well that was when the animals came out to play, with Mantas up to 4 metres across. I have included the photo of a Manta with divers. Notice the headvane (for want of the technical term) are curled up. This indicated they were in play mode and not only were they on their cleaning station but they loved bubbles. There were some outstanding interactions with divers on video. We also saw Hammer Heads, Tiger, Grey, Silky, Black Tip, and Whitetip sharks.

All up we had some very good diving and the crew did well under the circumstances. The warm water meant we took wet suits that were too heavy. We spent half our time in transit and did half the dive sites and dives advertised. Night diving is illegal in Mexico so I don't know why that was listed as things to do. I think normally you could do Guadalupe Is cage diving and do Islands south of Cabo San Lucas as separate trips and that would be recommended by me. Some had already done Cocos Is. They spoke highly of that. So once ashore we stayed in a nice hotel (pictured) on the fishing marina and while some stayed on I was pleased to get home after one night as I had been travelling for 5 weeks in north America.

Rob Chenery

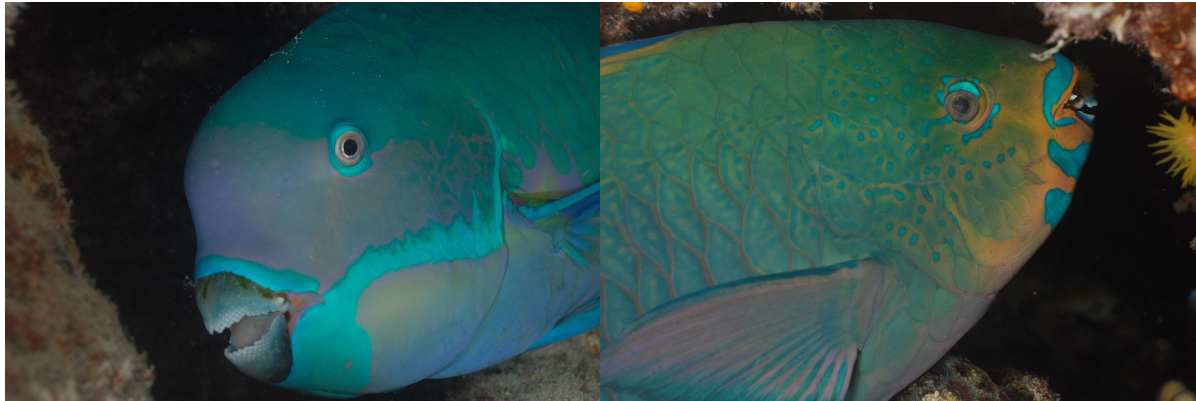
Great Barrier Reef trip 2014 Part two.

Text and photos by Mike Scotland

St George members have had another outstanding trip to the Barrier Reef. We had excellent weather and good seas for the entire trip.

On day three, we dived at Shell Reef. Everyone thought that this was a great dive. It had excellent small fish life and dramatic swim throughs. From here we dived the outer Barrier

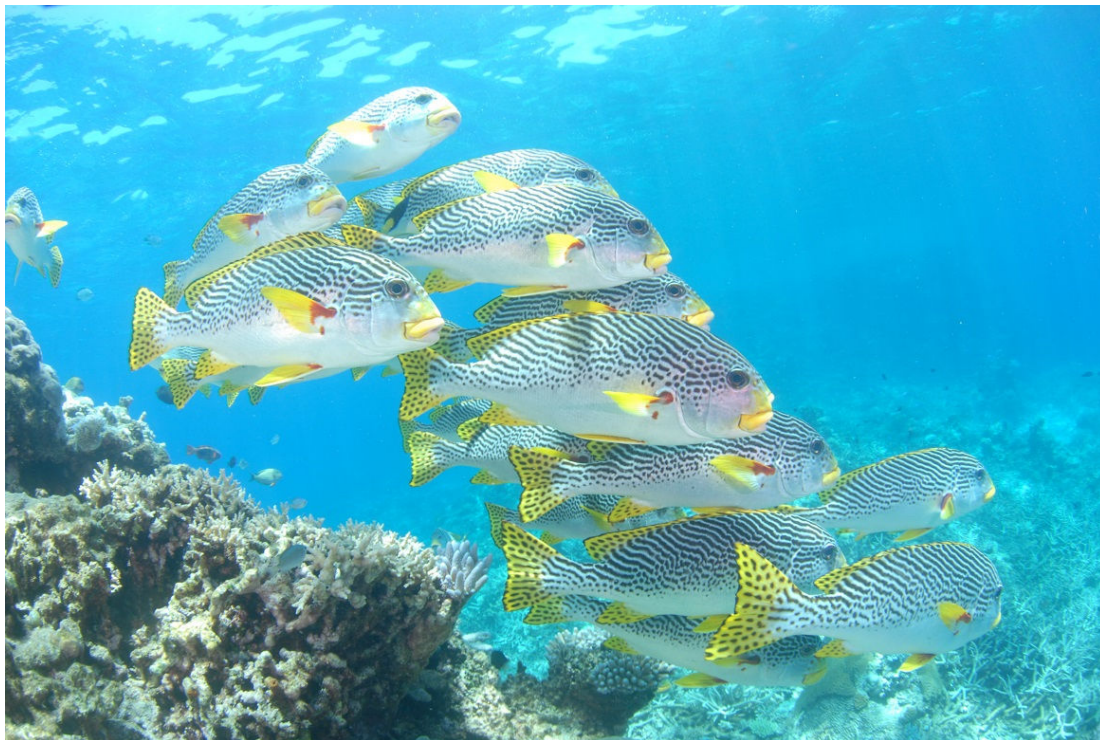
Reef, at Castor and Lion Reef. Lion reef was a big hit. It had schools of fish, some small sharks and a lot of great wide-angle photo scenes with Fan corals and golden Feather stars.



We had a great night dive at Jaguar Reef. There were plenty of Painted Crays out in the open. Epulette sharks were out feeding as well as lots of prawns and shrimps.

The next day, we dived Jupiter Reef. It had a big hard swim along a deep wall. It was one of the skipper's favorite dives of the area. We cruised down current for a long way and then turned around the reef to find a large school of bright yellow Diagonal Sweetlips. These are a photographers dream. It was easy to get thirty big fish in a school. Some divers saw two large Tawny Nurse sharks here as well.

Viper reef was the night dive on this day. We saw three species of sleeping Parrotfish, Blue Spot Rays, and sleeping Butterfly fish.



Dave wanted to put us on another of his favourite dives. Marty's Mad Mile was a current dive. The reef is always exposed to strong current. We headed out to the front edge of the reef to spot schools of fish. The current was strong enough to rip your arms off. Unless of course, you dive in the lee of the reef to get protection from the worst of it. It was a great dive. I spent a lot of the dive exploring sea caves and photographing Harlequin Tusk Fish.

The weather was near perfect so we decided to return to the Yongala for the last day. Here is a great example of how much a good skipper can influence the overall enjoyment of the diving. Dave took us several hours out of his way so that we could do two dives on the Yongala on our final day. How good is that?



The current was ripping. Our plan was to do the first dive well before the day boat arrived. We anchored at the stern mooring of the Yongala. The dive briefing reinforced the fact that we had to keep a grip on the descent line all the way to the bottom. In fact, letting it go would have been positively dangerous.



Photos by Mike Scotland

Once on the wreck, we had protection from the raging current. Most of us worked our way down to the bow. On the way, a large Hawksbill turtle swam with a huge Marbled Bull Ray. Pairs of big Six Banded Angelfish cruised over the hull. A massive Loggerhead turtle was sleeping up near the top of the wreck. These giant rays could kill in a split second if they wanted to. Yet, they seem happy to swim with us and allow us to get within centimetres of them. (When the current pushes you too close to the rays, they do not seem to mind at all.) The return trip to the ascent line was fun. We went up to the top of the wreck in sixteen metres and rode the current down. The one hundred and ten metre ride only took two minutes.

This was the Yongala at its best. The vis was fifteen metres and the marine life was cracking.

That was the third excellent trip on Kalinda. I have booked again for 2015 on Nov 8 for another six days of bliss on the Barrier Reef. I can't wait.



Selfie taken after the dive on the Yongala with Kalinda in the background. Mike Scotland

Blue ring octopus giving birth

On a recent dive at Shiprock on low tide while diving with Eddie Ivers, I was fortunate to encounter a female Blue Lined Octopus with eggs. As I settled in for a few photos, she was putting on a warning display by exposing her mouth and beak. This is the ultimate threat pose of an octopus. Next step is possible aggression. However, octopuses are very timid and unlikely to bite if you keep a safe distance as we did.



To our delight, some of the eggs began to hatch. The baby octopi were brown in colour with stripes. They were able to flash some blue colouration even at a few seconds after birth.



Blue Lined Octopus showing a tiny newborn baby in the centre. Mike S.

Nearby, a pair of Grubfish was showing a great deal of interest in these bite size morsels. Up above in the water column, Sweep and Old Wives were hovering about hoping for a little delicacy.

Mike S

Trip on the Taka Ribbon Reef Explorer

Text and photos by Michael Rolands

It's got to be on everyone's bucket list here, I suppose: go dive the Great Barrier Reef. I took up diving only in 5 months ago, and have wondered ever since why I waited so long. As my daytime job became very much unrewarding, I decided to throw it all around to paraglide, dive and drive around the country for at least a year. Just one little problem: I wouldn't get to the Great Barrier Reef before the cyclone season set in. No way was I going to wait another year...

So, I quickly organised a holiday from my gap year, and booked a flight to Cairns just before the Christmas holidays. Choices seem pretty limited in terms of doing longer trips out into the northern part of the Reef but the Taka Ribbon Reef Explorer seemed like a good option. Turns out: it was!

In a 3-day/4-night trip, we boated all the way from Cairns to Cod Hole, near Lizard Island, stopping in various spots along the way, like the Steve's Bommie, Gorgonian Wall, Clamgardens Wildside, Crackerjack, Snake Pit, Challenger Bay and the Lighthouse Bommie. Most of the distance was made overnight every time, whilst we spent maximum 2 hours between dives to re-anchor at a next site.



As I had only dived in Sydney before this trip (max viz 15m), I was totally blown away when we descended at Ribbon Reef 2, with a visibility of more than 30m@27 degrees, spotting

turtles from miles away it seemed. No wetsuit necessary at all. And it just got better from there on. Whilst storms were brewing over the mainland, we were enjoying the sunshine, and an unusual (?) north-easterly. The latter forced the crew to find or create new mooring points. They were very diligent with this, and put quite a bit of effort into tying us up nice and close to the dive sites.

Dive guides were free, if you wanted one, but most often, the 25 divers were buddying up in pairs that had been intelligently pre-arranged by the crew, based on experience. After just 2 dives, everyone found a well matching buddy. Some of the dive sites were new to the crew even, but they always did a quick scouting dive immediately after anchoring, just so they could brief us about conditions, and the layout of the site.

There were some safety rules imposed by the crew, but they were pretty relaxed, and I don't think anyone felt restricted by the rules really. The dive schedule was fairly tight, but not stressed, just perfect in my eyes. I did my nitrox certification on this trip, which included nitrox tanks for the whole trip. We did two night dives as well, which was great fun with such good visibility. To top it all off: the food was plentiful and fantastic! Actually, I thought I'd see a few more kilos on the scales after this trip, but somehow, all the diving kept that nicely under control.

So, altogether, I can't wait to do that same trip again! Yet, it can never be the same trip, not just because the crew and the buddies will be different: they chose new dive sites on every trip, depending on the weather conditions. Needless to say, I had a great time, and feel like I've learned a lot, got better on my air consumption, as I feel more comfortable in the water. But: I only saw about 5 nudibranchs altogether during the 15 dives over there. Feeling totally nudibranch-deprived, I was happy to be diving back here with the St George club: 30+ nudibranchs in one night dive.

Attached are some of the best photos I've taken out there. All with the Canon Powershot D30, together with a small torch.



Club dive on 20th December 2014

Peter Flockhart

The weather during the week had not been too bad but on Friday it blew very strongly from the south whipping up rather large seas. In fact it was breaking around 30 on the bare Island Bommie, not a good sign for the dive on Saturday.

However all the skippers decided to go as I rec'd no cancellations that night.

Saturday dawned as being cloudy but with very little wind.

SeaJohn& Yes dear 2 launched from Port Botany with full crews – no dropouts here.

Le Scat went from Hole in wall with a full crew also &DownUnder launched from the RMYC with one less as Bob Hill had dropped out with an ear infection.

On reaching the heads at Botany Bay it became evident that we would not be diving Pistol crack to a large swell rolling in from the SE. Those on Yes Dear 2 skippered by Wayne Heming hedged their bets & dived a deep reef off Cape Banks known as By Pass reef. This is reef runs in a north south direction & can drop to depths of 34m. Divers reported 12m and a slight current.

Les Scat skippered by Michael McFadyen and his crew were seen diving the reef under the Kurnell Whale watching Platform. This site starts in around 10m before dropping over the wall to 22m.

DownUnder with Dave Casburn went to Pizza reef where only Greg Blackburne& Shelly Breuseker dived. The conditions were reported to be quite dark due to a large number of jellyfish. Overall they

had a pleasant dive. The other diver on board was sea sick due to the swell & since Dave won't dive alone, he didn't get to go in. After the dive they returned to Jibbon for morning tea.

Our boat- SeaJohn - skippered by John Beddie decided to tuck in behind cliff a bit further south at a site known as Tabbagi Gorge. Here a cooling pipe to one of the Kurnell installation runs down the cliff face into the sea. The site starts in 6m before dropping to 22m. The wall is vertical before falling away to boulders & a sand line with several patches of weed. John, Mike Scotland & Jos dived first and when they were back on the deco line myself & Eddie Ivers rolled in. The water temp range from 20.5 on the surface to 18 on the bottom. Not much in the way of fish life seen, quite a few nudibranchs – blue dragons, sweet ceratosoma & marginata. No weedies sighted. At one point I stopped while Eddie Ivers untangled his external macro lens on his camera and in doing so we were approached by a medium sized cuttlefish who seemed to take an interest in the reflections off his lens & got upset when I shooed him away. On ascent a small school of kingfish swam past.

On the way in for our surface interval we past Yes Dear 2 Dears' crew coming up from their second dive at the Whale watch site.

After our surface Interval & some refreshments which was done at the Kurnell monument we motored back out for our second dive.

Our second dive was done as a drift with four of us – Myself, Mike Scotland, Josiah Firth & Eddie Ivers- rolling in together. Joh kept watch on the surface. We descended over the kelp beds at 16m before going over the wall & dropping to 21m and swimming in a southerly direction.

We past the usual suspects of mowong & several nudibranchs and a few small cuttlefish who loitering in the cave at this site. Along the wall are several stands of southern sea fans – Mopsella ellesi-, stalked hydroids long purple sponges as well as other sponge life. At around 30 minutes we checked our progress before continuing on. We dived one photographer to a diver with an SMB. With 6mins of time left it was decided to surface with after deploying our markers. Both Jos & I deployed our SMB's while Mike & Eddie followed us up. Once on the surface we awaited collection by John before heading back to the ramp at Port Botany.

It had been another good club dive even if the weather hadn't let us dive our nominated site there are always plenty of other dive sites to go and dive.

My thanks to the skippers for their time & the use of the boats.

Peter Flockart.



President	Natasha Naude	President@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au
0410 074 677		

Vice President	Dave Casburn
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Secretary	Nancy Scoleri	secretary@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au
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Treasurer	Caroline Corcoran	treasurer@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au
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Assistant Secretary/ Treasurer Shelley Brueseker

Webmaster	Paul Pacey	webmaster@stgeorgescubaclub.org.au
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0431 691 173	Paul.pacey@iinet.net.au
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Newsletter Editor	Mike Scotland
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0415 158 168	mikescotland@bigpond.com
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