



Newsletter No 5

Apr/May/Jun 2010

Welcome to the latest edition of the Bicheno Dive Centre newsletter.

BDC still for sale

We mentioned in our last newsletter that the Bicheno Dive Centre was up for sale and this remains the case. Not surprisingly with the current global financial situation there are limited buyers for businesses at present, and Bruce plans to continue as usual until a suitable buyer appears. At some point BDC will change hands, but rest assured there is absolutely no intention of it ceasing operation as a dive business.

Training news

Congratulations to eight new open-water divers recently certified and now putting their newfound skills to good use. Congratulations also go to the following:

Tim McBain	Stress & Rescue
Alasdair Bradley	Tec F, Adv Nitrox, Decomp
Samuel Heloir	Stress & Rescue, Deep Diver
Rhys Hollis	Tec F, O2 prov, Adv Nitrox, Dive Con
Mark Rolodziej	Deep Diver, Nitrox
James Lentern	Tec F, Adv Nitrox
Phillip Malkin	Tec F, Adv Nitrox
Fiona Swinkle	Dive Con
Pat Taylor	Adv Nitrox
Bob Van der Velde	Tec F, Adv Nitrox, Decomp, Dive Con (in trg)

The next Technical Dive Course starts in early July with Technical Foundation and Advanced Nitrox, followed in mid-July with Decompression and Advanced Decompression/Extended Range, and then late July with the Normix/Trimix course.

So if this gets you fired up then book now, and you might just be one of the first lucky divers to visit the sunken barge lying just north of Bicheno in 58 metres of clear, blue water.

PNG Trip

The dive trip to Kavieng is full. We leave at the end of August for 11 days enjoying warm water, relaxed diving, sunshine, palm trees and deck chairs. Jealous? Well, get onboard for the next one! We'll post some pics of our trip in the next newsletter.

Instore Products

Latest Alpha BCD. Be sure to check out and test dive the new Conquest III - a weight integrated, low profile, expandable rear-wing BCD providing 50 lbs of lift. This is yet another great Australian tec innovation from Alpha Products, and the soft backpack with weight integrated pockets is a steal at only \$710.



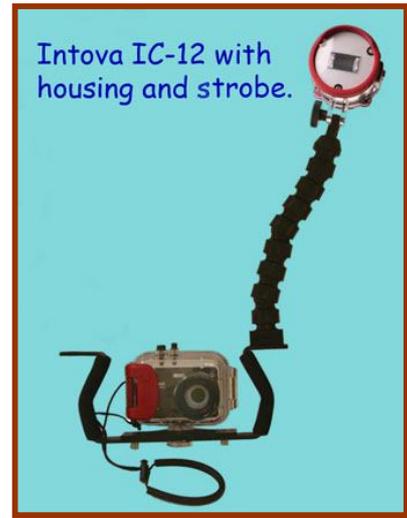
Cochran dive computer. Regarded as one of the world's best tec dive computers, the **Cochran EMC-20H** is also one of the simplest to use.



Even beginner divers will find this computer uncomplicated with its large, easy-to-read display and audible warnings. The EMC-20H can be configured for three gases plus helium and is available in a choice of mounting options, backlighting, case colours and dive profile memory - everything to

suit your exact style of diving. The computer plus software retails for \$2850, and you're welcome to test dive one from BDC.

New underwater camera from Intova. The latest offering from Intova is the **IC-12**, a 12 megabyte digital compact featuring shutter speeds as fast as 1/2000th second and a three times optical zoom. Complete with housing rated to 56 metres and an external strobe, this unit retails for only \$654. If you'd like to get into some serious underwater photography then this is a great option. We can guarantee there aren't many (possibly any?) other complete setups providing this sort of resolution and depth rating with external strobe at such an attractive price.



Equipment Servicing

It's that time of year again when many divers think about servicing their gear, and we all know how important it is to keep this life-preserving equipment in top working order. BDC offers a full range of servicing on all brands of dive gear. So if you're coming to Bicheno be sure to book your regs/BCD/computer in ahead for an over-night service and continue to dive with confidence.

Local News

The Tassie **Combined Clubs Weekend (CCW)** was once again held in Bicheno over the Queen's Birthday long weekend and was a great success. Dive clubs from around the state were represented with over 80 attendees. Following last year's dismal weather the gods smiled and provided superb conditions this time round - sunny days, smooth seas and clear blue water, with viz in excess of 25 metres in the marine park.



In addition to some fine cuisine, other highlights of the meet were excellent presentations by a number of guest speakers, the quiz night, scuba olympics, gnome hunt, synchronised scuba event, and of course the ever popular underwater photography competition. BDC again supported the CCW with a competition prize, as well as offering discounted boat dives. For interstate divers contemplating a dive trip to Tassie, the CCW is a great weekend and one that should not be missed.

Oceanic Conference. Bruce has recently returned from a very strenuous week up at Maroochydore in QLD attending the annual mid-year Oceanic Conference. Not all work and no play though, and while there he managed to squeeze in a couple of boat dives with Greg from Sundive exploring the wreck of ex-HMAS Brisbane – a fabulous dive. Rhys and Juke (the dog) were in charge of BDC during Bruce's absence.

Lost housing. On a completely different note, users of Ikelite housings might be interested in this little anecdote. One of Bicheno's local underwater photographers managed to lose an expensive Nikon/Ikelite rig while diving at Alligator Rock earlier this year...no, please don't ask how! Despite a half dozen searches from the BDC boat with up to six divers doing radial rope sweeps, the camera remained lost. But exactly three weeks later and despite big seas in the meantime, Bruce and Hobart diver, Alasdair Bradley, made one last attempt and found it. Needless to say the owner was more than a little overjoyed and hugely grateful. So, how did the housing and strobes cope after three weeks submersion in 20 metres of sea water? Well, pretty good actually. There was no ingress of water anywhere, the camera/zoom lens still operated flawlessly (Bruce actually took a photo with it during ascent), and once recharged the strobes fired again perfectly. All up there was only superficial damage – a few scratches here and there (luckily none on the dome port) and some slight discolouration of exposed metal surfaces about the housing. In fact, a good soaking overnight in fresh water, a little silicone grease on the o rings and the whole outfit was working like new again. Not a bad advertisement for Ikelite housings – especially if you're planning to lose one down there!

Winter diving. Winter is upon us once again with those cool southern currents bringing the clear water, prolific marine life and wonderful diving conditions for which Bicheno is renowned. Waub's Bay is literally



An underwater videographer enjoys the great winter viz in Bicheno's Marine Reserve.



Large school of yellowtail mackerel in Waub's Bay

teeming with fish and divers are being enveloped by clouds of mackerel and trevally on every dive.

Visibility and u/w photography in the marine park is exceptional at this time of the year, so if you're planning a dive trip to Tassie then the winter months are ideal. The water might be a tad cooler but this is more than compensated by the lack of tourist crowds and fabulous diving, and remember that BDC offers a full range of dive gear for hire including 7mm suits to keep you warm and cosy during your winter dives.

Critter Corner

One of the most popular creatures sighted while diving around Bicheno is the **big-bellied seahorse**, *Hippocampus abdominalis*. Just one glance at these shy little critters is all it takes to figure out how they got their name. They belong to the Sygnathidae family of fishes which includes pipefishes, pipehorses, and seadragons. Like seadragons it's the male of the species that carries the eggs to maturity, but unlike seadragons that carry eggs attached to their tails, the male seahorse has an internal ventral (front facing) pouch. Seahorse couples are thought to be monogamous and a female will consistently deposit her eggs into the same mate's pouch for fertilization, incubation and final hatching.

Big-bellied seahorses can grow up to 25 cm in length. They tend to swim upright but slowly, using their dorsal fin for propulsion and the pectorals, located behind the eyes, for steering. Being poor swimmers they are often found resting in sea grass beds or with their prehensile tails wound around some stationary object - anything from an anchor rope to a stalk of seaweed. Colouration is generally yellowish with dark spots, but can range from brown through to orange, white, grey, or even mottled. Some seahorses have long filaments adorning their head and body while others have none, and this appears to simply be an accident of birth.

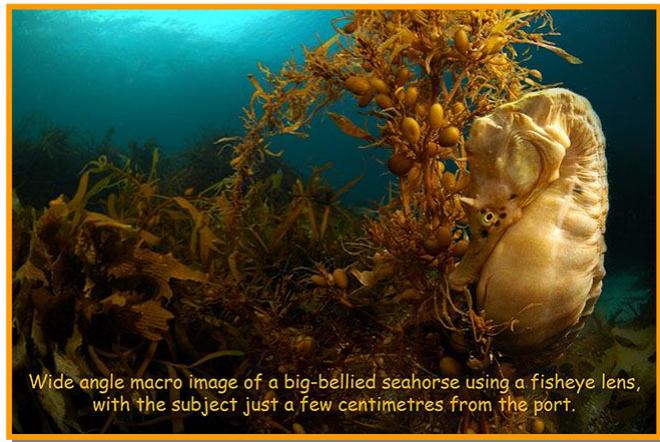


Mature male seahorses can give birth three times a year producing up to 300 juveniles (or fry) after a gestation period of around 30 days. The fry are miniature replicas of their parents and are also poor

swimmers, with many falling prey to predators or being swept away from feeding grounds by currents. This results in an estimated long-term survival rate of only five per 1,000 births and explains the need for such high reproduction rates.

While seahorses are common in the waters around Bicheno they're usually well camouflaged and difficult to spot amongst the weed beds. Shore dives, particularly at night when seahorses predominately feed are perhaps the best option, and Bruce is happy to lead divers to well-known haunts or even describe likely locations for them.

A great option for capturing some wonderful images of seahorses is by using a dedicated macro lens, but wide-angle macro and even close-focus wide-angle with fisheye lenses is becoming popular. Just be aware though that the big-bellied seahorse doesn't welcome attention,



particularly from strobes and focus lights and tends to turn away from the camera after that first shot. So our advice is to be well prepared for your initial shot and make it count - and please, don't ever be tempted to handle these fragile little creatures.



Safe diving,

Bruce Priestley

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