



Newsletter No 6

Jul/Aug/Sep 2010

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

Training news

Congratulations go to Craig Douglas on completing his Stress & Rescue and Nitrox 40% courses, and is now moving through Technical Foundation and Advanced Nitrox. Also to Ian Cunliffe for completion of his Deep Diver and Boat Diving courses.

Discover Scuba days are scheduled at BDC during the following periods: 27-29 Sep, 04-06 Oct, 20-22 Oct, 27-29 Oct and 17-19 Nov. Discover Scuba is a one day course designed for those who have never experienced scuba but want to have a peek at the underwater environment. It consists of a short lecture on equipment and how to dive safely, then confidence building through a practice session in shallow water under the close supervision of a qualified diving instructor. This is an inexpensive way for people to get a feel for the sport and decide whether or not they want to pursue further open water training.

Discover Scuba sessions are particularly popular at Bicheno since Waub's Bay has some wonderful sheltered areas with clear, shallow water and lots of interesting marine life. So if you know anyone who is thinking of giving scuba diving a try, this is an ideal opportunity.

PNG Trip

Well, what can we say about our recent PNG 2010 trip other than a wonderful time was had by all! Thirteen participants hailing from around the state as well as from Victoria teamed up in Brisbane for the flight over. On Friday night the early arrivals relaxed over a few drinks at the Manly marina aboard the yacht 'Brenda J' (more about her later in the newsletter). Then it was off to a local Thai restaurant for dinner before meeting the others back at Motel 85 - a very pleasant way to start to the trip. The only real drama at this point (missed flights and lost wallets aside!) occurred when it was discovered that all of Bob's dive gear and underwater camera equipment had somehow been mislaid by the airline. Fortunately this was sorted out next morning before our departure.



A group of happy divers prepares to depart Brisbane's international airport

Then it was all aboard for PNG - with heads glued to inflight movies, faces stuck into inflight meals, and Ian pouring over his manual in preparation for Deep Diver training at Kavieng. Three hours later we were on the ground in Port Moresby for a quick stopover before our

next boarding, finding the local temperatures just a tad warmer than in Tassie at this time of the year! Then back in the air for a short haul to Rabaul, onto Kavieng and through customs to be met by Scuba Ventures staff. The sun was starting to go down as we arrived at Nusa Resort, our home for the next week.



Sucking up the atmosphere in Moresby



And what a week it was. Up early at around 6.30 for breakfast each morning then out on the water diving between 8.30 and 2.00.



Bicheno's own 'Rex Hunt'. Rhys with his first catch ever - a 16 kilo mackerel that looked even better on the BBQ.

Afternoons taken up with more water activities - swimming, snorkelling, fishing, canoeing, stand up paddle-boarding, or perhaps less strenuous activities like sun-bathing, jungle walks, local village trips, the odd drink or two, more food, plenty of

laughter. The tough times didn't stop there either, after a quick afternoon siesta it was back to the grind for pre-dinner drinks before some fabulous evening meals - none of us ever thought we could eat so much!

After five days diving the best sites Kavieng has to offer including fresh water caves, plus a day off for so-called rest, we rose at 4 am on the final day to begin our journey homeward to Kavieng airport, and eventually Australia. No more hot sunny days, 30 degree water temps, lightweight suits, next to no weights ... at least not until next year that is. There'll be plenty of underwater photos of the trip on display in the shop if you're passing by, with particular interest in Ian's pics using the new Intova camera/housing/strobe setup that we mentioned in the last newsletter.

Planning for next year's trip is already underway. It's to Truk Lagoon from 2 Sep 11 for six nights staying at the Blue Lagoon resort, with a night in Cairns and one on Guam each way inclusive. There will be eight organised dives on reefs and wrecks, plus additional days and dives available for those who so wish. Maximum number for this trip is 10 with some places already booked, so get in early. Cost ex-Cairns is \$2249 for divers and \$1763 for non-divers. Don't miss this one!

Instore Products

New Alpha Tek Dive Torch.

We've been promising to bring you news on the new underwater torch from Alpha and here it is, the Deepstar. While the Deepstar has not been officially released just



The new Deepstar torch from Alpha Products

yet we are able to provide a few details, though unfortunately not the price at this point. Light is provided by three large LEDs which combine to produce a true 900 lumens, brighter than a 10 watt HID and with longer burn time. The torch can be powered by either a NiCd or NiMH battery pack (buyer's choice) which is permanently sealed in a PVC canister. The on/off switch on the aluminium power head is activated by rotating a delrin bezel. Alpha advises that only a limited number of Deepstar torches will be available for purchase in Australia, the remainder having already been sold under contract in the US. BDC has an option on six units, and we'll bring you more information as it comes to hand.

Equipment Servicing

With winter over and summer on the way many divers will be dusting off their gear in readiness for the warmer months. Now is an ideal time to get that equipment serviced, and BDC offers a full range of servicing for all brands of regs, BCDs and computers. Just drop them off and they'll be ready for you the next day.

Local News

Now, here's a sneak preview of Bicheno Dive Centre's new overnight or extended stay dive boat, the 'Brenda J', a 15 metre ketch-rigged fibreglass Roberts yacht with four metre beam. She's set up for blue-water cruising, complete with genset, desalinator, ample head/shower space, and sleeps six plus skipper. Importantly (for Bruce) there's over two metres of head room below decks, plus a large central galley, plenty of deck space above and of course stacks of room for dive gear and a compressor.

We'll let the pictures tell the story. We're hoping 'Brenda J' will be online for dive trips over this summer - Deal Island and Bathurst Harbour here we come! We'll keep you posted.

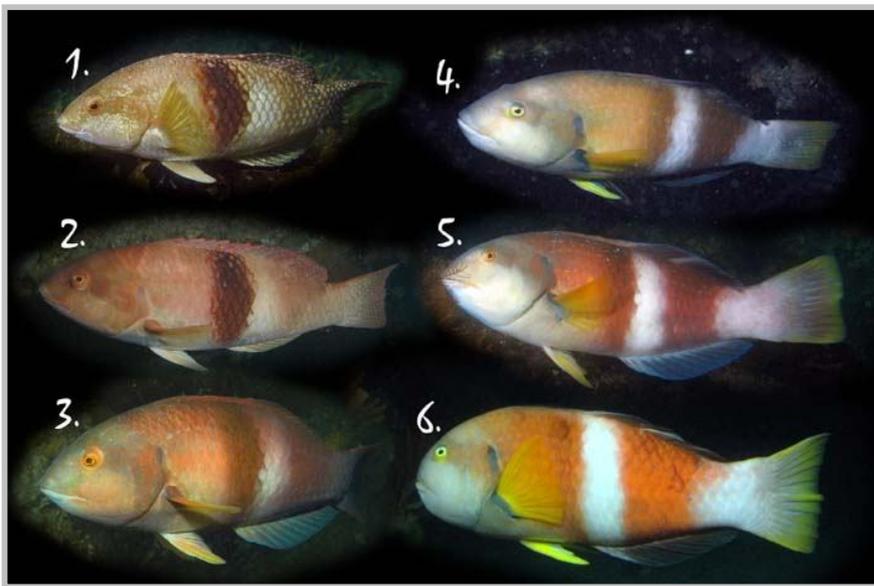


Critter Corner

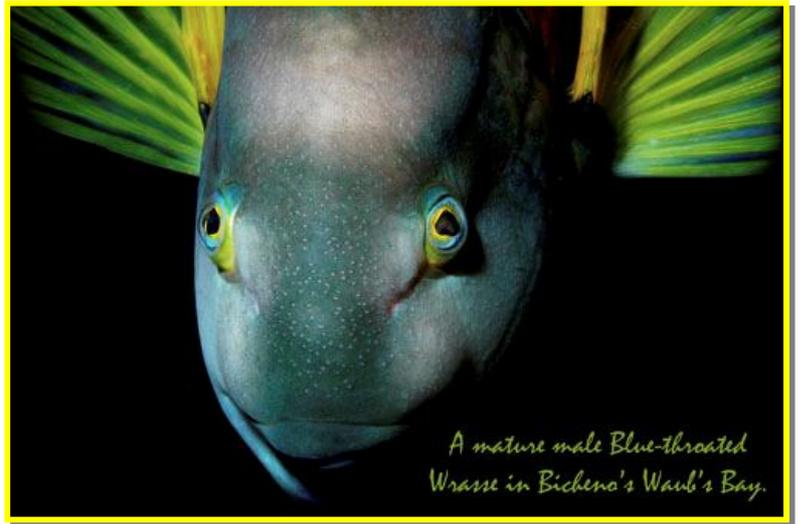
One species of fish that seldom gets much attention from divers is the blue-throated wrasse, *Notolabrus tetricus*. This is a very common species, possibly the most common of all wrasses found in Victorian and Tasmanian waters, and ranges from Ceduna in SA as far north as Sydney in NSW. Blue-throated wrasse go under a host of other local common names including bluenose, parrot fish, kelpie, winter bream and bluehead. Perhaps one reason why they're not more appreciated by divers is the great abundance of female fish, which have a fairly non-descript greenish-brown colour pattern that gives no hint whatsoever to their name. In fact, the difference in appearance between a female fish and mature male is so pronounced that you'd be forgiven for wondering if they were the same species at all. But there's an interesting tale behind the development of these fish.

Like all wrasse, blue-throats are born female and can turn into males if and when required, in accordance with a somewhat complex social structure. A male fish runs a 'harem' of 15 or so females, and when he eventually meets his demise (up to 11 years barring mishaps) the most dominant female in the group, usually the largest, promptly begins behaving like a male. A gradual colour change begins and is followed shortly thereafter by a complex sex change to physically become a male. The period needed for complete transition seems to depend on various environmental factors, and ranges anywhere from two weeks to two months. Anyway once transition has begun, all the females in the group move up a rung and leave a space at the bottom for a new member.

The photographs below were taken randomly at Bicheno over a five year period, with the first being a small female then transition through to mature male. (None of the photos are claimed to be of the same fish.)



From a purely aesthetic point of view the mature males with their size and striking colours are far more likely to attract the attention of underwater photographers. They're fairly common and have a propensity to approach divers, making close-up and wide-angle photography relatively simple and rewarding.



Nevertheless, the females shouldn't be discounted. While smaller and less colourful than the males they make up for this with vastly greater numbers and an even higher level of curiosity. Anytime you're concentrating intently on a subject to photograph you can bet there's at least one female blue-throated wrasse sitting close by studying you. In fact, they're so nosy they'll often push their way right into the frame as you take a shot, something akin to a small child demanding attention. Apart from these little misdemeanours though their inquisitiveness makes them ideal for close-up photography, perhaps more so than for wide-angle given their small size.

And they do like to show off with some wonderful poses!



Safe diving,

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