

Jan 06th 2004

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Not a lot of diving has been accomplished in the past week due to strong winds and high seas, however we did manage to make it to Wolf Rock on Tuesday. Conditions were acceptable with calm seas and light northerly winds.

We came across a couple of grey nurse sharks one of which has fishing line and a float trailing from its mouth. Unfortunately we can only assume the hook is embedded in its stomach. It was difficult to get close enough for a good look because as you could imagine she was not a very happy shark.

The bull rays look like they are mating at the moment as we kept bumping into the same group of three, two males and one female chasing each other all over the dive site with the female in the lead and the boys in hot pursuit. One big groper dominating his cod hole like the proverbial troll under the bridge, and leopard sharks playing in the thermo cline.

Visibility 8 – 10 metres and water temperature 25-26 degrees. This weekend should bring some good diving with light to moderate southeast winds predicted.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 20th 2004

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

The big south easters came and went, although before hand we managed six straight days of great diving with 20-25 metre visibility and all the big animal action that you expect from Wolf Rock. Even some manta rays made a cameo appearance.

On a more scientific note we have seen and photographed a female grey nurse shark with a tracking device attached. On reporting the sighting to Fisheries and Marine Parks we were informed that only three animals were tagged with this device in October last year at South West Rocks, NSW – two male and one female. The two boys are currently still present at Fish Rock Cave but the female has been missing. Now spotting her here at Wolf Rock has made for some worthwhile research, the Marine Parks and Fisheries people are delighted.

She's hanging out with our resident pack of grey nurses, although she seems to be somewhat shunned by them, possibly just new kid syndrome. We're going out to have another look at her today and we'll update any further observations next week.

Water temperature 26 degrees, visibility 15 metres.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 27th 2004

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Diving activities this past week have revealed some truly amazing secrets of the deep, one of which even surprised me.

Wolf Rock is well known for it's difference in temperature below the thermal layer, not unusual for deep water. In fact nuclear submarines seek out the colder waters in order to hide from spy satellites with sensitive thermal imagery. **This week the thermocline was so dramatic that it was actually visible when approaching the fourth atmosphere. The water in front of you shimmered, distorting the view of everything behind it, looking something like an alien force field.**

You can reach out and put your hand through it and feel the chill. Using a digital thermometer the difference was an amazing 6 degrees, 26 degrees on the surface and 20 degrees in the thermo cline.

It was also this week that I was lucky enough to have seen a marine creature I'd never seen before. I first caught the movement out of the corner of my eye, then I saw the tiger stripes and thought – "oh oh". As it approached me I had to lean back and refocus like being in the front row of the cinema. It's head was four times the size of a human's head and it was a light green grey in colour. From wing tip to wing tip it was easily 4 metres across, from the top of its head to the start of the tail about 3 metres and then add another 3 metres for the length of it's tail.

As it flew by you could feel the ocean move and at first I thought it was some kind of nuclear powered eagle ray on steroids. Or maybe I was being affected by nitrogen narcosis accentuated further by the sudden and dramatic change in temperature.

Once back at the shop we looked it up on the internet and identified the animal as the **giant mottled eagle ray**. Rarely seen because it lives normally in the very very deep ocean water. How about that!

Currently at Wolf Rock 14 grey nurse sharks. Visibility 15 metres and water temperature 26 to 20 degrees.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT JANUARY 2004

This past month has proved quite busy with visiting divers coming from interstate and overseas. All coming to see and photograph our grey nurse sharks. In doing so we noticed something unusual, one of the females had been tagged but it wasn't the usual colour and number type ID tag, it was some kind of electronic device.

On reporting this to Marine Parks we later received a phone call from NSW Fisheries informing us that we had one of their sharks. Apparently there were three grey nurse sharks tagged with tracking devices last October at South West Rocks, NSW - two males and one female. Currently the two boys are still present and accounted for at Fish Rock and looks like the girl has made it all the way up here. Interesting stuff! Incidentally the device is due to pop off and begin floating. The device is cylindrical and about the size of a can of deodorant with an antenna protruding from one end. It is labelled with Fisheries NSW and a contact phone number. If found call the DPI Fisheries and collect your \$500 reward. That's right, \$500 bucks.

We have also just recently conducted some training exercises in conjunction with the Queensland Ambulance Service. We started with a lecture on decompression sickness describing what it is, how you get it and the best way to treat and evacuate the injured person. Then it was into the bay for some mock rescue scenarios.

Firstly we pretended we had a diver with decompression sickness and then a simulated shark attack. We had a bit of fun here as we put the pretend victim into an old wetsuit so that the trainees could practise cutting it off. What they didn't know was that we had filled the wetsuit with tomato sauce to make it look a bit more real. The chief training officer said it was a nice touch of realism, and would like us to take part in similar training exercises three times a year, which would be perfect for running a Rescue Diver Course at the same time.

The past month has also revealed some truly amazing secrets of the deep, one of which even surprised me.

Wolf Rock is well known for its difference in temperature below the thermal layer, not unusual for deep water. In fact nuclear submarines seek out the colder waters in order to hide from spy satellites with sensitive thermal imagery. In the last week of January the thermo cline was so dramatic that it was actually visible when approaching the fourth atmosphere. The water in front of you shimmered, distorting the view of everything behind it, looking something like an alien force field.

You could reach out and put your hand through it and feel the chill. Using a digital thermometer the difference was an amazing 6 degrees, 26 degrees on the surface and 20 degrees in the thermo cline.

I was also lucky enough to have seen a giant mottled eagle ray, something I had never seen before in over 20 years of diving. I first caught the movement out of the corner of my eye, then I saw the tiger stripes and thought – "oh oh". As it approached me I had to lean back and refocus like being in the front row of the cinema. It's head was four times the size of a human's head and it was a light green grey in colour. From

wing tip to wing tip it was easily 4 metres across, from the top of its head to the start of the tail about 3 metres and then add another 3 metres for the length of its tail.

As it flew by you could feel the ocean move and at first I thought it was some kind of eagle ray on steroids. Or maybe I was being affected by nitrogen narcosis accentuated further by the sudden and dramatic change in temperature. These rays are rarely seen as they normally live in very deep ocean water. How about that!

Currently at Wolf Rock we have 14 grey nurse sharks, visibility of 15 metres and water temperature ranging from 26 to 20 degrees.

Kev and Cheryl Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 4th 2005

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

This last week has been an extremely busy one with lots of divers out and about for the Christmas/New Year holidays and the weather has behaved itself very well.

The diving has been fantastic, with a strong northerly current bringing all the critters out to play. We have been inundated with grey nurse sharks, eagle rays, leopard sharks, bull rays, giant Queensland groper and manta rays. **The eagle rays have been flying overhead in squadrons of about a dozen putting on some spectacular displays of acrobatics.** The grey nurse sharks have been hanging out in the current between 10 and 15 metres, and as the divers are swept round the end of the formation it's a bit like star wars, ducking and weaving so you don't collide head first with a shark! There were lots of other animals seen but too many to mention.

We have had some very experienced recreational divers visit us from Austria and I don't think they will forget the diving they have experienced at Wolf Rock in a hurry.

Visibility averaged about 15 metres and the water temperature has been a consistent 25 degrees.

Happy New Year!

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

Jan 11th 2005

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Not much diving has been accomplished with the strong winds generated from the cyclone to the north of us, however did get a couple of dives in before the weather closed in. Currently we have approximately 20 grey nurse sharks aggregating at Wolf Rock as far as we can tell. There could be more of them but they are spread out around the formation and at varying depths. **One thing we have noticed as we approach our peak season is that there are no visible hooks from what we can see, which is good news demonstrating that the sanctuary at Wolf Rock may be doing its job.**

Some people may be aware that Kev was envenomated by a stonefish while working at Bullock Point about 5 weeks ago. Not much is known about the ongoing side effects of stonefish envenomation and the affected finger is still painful and slightly swollen. One interesting point is that the area where the spines penetrated the skin has developed what is called necrosis, a condition where the skin around the wound flakes and peels continuously. We can only assume that the cells have been killed by the poison, and the body is now working to generate new skin and slowly return to normal.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

Jan 18th 2005

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Well the weather finally started to behave itself by about Saturday so we got out for a few dives before the end of the week. Surprisingly, the visibility was a fairly clear 8 – 10 metres. After the big seas and swells we were expecting a lot less. The sharks were still hanging out in much the same places but with the absence of current a lot of the other ‘big stuff’ was a little scarce. I’m sure that will change soon.

We’re also hoping that the beach conditions will improve fairly quickly. The famous Mudlo Rocks out the front of town have been exposed making it quite difficult to drive down the beach to Double Island Point. There is a track just wide enough for a car to drive through but only closer to low tide which has made for some pretty early starts for us over the past few days. All is not lost though as when the rocks are in this precarious state, it provides entertainment for locals and visitors alike watching the cars navigate there way through to the other side.

Water temperature 25 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT JANUARY 2005

The usual suspects have been keeping us entertained at Wolf Rock with leopard sharks putting in an appearance down deep in about 35 metres and the grey nurse sharks at the other extreme up in 10 metres. In between, eagle rays, groper and various species of fish, all sizes and shapes.

Passing cyclones and low pressure systems have upset things a little inshore and along the beach with Mudlo Rocks coming out and making their presence known, at one stage passable only 1.5 hours each side of dead low. This made for some early departures to go diving before dawn each day but all divers agreed that it was worth it.

Speaking of early starts a dive job on the Brisbane River at South Brisbane had us on sight and diving by 6am. The Brisbane Maritime Museum needed an underwater survey team to inspect the integrity of the lock gate at the old dry dock at Southbank. It seems the tide is able to come and go in and out of the old installation regardless of whether the lock gate is closed or not.

When doing this type of inspection the timing is very important for safety reasons, so we had to ensure that we were conducting the inspection of the river side of the gate while the last of the tide was still running out and then inspecting the inside of the gate while the first of the tide was coming back in. This is to avoid a condition called Delta P, or differential pressure. Delta P develops when a large body of water is allowed to enter or exit through small openings. E.g. open valves or cracks in dam walls or reservoirs. It has been known that whole divers have been sucked through open valves in dam walls leaving only his helmet behind because it wouldn't fit through the grating. Delta P is in fact the biggest killer of commercial divers worldwide. Accidents like this can be avoided with careful planning and safety procedures.

The lock gate was found to have huge holes below the water line. The water depth in the dry dock was rising to 5 metres when the tide was in and leaving behind a silt deposit up to 1.5 metres deep throughout the installation. The old dry dock is currently home to the Diamantina, the last of the river class Frigates actually built in Maryborough in 1943. The City Council and the Port of Brisbane Authority will make the final decision on the future of the South Brisbane dry dock.

Water temperature over the month has been 25 degrees and an average of 12 metres visibility.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive

Jan 10th 2006

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

This Christmas holiday period has proved to be one of our busiest ever due to the ongoing good weather and the increasing interest in Wolf Rock by divers. The marine life at Wolf Rock has been amazing with schools of pelagics, the sharks, various species of rays and all the small stuff equally interesting.

Even though the water temperature has increased to about 26 degrees a thermo cline from about 10 metres down has made it 'a bit chilly'. **All the sharks have been hanging out in water above 10 metres destroying the myth that they like colder waters.**

The bull rays have been quite active hogging the narrow gap between pinnacles one and two making it a bit of a tight squeeze if we happen to passing through at the same time. The bull rays are very sensitive to touch on the top of their body, and this combined with the fact that they can whip their barbed tail over their head like a scorpion makes me very careful when swimming close to them.

Water temperature this week has been about 25 degrees or 21 in the thermo cline with visibility starting out well at 15 metres but declining to about 5 metres at the end of the week.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 17th 2006

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Still lots of action out at Wolf Rock this week with grey nurse sharks, eagle rays, bull rays and gropers. The visibility has been a little limited probably due to the weed that is being blown into the bay with the continuing northerlies. We finished the week with some strong currents so hopefully this will help to clean the beach up a bit.

Shovel nosed rays or guitar sharks have been quite prominent this week with sightings at Wolf Rock and Nursery Reef. The shovel nosed ray is often mistaken to be a shark from a distance as they have very distinctive dorsal fins very like a shark but as you get closer you notice the wide, pointed flat head like a ray. We've also seen quite a few large wobbegong sharks out at Wolf Rock lying in large crevices awaiting their unsuspecting prey. Some of the smaller wobbegongs are found in little crevices or cracks in the formation which hide them so well you wonder how on earth they got in there in the first place. Wobbegong sharks are also a harmless species of shark but they do have the ability to do some damage with their backward facing teeth if you were to startle them by accidentally kicking them or standing on them.

Visibility this week finished on about 8 metres and water temperature was 25 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 18th 2006

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Some great days of diving have been keeping customers very happy over the last week. Conditions have been close to perfect with beautiful blue waters and great visibility giving divers a clear view of just how interesting the formation at Wolf Rock is. Eagle rays have been swarming around the pinnacles taking advantage of the strong current with the change of the tides. One of our interesting finds this week was a jet black and white striped lionfish. Normally they are a lighter orange and white colour.

Our last dive of the week was at Round Rock where we haven't dived in a while. We were pleasantly surprised with amount of life to be seen. One of the things about Round Rock that makes it quite distinctive from Wolf Rock is the amount of leopard sharks to be found as well the wide variety of rays we see. Resting on the bottom we found one of those largest rays I think I've ever seen, a leopard spotted ray, which must have been close to 3 – 4 metres across and nearly as long in the body. We also found a large quantity of cow-tailed rays found in groups in the sandy bottom around the formation. Eagle rays were also prolific; hanging in the current and one we found nosing through the sand finding food.

Visibility averaged 15 metres and water temperature 26 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 24th 2006

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

The return of the southeast winds has been welcomed bringing with it clean ocean water in the current that eventually develops. The thermo cline has changed as well with it now found down at the 30 metre mark.

Both Australian and overseas divers alike have been enjoying the diving at Wolf Rock obtaining some great underwater photography of the grey nurse sharks. Currently we have about 20 sharks aggregating in between 10 and 25 metres. Squadrons of eagle rays have been circling the main formation and giant Queensland groopers hanging out in the deep make for some very impressive diving.

One of our regular sightings out at the Wolf Rock is a large puffer fish that I have nicknamed Bruce. He is without fail always found in the exact same place. He does have a girlfriend but she is quite shy and will always hide whenever divers approach. Apparently these fish can grow up to 1 metre long so Bruce is not even half grown at this stage measuring about.

Visibility varied between 20 and 5 and water temperature is 26 degrees or 23 degrees in the thermo cline.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 31st 2006

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Strong currents developing on the flood tide have made for some very demanding dives this week, although having 35 grey nurse sharks to swim with tends to make the exertion well worth it. **With sharks above, below and beside you in the water it's a bit like trying to cross a busy street.**

When diving in strong currents there is definitely a technique, which can make all the difference to how hard you work. **A lot of divers make the mistake of trying to swim against the current mid water, which is bit like flying a kite in strong wind. The secret is to stay as close to the formation as you can a bit like a soldier crawling along the ground under fire.** This way you can find the pockets with the least resistance and get your breath back before continuing on.

Water temperature is still 26 degrees and visibility on our last dive was about 15 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT JANUARY 2006

Well finally the Southeasters are here. They have been a long time coming but we'll see how long they last. Southeast winds make for bigger ocean swell although launching the boat is easier in the protection of Double Island Point.

This past month has proved quite busy with visiting divers coming from interstate and overseas, all coming to see and photograph our grey nurse sharks. This month we have been seeing record numbers of up to 35 sharks, which is an amazing sight when they are all grouped together. Unfortunately though, one of the sharks we have seen this month has somehow managed to swim through a loop of strapping tape and as the shark has grown it is getting tighter around it's head and is starting to cut into the gills. Seaworld are planning to be up here next month for some tracking and monitoring of the sharks and they are hoping to be able to somehow remove the tape.

Some strong currents have been present on the turn of the tide, which the animals seem to love even if the divers find it a bit difficult to fin through. It's all worth it though because that's when Wolf Rock is at its best. Leopard sharks have been one of the highlights along with the rays and gropers. One of the last dives we did for the month we found quite a large stonefish that was so well camouflaged it just looked like part of the rock.

We also got a dive in on Nursery Reef and were pleasantly surprised to see that the reef is still in good condition despite the weed. One rather large mosaic moray eel was spotted and a species of starfish that I have never seen in this area before. Another dive on Round Rock brought us face to face with one of the biggest leopard spotted rays I've ever seen. It was roughly 3 metres wide and just as long and seemed quite happy resting on the bottom while the divers swam over the top of it.

Visibility has varied right throughout the month with some dives about 20 metres but averaging about 15 metres. Water temperature is hovering round the 26 degree mark. Great summer diving!

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 2nd 2007

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

After six years of diving Wolf Rock on a full time basis we still enjoy the diving and never get bored diving the same spot every day. This says a lot about the kind of dive Wolf Rock is and our divers just can't get enough. Over the past couple of weeks we have had several people come back again for a second day out with us.

We have been seeing less than the expected numbers of grey nurse sharks which is very unusual for this time of year. **We notice that the water temperature is still only reaching 23-24 degrees so we wonder whether that is having an effect of the normal migration of sharks to Wolf Rock after the mating season. It will be interesting to see if there is any correlation with the water temperature when it does finally move up towards 26 degrees.**

Lots of fingerlings have hatched over the past week or so bringing in a lot of larger species which have been feeding on the smaller fish and so on up food chain making for some interesting action under the water.

Visibility is still averaging about 15 metres and water temperature 22-24 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 9th 2007

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

As we suspected, with a rise in water temperature this week we have seen increased numbers of the grey nurse sharks. On our last dive we counted up to about 20 sharks, a big jump from the average of six we had been seeing.

Over the past few days a constant current has been bringing out a lot of bull rays and eagle rays along with a lone manta ray. A southern eagle was also sighted which is a little unusual to see this far up the coast particularly at this time of year. The southern eagle ray has a distinctly blunt head and is different in colouring making it quite easy to distinguish from the white spotted eagle ray. It also only grows to just over 1 metre wide, where as the white spotted ray can measure up to 3 metres across the wingspan. The white spotted eagle ray is almost black in colour with a white under body and has a more pointed snout, perhaps accounting for its name.

The fingerlings are still around in big numbers sometimes making it very difficult to see what's ahead as you swim through them, almost like a swarm of mosquitos, only not quite as annoying.

Visibility is still averaging about 15 metres and water temperature now up to 25 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 16th 2007

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

The weather has been very kind to us over the past week with outstanding crystal clear blue water giving us up to 25 metres visibility. This is probably due to the lack of rain which hasn't given the creeks and rivers a chance to wash out into the sea.

Shark numbers have increased yet again to around 25 or more. **We are now seeing discarded teeth on the bottom that indicates they have started to feed again.** This is because as they feed they lose teeth sometimes breaking them as they crunch onto the rock chasing their prey. The grey nurse sharks teeth are distinctly different to other species of shark. The tooth is elongated and designed to impale their food, which they then swallow whole, whereas the tiger shark has a curved tooth with a serrated edge a bit like a hacksaw blade.

The grey nurse shark moves through the water with their mouth open displaying the rows of teeth making them look a lot more fierce than what they really are. This week's photo gives you a close up look of what they are like. **You can tell that this shark probably hasn't been eating much of late because there is lot of algae that has accumulated on it's teeth.**

Visibility has been averaging about 20 – 25 metres and water temperature is 25 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

Jan 30th 2007

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

With grey nurse sharks making their usual migration here after the mating season we are now seeing upwards of 25 girls. **Over the past 2 weeks we have been seeing them constantly coming to the surface to gulp air, which generally indicates they are about to change depth in the water, usually to shallower ground. Lots of thermo clines have dictated where in the water column they like to swim and with the warmer water in the top 15 metres that's where they all are at present. As you swim deeper the water temperature has been dropping by at least 2 degrees or more.**

Leopard sharks are still around as well as the eagle rays and the odd bull ray. Bull rays like very strong current so that's when we see them out in force. Although we have had some fairly consistent current it hasn't been that strong. A few good size turtles getting around, mainly loggerhead, and a couple of little hawksbills popping up every now and then.

Kelvin Koh, one of our visiting divers, took this week's photo. It shows Clint Hemsall, a professional underwater cameraman from the Gold Coast at work under the water. Clint got some fantastic footage out at Wolf Rock and we hope to see the results of that soon.

Visibility started well at 20 metres but closed in to around 10 metres by the end of the week. Water temperature is averaging 25 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT JANUARY 2007

January has started the year off with another month of great diving. With grey nurse sharks making their usual migration here after the mating season we are now seeing upwards of 25 girls. Over the past 2 weeks we have been seeing them constantly coming to the surface to gulp air, which generally indicates they are about to change depth in the water, usually to shallower ground. Lots of thermo clines have dictated where in the water column they like to swim and with the warmer water in the top 15 metres that's where they all are at present. As you swim deeper the water temperature has been dropping by at least 2 degrees or more.

Leopard sharks are still around as well as the eagle rays and the odd bull ray. Bull rays like very strong current so that's when we see them out in force. Although we have had some fairly consistent current it hasn't been that strong. A few good size turtles getting around, mainly loggerhead, and a couple of little hawksbills popping up every now and then.

This month Clint Hemsall who is an underwater videographer from the Gold Coast joined us. Clint got some fantastic footage out at Wolf Rock and we hope to see the results of that soon. This month's photos are a couple of shots of Clint at work under the water. It takes a lot of skill to be able to manoeuvre through the water with the type of equipment he uses and still get great footage.

Visibility for most of the month was a constant 20 metres but unfortunately late in the month some dirty water washed in limiting the visibility to about 10 metres. Water temperature is averaging 25 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

January 2008

Wild weather has pretty much kept us shore bound for the month of January. In the seven years we have been operating we have been lucky enough to have fantastic weather over the busy summer months. Talking to the old timers looks like we are returning to the old days of monsoon like weather patterns with a few cyclones thrown in for good measure. All the rain has affected visibility so even when the weather has been acceptable there's no point in diving! Keeping a positive slant on things though it's good to see some decent rain, at least someone else will benefit.

So for now we can only reminisce. January should be the month when the numbers of female grey nurse increase dramatically with all the pregnant females gravitating here after the mating season. We should also be seeing large numbers of leopard sharks enjoying the warm water, eagle rays would be out in squadrons and huge schools of baitfish should be swarming over the rock.

We have however been kept busy with commercial work. One of those jobs was the retrieval and reinstallation of the Gneering Shoals east cardinal mark, (aka the blinker), which usually resides down off Mooloolaba. When taking a drive along Teewah Beach we spotted the blinker sitting just off Double Island Point. Australian Maritime Safety Authority were most relieved when despite the extremely rough conditions we were able to shackle up to the blinker so that a salvage tug out of Gladstone could tow it into Wide Bay and crane it on board in calmer water. When you consider that the blinker weighs about 8 tonne and stands 6 metres above the water line it gives you some idea of the size of the job at hand.

Fingers crossed for better conditions in February.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

January 2009

Although January this year was a big improvement on last year, we still have had a couple of weeks of strong winds not conducive to getting out on the water. The Australia Day weekend however was a big success with good conditions both on top and below the water.

Interestingly, this year has also proved to be an anomaly with the grey nurse sharks with numbers down quite dramatically compared to previous years. We have experienced this once before back in 2002, but numbers have started to increase again so we'll see what February has to offer.

The baitfish and fingerlings have been keeping the pelagics busy chasing them around the formation and providing plenty of entertainment for divers. Eagle rays, leopard sharks, groppers and turtles have been big attractions and I've spotted a few different looking nudibranchs that I haven't seen before at Wolf Rock. In particular we have a female loggerhead turtle, probably in the vicinity of a 100 hundred years old that seems to have taken up residence in a particular spot out there. Every time we swim past that spot, there she is, head first into the rock trying to blend in.

Visibility for most of the month has averaged 10 – 15 metres and the water temperature has been a warm 26 and 27 degrees with prolonged northerly winds.

This is probably why we have had more reports of irukandji jellyfish envenomations up on the western side of Fraser Island. Apparently the irukandji can only survive in waters above 25 degrees. Early research by a local doctor in Cairns, Dr Flecker, found that an aboriginal tribe to the north of Cairns called the Irukandji tribe was commonly stung by these jellyfish hence their name today. After Dr Flecker died in the 1950's another local doctor continued his research, Dr John Barnes, and he was successful in developing a method of "milking" the jellyfish, which has led to the production of an antivenom.

If anyone is stung by the irukandji, symptoms can take an average of about 30 minutes to develop (but can be as little as 5 minutes) and consist of chronic cramping, vomiting, sweating and a burning sensation on the skin, just to name a few. The best first aid is vinegar but this will only neutralise the nematocysts (stinging cells). After applying vinegar, carefully pick off any remaining tentacles with fingers if necessary as the fingertips generally have thicker skin, **but remember to wash hands afterwards.** Do not rub the area but applying bagged ice or cold packs may help with pain. It's critical that further medical treatment is sought immediately.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

January 2010

In direct contrast to last year where we had very low numbers of grey nurse shark, this year we are seeing record numbers out at Wolf Rock. Each dive we are consistently seeing in the vicinity of 30 – 50 sharks and we suspect there could be anything up to 60 sharks out there. The weather has also been behaving perfectly and we have been getting out diving on a regular basis. Soon enough the cyclones will start to effect this so we are making the most of it.

One of the great things about running dive charters is the interesting people you get to meet. This month we had a visit from a fellow by the name of **Gary Cobb**. For the last 6.5 years Gary has been dedicating all his free time to a passion of his – nudibranchs. These little animals have always fascinated me and it was great to be able to speak with someone who could be regarded as an expert on them.

Nudibranch literally means naked gill and are a member of the mollusc family. As well as the gills they have rhinophores – little horns or stalks with which they feel vibrations and detect a mate with. The gills are used for breathing but in the middle of the gills is a protuberance which is their anus, so they poo from the same place that they breathe. Yuk!!

There are over 3000 species worldwide and Gary has managed to identify 415 of these that can be found on the Sunshine Coast from Woody Point at the southern end of Redcliffe, east to Tangalooma and north to Noosa.

Most nudibranch are sponge eaters however not just any sponge, each species eats only a particular type of sponge so if this food source can't be found they die. The exception being the Godiva quadriclour from South Africa which is carnivorous and will eat other nudibranch. It will follow the trail of another nudibranch until it catches up and over a period of a day or so will slowly devour it bite by bite!

More information in next month's report but in the meantime have a look at www.nudibranch.com.au

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

January 2011

As everyone is no doubt aware this January has been a bit depressing weather wise with flooding to the north and south of Rainbow Beach. This has affected the diving at Wolf Rock and on our last charter we were experiencing visibility of only 2 metres. Now it is just a waiting game until waters clear up. Customers did however still enjoy their dives getting to see the grey nurse shark “up close and personal”. It certainly gets the adrenaline going when you are swimming around in the gloom and a 3 metre shark suddenly appears in front of you.

Last month we had visitors from Sydney and Austria, regular customers who are avid photographers. Paul and his wife Florence have shared some of their photos with us and this month's photo is of Florence with a leopard shark. You can see the leopard shark has two remoras, or “sucker fish” as they are commonly known, attached to it. The remora does this to either hitch a ride or for protection and while attached they live off the scraps of food the host may provide. The host can be anything from sharks to rays, turtles or even some larger fish such as trevally or swordfish. It is not uncommon for a remora to try and latch on to a diver if they have been dislodged from their host.

Water temperature is now 26 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

January 2012

The month of January started reasonably well with some good diving the first couple of weeks before weather moved in. **The grey nurse sharks are moving into their mid-summer pattern up into shallower waters and all the new mothers are settling in to their early stages of pregnancy.** Our water temperature was about 25 degrees which is a little cooler than normal for this time of year and visibility around 10–15 metres.

Since we weren't doing much recreational diving we ended up in Bundaberg recovering pylons which had been swept away in last year's floods in the Burnett River. Yes, the clean-up is still going on 12 months down the track!

While we were there we took the opportunity to visit Mon Repos and have a look at the turtles. The laying season starts in November and continues right through until February, with the hatchlings coming out from Jan to April. So January and February are great months to visit when you may be lucky enough to see the young hatchlings make a dash for sea and the mature turtles coming in to lay clutches.

The three species of turtle that visit Mon Repos are the loggerhead (endangered), green sea turtle (vulnerable) and the flatback turtle (vulnerable). We were lucky enough to witness a clutch being laid by a loggerhead turtle which had returned to Mon Repos for her first season of laying eggs. This would make her 30 years old since they don't lay eggs until they reach that age. In this clutch she laid 116 eggs and because the site was too close to the high water mark we got to help with the relocation. We also got to see some research conducted on a flatback turtle clutch that had hatched the night before. The researchers dug up the nest to count eggshells and any poor hatchlings that didn't make it.

Can you believe that turtles were harvested commercially right up to 1968 to be made into turtle soup? Masterfoods was the last company to make this soup for sale here in Australia.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

January 2013

The warm diving weather this month has been enjoyed by divers with water temperatures hovering at 26 -27 degrees. **Grey nurse sharks have finished their mating and are now moving into their gestation period when we get all the pregnant females aggregating at Wolf Rock for the next 6 months or so.**

Lots of big eagle rays around in the first few weeks of January which indicated they could have been a mating aggregation as well. In summer months we often see the eagle rays in large squadrons of anything between 6 – 20 rays at a time. Throughout the cooler months we usually see them moving about by themselves. I guess if the sharks have a mating season then the eagle rays are probably the same. Some really big giant Queensland gropers have also been seen. Turtles, the odd bull ray, moray eels, octopus, wobbegongs, leopard sharks....we are so lucky to have such a healthy dive site to enjoy.

Another highlight for me just recently was the sighting of the biggest anglerfish you will find in Australian waters - the giant Anglerfish which grows to a maximum of 30cm, so the one we found at Wolf Rock was definitely fully grown. According to the book Sea Fishes of Australia it is only found along the length of the Queensland coast here in Australia and it mimics the colours of sponges to try and blend in with the reef. See photo this month.

Visibility has been averaging around 8 metres so far for the month but as this report is only for the first 2 weeks of January we anticipate we should have some better visibility for the Australia Day weekend.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

January 2014

During times of the full moon the magnetic field around the exposed pinnacles of Wolf Rock attracts most of the life into shallow water putting all the grey nurse sharks into a holding pattern around the two main peaks, sometimes in only 5 metres of water. The water temperature is also warmer which the grey nurse sharks enjoy and we suspect also has something to do with the start of their gestation period. For our divers this in turn greatly reduces the risk of decompression illness and also gives them more bottom time.

When scuba diving, there are limits to the amount of time you spend under the water depending on the depth you dive to. For instance, at 10 metres a diver has 219 minutes before the blood system accumulates an unacceptable level of nitrogen. Nitrogen is a bi-product of your body using the oxygen content of air and is an inert gas not used by the body's metabolism. Under pressure this gas accumulates in the blood and tissues of your body. This is not a big problem unless the diver exceeds the time limits designated for certain depths, in which case upon surfacing the nitrogen will expand creating bubbles in the blood and surrounding tissues resulting in joint pain or in extreme cases heart attack and stroke.

The big highlights at Wolf Rock this month have been giant Queensland groopers, manta rays and pregnant grey nurse sharks. Visibility is 15 metres and water temperature is 25 degrees.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

January 2015

What a fantastic month of diving so far. We have been enjoying some beautiful weather conditions and with such hot days everyone is making the most of getting in the water.

Wolf Rock has not disappointed turning on a variety of marine life second to none. **The female grey nurse sharks are here in huge numbers for the beginning of their gestation period and we have schools of baitfish being chased by the trevally, kingfish and bonito with them in turn being chased by the whaler sharks!** And then we have the leopard sharks, groper, bull rays, eagle rays, turtles.....too much to mention.

On a much sadder note we came across a manta ray that had become entangled in a rope line that had been used for a marker and was taking advantage of the slight current at Wolf Rock for a rest. This was such a heartbreaking sight as manta rays are one of the most graceful and gentle creatures you can see under the water. **His cephalic lobe is about 50% severed due to the weight of the piece of coffee rock that had been used to hold the marker in position.** At the other end of the line was a small styrofoam float. In his attempt to free himself of the line it had wound around and around like a tourniquet and was so tight it was impossible to remove all the rope. Fortunately we were able to cut off the coffee rock and float which I'm sure gave the ray some relief.

We have been in touch with Asia Armstrong who manages the non-profit organisation www.facebook.com/ProjectMANTA and they have identified the ray as "Grumpy Dave" a manta ray that was last seen in a very healthy state at Lady Elliot Island in September 2011. Asia is confident that even though he will probably lose that lobe he will still be able to survive as long as infection does not set in.

If you are interested you can see the footage of this on our Facebook page - www.facebook.com/wolfrockdive

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive