

DIVE REPORT WEEK ENDING 22 JULY 2003

The recent strong winds and high seas slowed things down a little for Wolf Rock so Nursery Reef protected in the bay was the right option where we saw wobbegongs, tawny nurse sharks and hawksbill turtles along with a varied array of small coloured reef fish. The weather finally came good on Monday so it was back out to Wolf Rock to get with the big stuff where we made friends with a massive loggerhead turtle estimated to be possibly 100 years old. The grey nurse sharks were located on the deep side of the formation at 30 metres. Water temperature 20 degrees and visibility 12 metres.

Wolf Rock Dive Centre
Rainbow Beach
Ph 5486 8004

Dive report for week ending 29 July 2003

Currently at Wolf Rock we have a grey nurse shark with only one eye. In fact, if you approach from her blind side you can actually get close enough to see the denticles in her skin. On Saturday as we were swimming up behind her, we were cut off by a very fast moving male. It was then decided to leave off and let him have his newfound girlfriend. Incidentally the boys don't normally turn up until summer for their mating season, which gives us food for thought. Average water temperature 20 degrees and visibility 12 metres and improving at present.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

RAINBOW BEACH DIVE REPORT

July 2003

The coldest month of year for us is always July because of the water temperature, with 19 degrees being the bottom of the scale. Some may not regard 19 degrees as cold but bear in mind that water conducts heat away from your body twenty times faster than air. After a couple of hours you really begin to feel it even in a 5 millimetre suit. Thankfully the water is now back up to 20 degrees and should keep climbing as we get further into August.

The Nursery Reef has proved very inviting for training students because of its calm still water and protection from the South Easterly. Round Rock has also provided some good diving this month for divers with an intermediate level of experience. The spotted leopard skin rays are large and never fail to impress.

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Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

July 13th 2004

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

A mixed bag of diving this week with conditions deteriorating at Wolf Rock by the end of the week. With the enormous swell that eventuated from the bad weather off New Zealand, under the water was a bit like swimming in a washing machine. Before that we had some enjoyable dives sighting the grey nurse sharks, manta rays, turtles, wobbegong sharks and pods of whales making their way north.

We also experienced quite a strong current that can make diving a bit of a challenge, but once you're behind the formation it provides protection and makes it easier to swim. The effort was worth it as we found 18 grey nurse sharks schooled together in the shark pit, which made it look akin to shark soup. That's shark soup, not shark fin soup.

One of the creatures we see on a regular basis while diving at Wolf Rock is the olive sea snake. The olive sea snake is the most poisonous snake in the world and they can be quite inquisitive at times following you around the dive sight, sometimes swimming around in between your legs, which can be a little bit unnerving. They've even been known to look you straight in the mask as they can see they're reflection. The sea snake is an air-breathing creature so they need to come to the surface every 45 – 50 minutes to take a breath and replenish the air in their swim bladder. It's not uncommon for the sea snake to find it's way to the surface following an anchor line. Unlike deadly terrestrial (land) snakes, the olive sea snake has a very small mouth and its fangs are in the rear of its mouth making it very difficult to envenomate a human being. Therefore the only vulnerable points on a human are places like the ear lobes, nose and the skin between the thumb and forefinger, although stranger things have been known to happen.

Visibility at Wolf Rock over the past week started at 15 metres and water temperature is 21 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

July 20th 2004

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

This week I think we have spent more time studying the weather map and watching the barometer than actually going out diving, although when we have ventured out it has proved to be a beautiful winters day and some great diving was had by all.

The grey nurse sharks are still congregating in deeper water, 30 metres, and the eagle rays and manta rays are always the show stealers. A twenty metre humpback whale surfaced not 15 metres from the boat before rejoining the pod giving our surface supervisor a real treat, while whale song was heard by every diver down below.

A massive high pressure system over the bight as well as a low positioned along side over the Pacific will continue to produce strong southerly winds for the rest of the week. Fingers crossed for a calmer weekend.

Visibility has been averaging about 10 metres and water temperature is now 19 degrees.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

July 27th 2004

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Three days of strong southeasters kept us shore bound until the weekend came along with some friendly northeasters that improved visibility out to about 15 metres. And much to our amazement **the groupers have returned.**

About six groupers have been gathered in what we call the cod hole, a deep depression in the formation at 35 metres. A giant Queensland groper is a large animal that looks like a cod on steroids and when it comes to eating habits they don't bite their food they actually inhale it. The giant groper is able to pull enough water in through the mouth and out through the gills that their prey gets caught in something like a vacuum, a bit like a black hole in outer space. In fact besides other sharks the giant Queensland groper is the only fish in the sea that will eat a fully-grown shark.

Their behaviour can be a little aggressive at times as they can be quite territorial, usually swimming toward divers when they see you. Apparently short sighted, they will also follow you until they feel you have ventured far enough away not to be a potential threat anymore. This can be a little bit disconcerting considering they grow to about 2 - 3 metres long and can weigh anything up 500 kg. All things considered though, they are more amusing to watch in the water than threatening.

Visibility this week 15 metres and water temperature is 19 degrees.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2004

After an absence of a few months the groupers have returned in force over the past few weeks. About six groupers have been gathered in what we call the cod hole, a deep depression in the formation at 35 metres. A giant Queensland groper is a large animal that looks like a cod on steroids and when it comes to eating habits they don't bite their food they actually inhale it. The giant groper is able to pull enough water in through the mouth and out through the gills that their prey gets caught in something like a vacuum, a bit like a black hole in outer space. In fact besides other sharks the giant Queensland groper is the only fish in the sea that will eat a fully-grown shark.

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Apart from that the humpback whales have been quite active and even if we haven't seen them on the surface we can certainly hear them.

Visibility averaged 10 to 15 metres throughout the month and water temperature crept from 20 down to 19 degrees.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

July 6th 2005
WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Again not much diving action over the last week due to weather conditions.

Another big swell has decimated the beach and washed away sand leaving a 1 - 2 metre bank down the southern end of the bay. Needless to say the rocks in front of town have also been exposed.

A close encounter with a whale was an exciting moment for customers on the way out to the rock. The whale was heading straight into the bay and passed only metres from our boat. The fish life out at Wolf Rock has been prolific with the sharks being found down deep in 30 metres.

Unfortunately a limited 3 metres visibility on the weekend but with the swell dissipating and calmer conditions that should change quite quickly. Water temperature still 21 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

July 19th 2005
WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Some nice calm weather over the weekend gave us perfect conditions for diving. With a southwesterly wind the water in the bay was flat as a pancake making launching and loading a breeze.

The diving was not up to it's usual standard because of low visibility again but we still managed to find some sharks out there with the odd turtle, moray eel and nudibranch with a couple of groopers thrown in for good measure. **The rock was also swarming with scads, at one point they were so thick you couldn't see more than 1 metre in front of you.**

Water temperature has dropped to 20 degrees and visibility 5 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

July 26th 2005
WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

It appears that there has been a change for the better in the weather pattern with some beautiful calm conditions settling in since Sunday.

Despite some pretty ordinary visibility we are still managing to come face to face with the grey nurse sharks who are hanging down deep in about 30 metres of water. Their behavior is a little unsettled probably because they are coming close to pupping, which will be some time in September. Apart from that, lots of fish life and one extremely large loggerhead turtle on the bottom attempting to blend in with the formation. Its head was about the size of a human head and the shell as big as a dining room table.

Some manta rays have been spotted swimming around on the surface along with the odd sea snake and the whales are still singing, as they make their way north past Wolf Rock.

Lets hope the weather holds now for the sinking of the Brisbane which is planned for this Sunday.

Water temperature 20 degrees and visibility 5 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2005

Not a lot of recreational diving has been achieved over the past month due the unfortunate weather patterns we have been experiencing. With the big swell and wind also affecting Mudlo Rocks getting to the dive site has also been a bit of a challenge. Although our customers enjoy the ride through the Freshwater Road, after you have done it a few hundred times it becomes a little tedious, especially towing a boat.

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It appears that there has been a change for the better in the weather pattern with some beautiful calm conditions settling in since last Sunday so lets hope the weather holds now for the sinking of the Brisbane which is planned for Sunday 31st July. We will update you on that in the August issue.

Water temperature is now 20 degrees and visibility is averaging 5 metres for the month. It can only get better!

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

July 18th 2006

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Over the past week we have been conducting surveys for **Shark Week**. This officially ended on Sunday. The object of Shark Week was to collect as much data and photos as possible to try and get an idea of how many grey nurse sharks have been sighted up and down the East Coast from southern New South Wales up to Wolf Rock. This is all weather dependent however, which makes things a little difficult to co-ordinate. Here at Wolf Rock we were seeing around a dozen sharks with a few of them having features that assist in identifying them individually. Most of them were hanging out in about 30 metres of water so time was of the essence in getting photos and information before running out of bottom time. But we did manage to enjoy the sight of other critters such as eagle rays, manta rays and groper while there and listening to the whales is always a bonus.

The photo I have attached this week is not of Wolf Rock but taken down at Flat Rock off Stradbroke Island on Sunday. This is every divers dream but unfortunately doesn't happen that often, two humpback whales swimming past you under the water. One day I hope to see this at Wolf Rock.

Water temperature has dropped to 20 degrees and visibility hovering around the 10 metre mark.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

July 31st 2006

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Weather has defeated us once again over the past week with us only able to get a couple of days. The swell rolling into the bay made it impossible to launch and did not dissipate until Sunday. The beach down in the bay just seems to get smaller and smaller with so much sand being washed away.

The few times we were out wasn't bad diving with the usual suspects thrilling the divers. Sharks as always are the main attraction although earlier in the week they were playing a bit of hide and seek with one of the divers missing out on seeing them altogether due to his air consumption. The other divers who were better on their air consumption did see them however and assured their friend that the sharks really were there. He wasn't disappointed though as we saw plenty of other animals such as Spanish dancers, pineapple fish, sea snakes, groper and nudibranchs.

Water temperature is currently 19 degrees and visibility was about 10 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2006

July has turned out to be a reasonable month despite unsettled weather throughout the last few weeks with some strong southeast winds and big swells, normally something we see more of in summer. **The grey nurse sharks have been swimming around predominantly down in deep water, about 30 metres or so which seems to be a bit of an annual pattern as this was where we were finding them last year.**

Numbers have been varying between 1 or 2 up to a dozen. This year we were involved in **shark week** where the object was to gather as much data and photography as we could to try and identify individual sharks and see whether they are moving around between sites up and down the east coast.

Apart from the sharks the giant Queensland groppers have been out and about, the odd eagle ray, olive sea snakes, spanish dancers and the usual schools of pelagics. Last weekend a couple of **manta rays** were also seen swimming past. Divers have been getting some good photography but nothing can beat the shot taken down at Flat Rock off Stradbroke Island by Carley Bansemer. Seeing humpback whales while diving is something every diver dreams of and as this months photo shows, it's quite an amazing site - two humpback whales with a grey nurse shark in the foreground.

The end of July also saw the first anniversary of the sinking of the ex HMAS Brisbane off Mooloolaba. The new dive site has been attracting divers from all over and as a consequence bringing more divers up to dive here at Wolf Rock as well. This is good news for the dive industry and general tourism for Southeast Queensland in an increasingly competitive market.

Visibility this month has averaged about 10 metres and the water temperature is hovering around 19 – 20 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2007

Despite the cold winds which are persisting from the southwest, divers are still keen to get in the water to see the action. All our southern visitors are quite comfortable in these conditions as this is usually the type of weather they experience in their summer.

Sharks are still the main attraction but humpback whales and dolphins are providing loads of entertainment on the surface. **There's a particular group of dolphins we see from time to time that like to play with us when we are heading back to shore. On one of our trips we were joined by about a dozen of them who persisted in racing the boat. As soon we stopped they would stop and when we took off again they would chase us and swim directly in front of the bow of the boat.** We're not sure who was having more fun, them or us. Eventually we stopped and decided to see what would happen if Kev jumped in to snorkel with them. Once in the water unfortunately they didn't stay long, after doing a couple of laps to check him out they were on their way. Long enough though for us to get a couple of shots of them underwater.

All the big animals seem to be hanging out in depths of between 20 and 30 metres at the moment. One dive in particular was memorable when we came across what seemed to be an aggregation of shovel nosed rays. Spread out across the bottom were about a dozen of them with a lone bull ray keeping them company. As we swam on we were joined by a good sized manta ray with a wingspan measuring about 4 metres. We're also seeing quite a few extremely large loggerhead turtles, again right on the bottom resting. Up a bit higher in the water column the giant trevally and kingfish are patrolling the rock chasing the baitfish around.

Water temperature is now around the 19 degree mark and visibility is hovering at an average of 15 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2008

July hasn't been the busiest of months this year with weather still unsettled and colder water keeping all but the die hard divers at home. The conditions when we did get out were reasonable but visibility has been a little ordinary due the unusually high amount of rain we have been getting in the area.

Throughout the month, as we experienced in June, sightings of grey nurse shark have been a bit hit and miss. The biggest count for the month was about 6 sharks sighted on one dive but on other dives nothing at all. **The first of the males has turned up** and quite a good size one too, between 2.5 and 3 metres which is pretty big for a male. This will be the start of the males arriving now to get ready for the mating season which kicks off about the end of October. **The females that are here now are probably still here from last year so won't be mating this season. The males will be waiting for the arrival of the "new" females who will be returning after a 12 month break away.**

Humpback whales have been a different story with sightings on just about every trip out to Wolf Rock and sometimes seeing 3 or 4 separate pods in the space of 1 hour on the water. Hopefully this means numbers are increasing and we can look forward to many more sightings, preferably under the water. Loggerhead turtles have been fairly active and grofers being spotted on a regular basis.

Water temperature has fallen to 19 – 20 degrees and visibility on our last dive was about 8 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2009

Well the highlight this month was my very first scuba dive with a humpback whale. This is a once in a lifetime experience for most divers unless you happen to be in a country that allows diving with humpbacks. We just happened to be in the right place at the right time and there it was. It was only a baby, just 4 – 5 metres long!! Don't know what I would have done if I came face to face with Mum, who would have been about another 10 metres longer. We were down at about 25 metres when we saw the baby who was hovering about 5 metres above our heads obviously checking us out.

Kev had been watching from the surface sending telepathic messages “look up, look up” as the Mother and calf had been following our bubbles around the dive site. The calf must have decided to investigate further and dived down to have a closer look at us, we didn't see the mother as visibility was only about 6 metres, but she must have been close by keeping an eye on her offspring. Apparently they were there for most of our dive but unfortunately we didn't see them again.

After that, it was all pretty much downhill as nothing could compare to that exciting experience. Just joking.....there was still plenty to see with eagle rays, groper and a lone male grey nurse shark which normally turns up about this time every year.

The photo this month of two humpback whales was taken by Carley Bansemer when she was diving at Flat Rock a dive site off Stradbroke Island. As I was saying earlier, the chances of seeing humpback whales while on scuba are very slim, but having it happen when you have a good quality camera to record it are even slimmer.

Visibility has started to improve after a prolonged bout of dirty water. We're now averaging about 10 metres and water temperature is around 20 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2010

This time last year was the month I got to see a humpback under the water for the first time. No such luck so far this year, but you never know as **we are seeing record numbers of whales passing by this year.** Very exciting, we never tire of watching them pass by and lots of breaching action this year as well which makes it all the more spectacular.

Having said that, another big surprise for the month however has been the quantity of grey nurse sharks we saw. **A total number of about 35 sharks were counted, a record for July!** This only occurred in the last week of July, up till then we were seeing about 6-7, on some dives none at all. So there you go, after 10 years you just don't know what will happen next.

This month we were visited by a family of Dutchies!! They were so keen to get in amongst the sharks and they booked themselves in for an Advanced Course for the whole family. Unfortunately due to weather, we were only able to do one day of training but they got to see some shark action.

Visibility between 15 and 20 metres and water temp has dropped to 19 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2011

As we approach the end of the month we are finally starting to get some good visibility in the water. It seems like ages since we have had blue water, in fact not since all the flooding at the beginning of this year, so it was great to see a return to what is considered to be fairly good visibility at about 15 metres.

Seems like the grey nurse sharks like it too with about 20 of them counted on our last charter out there. Eagle rays and gropers have also been out and about with **olive sea snakes, one of which proved to be particularly nosy. It took a liking to our dive leader and persisted in wrapping itself around his legs for about 15 minutes before it lost interest and swam off.** It was probably attracted by the bits of metal it could see shining on his dive fins.

On our way home after another charter late in the month we noticed a green sea turtle on the surface that was not able to submerge and looked very lethargic. Underwater World in Mooloolaba kindly offered to take the turtle and is now looking after her. They won't know for a few days whether she will be okay but it could be some sort of virus as her neck glands were looking a little swollen or perhaps she hasn't been able to find enough food. **Apparently there has been a 700% increase in turtle strandings in north Queensland of late.** Although authorities are not sure of the exact reasons they suspect it may be due to the decimation of sea grass beds by Cyclone Yasi and ongoing flooding events. Sea grass is a major food source for green sea turtles just as it is for dugongs.

Water temperature is down to about 19 degrees at present and will hopefully not drop any further for the rest of winter.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2012

Diving conditions have finally returned to normal at the end of this month after another extended period of bad weather similar to what we experienced last year but without the severe flooding.

Our shark population is still hovering at around 20 sharks in total with quite a few boys already here, around 6 or 7 of them from what we could see. Most of the females are looking heavily pregnant and they had all settled into deep water on our last dive this month.

We've always wondered why we see so many of the females come to Wolf Rock at the end of the mating season in January, and then hang around throughout their pregnancy. As it turns out it has something to do with their gestation after mating and Wolf Rock is the only known aggregation site for pregnant female sharks. We are getting about 50% of the pregnant females here but they still don't know where the other 50% are going to.

Water temperature is down to about 19 degrees and we currently have visibility of around 15 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2013

Some great diving over the last couple of weeks with underwater visibility conditions improving somewhat compared to recent months.

Shark numbers have levelled out at around a dozen or so with the first of the males arriving about mid month. Most of the females are heavily pregnant getting close to giving birth. The two males we have seen so far is one really big guy at around 3 metres in length and he also has a pretty healthy looking girth as well. This is a little unusual for the male grey nurse shark; normally they are a little smaller and skinnier. Generally, the female of the species grows a bit bigger than the males.

Other action out at Wolf Rock included giant Queensland groper, eagle rays and turtles. We also see a lot of other tropical species of fish which are always there but tend to blend into the background when looking at the bigger animals. These are all the beautiful and colourful reef fish that live in and around the hard and soft corals. To name just a handful of the very many, we have blue neon's, trumpet fish, wrasse, butterfly fish, batfish, angelfish, parrotfish, blennies, goatfish and puffer fish etc.

Good to see such a great turnout in Hervey Bay last weekend on Paddle out for the Whales Day. Well done to everyone who took part and a great way to raise the profile of these awesome animals.

Water temperature is down to 18 and 19 degrees and we currently have visibility of around 15 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2014

As winter settles in days are a little cooler but water temperature is still relatively warm at 19 degrees.

Rays have been quite prevalent this month including the **manta rays** which have continued to visit Wolf Rock. On our last dive before this report there were three as well as a large squadron of around 20 eagle rays and a very large marbled bull ray with a compliment of smaller stingrays riding her back.

The shark numbers have dropped significantly to only 1 – 3 being seen on each dive but if what we experience in past years continues we can expect to see a lot more out there very soon. **July is usually the month when the males turn up so I'm sure we will be seeing on our next charter once the weather settles.**

The humpback whales have been amazing and we are seeing them on pretty much every trip out to the rock. They seem to be travelling a lot closer to the beaches this year. Either that or the population has grown and we are just seeing the results of that.

Visibility is hovering at around 10 - 15 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

July 2016 (2015 missing)

The whales have been amazing this month with quite a large number of them travelling past close to Wolf Rock. When seeing them so close to the boat you really get an idea of just how big these animals are. They grow to a length of around 18 - 19 metres with the females being slightly bigger. The sound of their exhalation as they spout is quite loud and makes such a distinctive “shwoosh” sound so you know they are there even before you see them.

It's interesting to note that humpbacks travel in distinctive groups for their migration north. The first we see are the females who are just about to wean their young calf they gave birth to the year before. The next group is made up of both male and female sub-adults and these will be the most playful. About 3 weeks later we see the mature males and resting females and then the pregnant females are last as they have been fattening themselves up to give birth and then feed their new born calves in warmer waters.

Grey nurse sharks are still here in big numbers and we are seeing between 20 and 30 of them with the first of the boys having arriving early in the month. We suspect there could be up to 4 males here already. A lot of the females are still heavily pregnant with only a few that look like they are here for the next mating season.

Large schools of trevally, mackerel and barracuda have been hanging around the area and there seems to be quite a few little whalers chasing the smaller fish around.

Visibility has ranged between 5 and 20 metres throughout the month and water temperature is now 19 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive