

August 5th 2003

At Wolf Rock large **manta rays** have been a spectacular sight this week. They have been feeding in the northerly current using their mandibles as hydra foils in order to direct the flow of plankton into their gaping mouths. On the topic of gaping mouths, the giant Queensland gropers are back hiding in the many caves and swim throughs like trolls waiting to ambush the unwary. Two of our grey nurse sharks are looking very rotund with their pregnant bellies and we expect that they may soon be ready to give birth. Visibility has declined now to 10 metres and water temperature holding at 20 degrees.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

August 12th 2003

At present, we are experiencing a run of near perfect weather allowing for a full week of consistent diving, so far so good.

Monday surprised us with a 2-3 knot current from the south which really brought the rock alive with an abundance of life all feeding in the moving water. The whole food chain was on display. Our grey nurse sharks are rising up from the deep and coming closer to the main formation with the full moon, and the pregnant females are still there waiting for their time to pup.

Fortunately the northerly change abated the current leaving us with 15 metres visibility and water temperature 20 degrees.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

August 19th 2003

As we approach the end of August, the water temperature begins to rise slightly bringing with it humpback whales on their return journey from the Great Barrier Reef.

This week divers were amazed by a fantastic display put on by two humpbacks mating at the surface. It really is quite something to see two twenty-ton lovers in the throws of passion. There was non-stop breaching, tail slapping and pectoral fin waving, rolling, grunting and bellowing with both of them three times longer than our boat. An experience we'll never forget!

We have also just recently been host to diving legend **Ben Cropp**. Ben came to Rainbow Beach to get some underwater footage of the Grey Nurse Sharks at Wolf Rock, for his coming documentary film to be titled The Vanishing Grey Nurse. The timing was perfect because **it looks like our pregnant females have finally gone away to pup, as we have not been able to find them for the last couple of days.**

Water temperature has climbed slightly to 21 degrees and visibility has averaged 15 metres.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

August 3rd 2004

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Wolf Rock is not only a critical habitat for the grey nurse shark, it is also well known for its resident **wobbegongs**. The wobbegong is sometimes referred to as the carpet shark although they are actually two different creatures.

The most common misconceptions about wobbegongs are that they are harmless, toothless and as with most other shark's unable to turn and bite their own tail. In fact 'wobby' is actually the only shark that can.

Wobbegongs have a broad head, are all mouth, possess 90 razor sharp backward facing teeth and on contact, are able to lock their jaws not unlike the pit bull terrier dog. Wobby is an expert ambush hunter and a master of camouflage. The disruptive pattern on its skin helps to break the silhouette of the animal as it lays in wait for unsuspecting passers-by. With a lightning fast strike wobby will swallow its prey whole.

Divers have been bitten by wobbegongs out of self-defence while accidentally kneeling or standing on an invisible but very aware shark with underlying attitude. Most pelagic sharks will display their discontent or disapproval with signs of aggression such as the arching of the back, the down turn of the pectoral fins and an obvious swagger while they swim. But wobby shows no signs of intention or emotion, just the poker face of the steely-eyed ambush expert of the deep.

Visibility this week 20 metres and water temperature is 19 degrees.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

August 10th 2004

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Once again Wide Bay is covered with algal weed. It appears after the occurrence of what is called an up welling. An up welling occurs when an upper layer of cold water streams over the warmer bottom layer and as heat rises the bottom layer changes places with the top layer bringing with it the weed which is then heated by the sun and starts to decompose.

The northerly and westerly winds push it up on the beach where it lays after a big tide, wind blown sand covers the weed and it begins to ferment creating gaseous pockets in the beach. This is why you can get bogged in it so easily and it really smells bad.

The water column is now at 18 degrees and being mid August it may not drop any further. The giant Queensland gropers are still with us as are the constant songs of the humpback whales. **The grey nurse sharks have lessened in numbers as the pregnant females go off to unknown locations in order to give birth.**

Visibility this week 20 metres and water temperature is 18 degrees.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive Centre

August 22nd 2005
WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

Blessed with near perfect conditions, Wolf Rock has turned on some truly excellent diving over the last few weeks.

A swift 3-knot current running from the north brought out all the apex predators, from giant Queensland groper to whaler sharks. They all love to feed in these conditions when the ocean is moving like this. The animals can hover motionless pointing themselves into the current and when approaching them from behind they cannot hear, smell or see you coming. At one stage I found myself alongside some of the biggest barracuda I have ever seen just hanging there as I held onto the rocks to stay with them. Quite an experience.

Water temperature 19 degrees and visibility 15 metres.

Kev Phillips
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2005

August was a good month for diving with plenty of action out at Wolf Rock and some good diving in the bay on Nursery Reef. **The weed that had blanketed Nursery Reef earlier this year was still evident but has finally started to dissipate letting the area come back to life. One thing we did notice was that the egg cowries that were plentiful in that area seem to have totally disappeared. Whether that is due to the weed or whether they have become victims to collecting we're not sure. Let's hope that they do come back. It is such a fragile little reef that something like this could upset its whole ecological balance.**

The grey nurse sharks are still plentiful out at Wolf Rock and are definitely looking very close to giving birth. **Over the past month a couple of male sharks have turned up.**

The giant Queensland groper have been patrolling the site and the huge loggerhead turtle we saw last month seems to have taken up residence down the deep end of the formation.

As this report was written the weather had taken a turn for the worse with some strong southeasters blowing again but we hope to be out there early in September for some spring diving.

Visibility improved throughout the month with an average of around 12 metres and water temperature varied between 17 and 20 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

August 22nd 2006

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

After six years of conducting full time diving operations at Wolf Rock we now recognise definite patterns in aggregation and behaviour of the animals that live there.

As the seasons change, different species come and go such as the manta rays, humpback whales, leopard sharks and bull rays. Alternatively, the swift currents tend to bring out the big predators and pelagics. We can also recognise individual animals by their scars and growths and their own unique character or personality such as “Heckle and Jeckle” the giant Queensland gropers that are like grumpy old men. One that won’t let you close enough to take a decent picture and the other that just loves to pose for the camera.

When female grey nurse sharks are at the peak of mating season they appear quite cranky. When they are gestating they prefer the warmer water and right before pupping they just want to be alone, separating themselves from the pack and preferring a brief game of solitaire.

Then there’s “Jack”, a lean young male that turns up early each year for mating season a bit like reserving your spot at the muster. We recognise him by the scar on his nose and his distinct attitude. He’s always swimming faster than the other sharks as if he’s had too much red cordial. If you swim too close to one of his girlfriends he will swoop you like a magpie. On more than one occasion he has crept up behind a diver and had a little nibble on their fin tip. Makes you wonder what he’s trying to say. So we have nicknamed him “Jack the Ripper” the serial fin biter. He turned up again only a week ago. Jack’s back!

Water temperature is currently 19-20 degrees and visibility was about 15 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

August 29th 2006

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

We still have about 6 grey nurse sharks in residence at Wolf Rock with what looks like three heavily pregnant females. A couple of males have arrived as they normally do in August as the whole twelve month cycle recommences. Manta rays have also been seen throughout the last week with a couple of them proving to be very diver friendly. This week's photo is of a diver photographing a jellyfish we found not long after descending for a second dive. Up close to this animal you can really see how beautiful and graceful they are under the water as well as being there own little ecosystem with hundreds of tiny blue fish living in amongst it's tentacles.

The temperature has not dropped lower than 19 degrees so far this months which is a little unusual in comparison to past years where we have recorded temperatures as low as 17 degrees. Just that 1-2 degree higher makes a big difference in the chill factor. Visibility has been good averaging 15 - 20 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2006

August was a good month for diving with plenty of action out at Wolf Rock and some excellent diving in the bay on Nursery Reef and also out at Round Rock.

We still have about 6 grey nurse sharks in residence at Wolf Rock with what looks like three heavily pregnant females. A couple of males have arrived as they normally do in August as the whole twelve month cycle recommences. Manta rays have also been seen throughout the month with a couple of them proving to be very diver friendly. One of this month's photos gives you an idea of the size of the animal but also demonstrates how harmless they are. The other shot is of a diver photographing a jellyfish we found not long after descending for our second dive. Up close to this animal you can really see how beautiful and graceful they are under the water as well as being there own little ecosystem with hundreds of tiny blue fish living in amongst it's tentacles.

The temperature has not dropped lower than 19 degrees which is a little unusual in comparison to past years where we have recorded temperatures as low as 17 degrees. Just that 1-2 degree higher makes a big difference in the chill factor. Visibility has been good throughout the month at an average of 15 metres but the last week has been even better at 20 metres.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2007

Not a lot of diving happening throughout the month of August. The cold weather snap we experienced put off all but the die hard divers and the rest have been waiting for the weather to warm up. Unfortunately just when the momentum got going again we were hit with the massive storm that wiped out our beaches and things have come to a grinding halt again. Mind you when we did get out there the diving was pretty spectacular.

Quite a few male sharks have moved in for the duration and all the females that are still around at Wolf appear to be heavily pregnant. They're moving about the formation predominantly down in deeper water but occasionally up in around 15 – 20 metres. So roughly 8-10 sharks still hanging about.

We have heard reports of an albino grey nurse shark spotted further down the coast so we will be interested to see whether he turns up at Wolf Rock for the mating season. We have our suspicions that it is probably more likely a very pale looking shark rather than a genetic albino. A couple of years ago we noticed 1 shark that we thought looked rather odd, possibly this is the same one.

We've included a couple of photos of batfish with this month's report. They are commonly found above large pinnacles and shipwrecks and are seen on a regular basis at Wolf Rock, usually in the first 10 metres of water. They are inquisitive to the point where they like to follow divers all the way to the boat on ascent which is great as it keeps us amused while decompressing.

Well, let's hope the beach comes back soon so everything can get back to normal.

Visibility was 15 metres and water temperature had started to creep up to 20 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2008

A bit of a mixed bag this month as far as underwater action goes. Wolf Rock started out pretty quiet but has finished with a lot more activity in the last week. After only seeing a single shark sporadically throughout the month we finished with a dozen of them on our last dive. Three of them were male and the rest were female with at least 5 of them pregnant. Most of the females were in the 3 metre range and one of the boys was a good 2.5 – 3 metres. **When you get right up beside these animals you really appreciate how big they are. It also seems to be a trademark with Wolf Rock sharks as well. Many of our customers comment on the size of the sharks we have here in comparison to the ones they see down south. In fact just this week we received a video disk of a dive done here at Wolf Rock and another at Fish Rock Cave, another significant grey nurse habitat in New South Wales. We can identify Wolf Rock just by looking at the rotundity and length of the animals.**

We got to do a few dives on Round Rock this month which turned out to be a good decision. If it's quiet at Wolf Rock you can almost guarantee there will be something happening there. On one particular dive it must have been a special meet for turtles, every time we turned a corner we bumped into another one. All of them were a good size and mostly loggerheads. One in particular was very friendly, patiently waiting while each diver gave him a pat on the top of his shell. Our family of divers from Canada - Mum, Dad and 3 kids had a ball. It was the first time they had been so close to a turtle and to also be able to give it a pat on the back was very exciting. Some turtles obviously spend a lot of time near divers as they are not perturbed by their presence at all. And you can usually tell, as their shells are extremely clean with no algae or crustacean growth.

Visibility has averaged about 10 metres and water temperature has been a brisk 19 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2009

This month we have seen a surprising number of male sharks compared to other years. With a total of 10 males counted this is a record number at Wolf Rock.

There are still a couple of females about as well and all the sharks have been hanging out down in deep water at about 30 metres. One of the boys had a significant amount of growth around his front dorsal fin which appears to be the remnants of where he was tagged at some stage. This is the very reason why the **tagging method** of identifying grey nurse sharks was discontinued in Queensland. The accepted method now is through photo identification which has been proven to be successful by Carley Bansermer's years of research. In New South Wales they still use the tagging method so this is probably a male shark that lives predominantly over the border.

One of our customers completed her Advanced Open Water Course with us this month and one of her elective dives was photography. Bernie got some great shots considering it was her first time using a camera. On that day we had quite a few large schools of batfish which Bernie managed to capture on camera. See photo this month.

Visibility has averaged about 10-15 metres and with water weather the water temperature has now risen to 21 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2010

Diving this month has been nothing short of spectacular compared to the month of August in previous years. We started off with a very friendly adolescent male humpback who took a keen interest in a group of divers doing their safety stop at the end of their dive. For some reason he just wanted to hang around and check them out giving them loads of photo opportunity – see photos this month compliments of Maria Berger. This year has proven to be one of the busiest we have seen for humpback whales with them hugging the coast on their journey north. Normally we see more of them on their journey south, so we're very interested to see what happens in the next couple of months when they are on their way home with all the babies!

In addition to the whales we have also been seeing loads of manta rays and unusually large numbers of grey nurse sharks for this time of year. Whether this is due to the amount of food in the water this year or just some sort of cycle we don't know but it certainly makes for some exciting diving.

Just last Wednesday we had 35 metres visibility, about as good as we have seen it but unfortunately it didn't last long and we are now back to about 15 metres, not that we're complaining. Water temperature is averaging about 19 degrees but will soon start to improve with the arrival of spring.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2011

Continuing on from last month some more great diving for our customers. Grey nurse shark numbers have been hovering between 20 and 30 and on one particular day we counted up to 10 males. This is great to see. **It seems that every year we see an increase in the number of males here, so hope it continues.**

News on our green sea turtle that we rescued last month is good. Staff at Underwater World report that she is “eating and pooing” which is good news in a turtle’s world or anyone’s world I guess! Not able to submerge yet however, apparently she likes to hang on to a pole in the middle of the pool there with one of her flippers. We had a call from a lady in town who found another turtle which had just washed in on the beach out front of town. I hope she was able to find some help for it. One thing to keep in mind is that turtles do sometimes come into the beach for a rest – maybe because of rough weather or if it’s mating season or they may have been caught underwater for a period of time before being able to return to the surface for air. If so, it may be worth waiting to see if it returns to the water of its own accord.

There are 7 species of turtles found worldwide with 6 of those found in Australian waters. The main turtles found around the Cooloola region are the loggerhead, the green sea turtle and the hawksbill. Another called the flatback turtle is thought to be unique to Australia as it only lays eggs on the Australian coastline but I think they are found more predominantly to the north of us in between the Great Barrier Reef and the mainland.

Visibility this month averaging 10 – 15 metres and water temperature has been around 19 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2012

Wow, where have all the years gone! I started writing these reports back in 2001 and here we are over 10 years later. One thing that doesn't seem to change is the continued popularity of a dive like Wolf Rock.

Even though the last few years have been some of the toughest weather wise, as soon as the weather comes good, the customers are still there waiting to dive. This month has seen a return to some of our best diving conditions. The visibility improved to the best we have seen in a long time and by the end of the month we were enjoying 30 metres. In a divers' world, the formation of the dive site is just as important as what type of animals they will see. It's such a great sight when you look from the surface and see the bottom and then are able to take in the whole formation from a distance.

The grey nurse sharks also continue to fascinate everyone and photographers can't seem to get enough shots, forever pursuing that perfect combination of good visibility and the right angle to show off the object of the photo. A bit like the golfer always striving for that hole in one.

Animals seen this month included the grey nurse sharks with 8 – 9 males already here, giant Queensland groppers, a lone eagle ray, turtles and various species of schooling fish.

Water temperature has increased slightly to 20 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2013

With the return of our beautiful Queensland weather, diving has been extremely enjoyable both under the water and on the surface this month.

The water visibility has improved with a return to some cleaner water giving us more unhindered views of the formation and marine life. The action has been pretty consistent and we have been able to count around 20 sharks hanging out down deep on the bottom. **Gropers** have been curious coming over for closer looks at us and some huge turtles. One very old and very big loggerhead has been seen sleeping on the bottom over the past few dives, her shell is almost pristine with hardly any growth but her neck and head is encircled with barnacles.

On one memorable dive we had a student doing his narcosis test on the bottom while a groper, a sea snake and a grey nurse shark swam around Kev. Unfortunately the diver was so intent on his mathematical equation he missed the lot.

This month we also found an underground spring pumping out volumes of fresh water. This has affected the bottom composition which is now covered in craters about 1 metre wide and a foot deep. The spring itself has a silty muddy bottom. It will be interesting to see how long it will continue to flow.

Plenty of whales now returning south with their calves and we are entertained on the surface with their antics. One of our pictures this month is of a baby whale breaching just off Wolf Rock.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2014

Still plenty of pregnant grey nurse sharks at Wolf Rock with a few males getting around. This will be the last full month before the pregnant females will slowly start dissipating in order to have their babies. They will give birth to 2 live young that will be born between 80 and 100cm long. There are 6 stages in the life history of the grey nurse shark:

- Neonate
- Juvenile male
- Juvenile female
- Adult male
- Adult resting female
- Adult gestating female

Scientists still don't know a lot about neonates and gestating females. **About 2 thirds of the gestating females have been identified as using Wolf Rock but there are no records of the other third of the population which leads them to believe there is another gestation site that is unknown.**

The young will look after themselves from the time they are born and we probably won't see them at Wolf Rock until they are ready to mate which is in about 4-6 years for the male and 6-8 years for the female.

Lots of rays have been hanging about the rock along with the pelagic species and schools of baitfish. Visibility for the past month has been around 15 metres and water temperature 19 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2015

Some lovely winter weather has been enjoyed by all divers the last few weeks and although water temperatures have dropped, it doesn't take long to warm up again in the winter sun.

As we always do this time of year we have been seeing plenty of humpback whales and enjoying their whale song while under the water. Grey nurse sharks are lower in number and predominantly male with just a few **pregnant females left before they head off to give birth.**

Giant Queensland gropers have been frequenting the rock in numbers and we seem to have a resident loggerhead turtle that we have caught napping on the bottom on a regular basis. He loves to lay on the bottom with his head in a little alcove if he can find one and he blends in surprisingly well with the rocky formation. If we have time we give him a bit of a back scratch which he seems to enjoy and I suspect this helps to keep his shell nice and clean. For a turtle of his size and age he has very little barnacle growth.

We've also seen huge schools of barracuda, mulloway big eye trevally and kingfish have been rounding us up in big schools which is a pretty spectacular sight.

Visibility has been great at around 15 metres and water has been a nice blue colour which our photographers love. Water temperature has been as low as 18 degrees and up to 20 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive

WOLF ROCK DIVE REPORT

August 2016

Sharks, manta rays and humpback whales have kept all divers entertained this month.

We are still seeing approximately a dozen sharks, predominantly male. **Sadly, we have noticed about 3 sharks with hooks in their mouths that look quite fresh and can only assume they have picked them up just recently. Whether this was from people fishing at Wolf Rock we don't know, but we do know that people are fishing at Wolf Rock. We are constantly picking up fishing line, hooks, various lures and sinkers. Since Wolf Rock has been closed to fishing for about 10 years or more now, I think that surely these fishermen must know they are fishing in a green zone.**

You might say that this is not really doing any harm to the sharks however it's the hooks that you can't see that do the most damage. If they have been swallowed they will be sitting in the shark's stomach which can be piercing the stomach walls and leaving them open to infection which eventually kills them. Since they are such a slow breeding animal each death is detrimental to their population.

Just like the dugong which used to populate the Great Sandy Straights, Hervey Bay and Moreton Bay in their thousands, so too were there thousands of the grey nurse sharks up and down the East Coast of Australia. We can only hope that the protection the sharks now receive between here and southern New South Wales will be enough to revive their population.

We've had some great visibility at an average of 15 – 20 metres and at one point about 30 metres which was fantastic! Water temperature is at its coolest for the year at 19 degrees.

Cheryl Maughan
Wolf Rock Dive