



April 2001 newsletter
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Reef watcher

Marathon Mania

Rather early on Sunday morning, before the sun even came up, a dedicated group of volunteers started setting up for this years Marathon Dive. It must have been an earlier than usual start for some, with one person putting their wetsuit on back to front (not sure how he did it but I witnessed it! and yes, it was a male!).

Nor the water conditions nor the visibility was great during the day (some may say 'what vis.?'), however more than 80 divers and snorkellers visited Port Noarlunga to assist in collecting data on the fish life. The first group of divers hit the water at 7:30am, recording fish presence and abundance at their allocated site. Due to poor conditions the snorkelling was restricted to later in the day but those who did manage to get into the water enjoyed themselves. However it's probably best not to mention a certain boat driver who managed to 'reef' their boat (perhaps something to do with a hot date planned for that evening?). Nevertheless the boat drivers/helpers all did a great job, allowing the collection of data from both the northern and southern tips.

Data collected throughout the day will be analysed shortly. Fish data will be analysed for changes in abundance at each site throughout the day. This will also be compared to health of the adjacent habitat.

It was good to see some of the 'old faithfuls' head down on Sunday, including Bill and his dog Mcleod, who have been with Reef Watch since its onset. Bill couldn't dive this year but aims to be back in the water to lead the diving group with his series of antics again (perhaps not any jetty jumping with your dive gear on this time Bill!).

The day would not have been possible with out the support and assistance of many people. Thanks to **Port Noarlunga Dive Centre** for providing numerous free air fills, Russell, Sue, Tony, Daryl, Colleen, Ruby, Lloyd, Patsy, Brydie, Peter, Steve and Mary-Anne who provided invaluable contributions during the day including: donating their boats; acting as lookouts; cooking the BBQ; completing administration tasks; and pulling people in and out of the water. Thanks also to the Turtle Society for donating their BBQ for the feast, and to St Johns who were present throughout the day. Lastly, but not least, thank you to the divers from DEH who completed the LIT surveys.

Hope to see you all again
next year!

Local residents taking care of Hallett Cove reef

A new Reef Watch group has been set up with the assistance of City of Marion Council to monitor the local reef environment and work towards proclaiming the area as protected. With more than 30 people attending the first meeting, the community is showing great support for the protection of their coastal and marine environment. Divers, snorkellers and coastal people of all ages have volunteered to complete surveys, educate the local community and establish new coastal signage. The group was formed in response to a survey produced by Marion Council and delivered to all council residents. One of the main concerns mentioned by residents was the number of people sighted collecting organisms from the protected intertidal zone. To combat this problem, one of the aims of the group will be to improve signage in the area relating to the protected zone. In addition, divers

and snorkellers will be completing Reef Watch surveys at reefs from Kingston Park to north of Port Stanvac.

The residents have formed groups which have 'adopted' a reef which they will monitor four times during the year. Six sites have been nominated and one group have already noted more than 30 fish species living at one of the small reefs. Their first official trip to the sites will be on April 8th to determine the exact site locations and to obtain a general description of the local reefs. Marion Council will assist in providing the group with funding to purchase monitoring kits. If any Reef Watchers living in the Marion Council area would like to take part in this project, please contact Reef Watch on 8223 5155 to register your interest.

Algal Workshop

The Marine Algae workshop was held during February at SARDI Aquatic Sciences. With the support of instructors from the Department for Environment and Heritage, the University of Adelaide and SARDI, participants were taught identification skills which will enable them to collect more rigorous data on reef health.

Dr Anthony Cheshire provided an informative introduction to marine algae and their importance in the environment. This was followed by 'hands on' activities in the pool farm, with instructors present to share their wealth of knowledge and expertise on each topic from seagrass to seaweed, incorporating identification skills with information on the reproductive and physiological components of the alga. Participants were also introduced to LIT surveys.

Many thanks again to: Dr Anthony Cheshire for all his assistance; SARDI for the use of the facilities; Squid from the University of Adelaide who wrote the workshop manual; the dive team who

collected, maintained and organised the specimens for the day; and to the instructors who donated their time and expertise throughout the planning and implementing stages of the workshop. Your help was greatly appreciated.

Please remember that Reef Watch receives no funding to run these workshops, with everyone assisting on the day volunteering their valuable time and expertise to make the day a success. The workshops have been hugely subsidised, with all instructors, use of facilities and materials either donated or volunteered. This is to encourage and, to allow everyone to attend. The algal workshop was run at a loss, thus even further reducing the funds Reef Watch has available.

Due to numerous people not attending the workshop after making a booking Reef Watch was not able to cover costs, especially for catering which was ordered prior to the day. By not attending the day you also have disadvantaged others who were on a waiting list to attend. To resolve this problem to attend any future workshops a deposit must be paid when booking.

Marine Invert Workshop II

On a brighter note, Reef Watch has received a small grant to run a second invertebrate workshop, which will aim to be held during June. Due to the large interest in the previous Marine Invert. workshop we require expressions of interest for attending the workshop ASAP. When the date is decided a letter will be sent to you to confirm your attendance. To reserve your place payment must be made before the workshop.

Feral Workshop

A workshop will be held during October to teach divers and snorkellers to identify introduced marine pests. This will incorporate the launch of the 'Feral or in Peril' program which will aim to monitor the location and abundance of threatened and introduced marine species. Free ID slates will be provided to all those who are interested in participating in the program. Stay tuned for more details.

Snorkelling & Diving in Bali – Indonesia

By Adrian Marshal

Recently a travel agent friend of mine rang me up and asked me if I would like to go to Bali with him for four days at a ridiculously low price. The following Friday saw me boarding a plane and heading to Denpasar – Indonesia. I investigated prices for charter dives shortly after arriving, I could not go home without getting out to a reef for a dive or at least a snorkel. Diving prices in Bali were all in American dollars and ranged from \$65 to \$75 for one dive. I was surprised, it was anything but cheap. I booked a single day Cruise to nearby Lombok Island. On the day a large fast catamaran transported me to a tourist pontoon moored 500m from the island. I wasted no time in getting in the water.

The water was 10m deep with 20m visibility and at 29 degrees it was a welcome change from the cold southern waters. The sandy sea floor was peppered with Coral bommies up to four meters high and anything from 5 to 25 meters wide.

I had participated in Mary-Anne Stacey's Reefwatch Snorkelling

Workshop three weekends previous. The tips that I learned on that Sunday were invaluable to me while snorkelling. By frequently free diving down to the reef I was able to get right amongst the coral formations and the abundant colourful fish communities. I was the only person of the 100 or so tourists that could get close to the reef with snorkelling gear. Four weeks previously I could not have done this effectively.

After a quick exploration I was keen to get under the water, relax and take my time. So it was on with the scuba gear. The Indonesian dive master (Aziz) could not understand why I did not want to wear a wetsuit. I had checked the temperature at depth and was really looking forward to the warm water with out the restriction of a wetsuit. I would just have to be very aware of singers and bites.

At 9m Aziz passed me a satay stick, in seconds there were masses of colourful reef fish chasing and pecking it a frenzied attack. My vision was completely blocked by colourful squirming, biting tugging hungry fish of all sizes and many colours. The plethora of colourful fish in this environment is beautiful to watch as there are species groups, dominant individuals, territories, and unique behaviours to observe.

Some of the other notable inhabitants of the area I spotted were a giant clam, a sea snake, school of silver Snapper, trigger fish and a strange orange pipefish. The giant brain coral and fan coral formations were also nice to see again in the flesh, there was no evidence of sun bleaching at this depth, but there were many little oblong shaped scrapes in the brain corals caused by the mouths of hungry fish.

Frequently spotting and picking up rubbish on the ocean floor was further evidence that these areas are under intense pressures from the human population, who are largely ignorant of their impact on the under

sea environment. However I was impressed to find an employee of the Cruise Company picking up rubbish from the sea floor with a large catch bag. I noticed there were five large bags of rubbish collected from the sea that day. I wondered if this quantity of litter extended beyond the range of recreational diving from this pontoon. I had never intended to go to Bali, but now that I have it has highlighted to me how successful and necessary programs like Reefwatch, Dragon Search, Wetstuff and MLSSA are. There is still much ground to cover in environmental education throughout the world.

Snorkel like a pro!

Always wanted to be able to sit at the bottom of the ocean without having to wear scuba gear? or perhaps you cant even reach the bottom of the ocean because you're never sure how much weight to wear? Or have you always wanted to try to snorkel but never got around to it? if you answered YES! Then this course is for you.

Mary-Anne is a trained snorkelling instructor, teacher, Dive Master, Boat driver, underwater hockey player(amongst a million other things!) but she has kindly offered donate her time to help Reef Watch members in their quest to become snorkelling champions. There have already been two, well attended courses but due to their success she has offered to help out again.

The 3 hour course costs \$10 and is limited to 8 people. If you are interested, contact Mary-Anne: mstacey@camtech.net.au 0419 804685.

LIT Survey Training Day

During February a survey training dive was held to teach divers to complete the advanced monitoring methods or the Line Intercept Transect (LIT) survey. Those who had attended the algal workshop were eager to put into practice all they had learnt in the water. Some underwater footage was taken of the dive and will enable those who couldn't make the trip to see how it's done! Thanks to the film crew who took some candid shots. Check out the dive calendar for the next LIT training dive.

Sponsorship sources Reef Watch needs your help!!!

Reef Watch needs your ideas. Funding is running out and to be able to continue the program in the current format we need some ideas for funding options. If you have an ideas, please let us know – no amount of money is too big or too small. If you have any suggestions please contact Reef Watch ASAP.

Newsletter renewal

Thanks to all who have recently paid their newsletter subscriptions. Please remember that this money (which is GST free) assist in postage and printing of the newsletter, none of which is covered through funding. Your assistance in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Individuals \$10
Groups/corporations \$15

