



Newsletter No 7

Oct/Nov/Dec 2010

Welcome to the last Bicheno Dive Centre newsletter for 2010. Bruce and the staff would like to wish you all the very best for a safe and happy Christmas and a wonderful and prosperous New Year.

Training news

Courses. Our congratulations go to the following open water divers who have qualified over the last few weeks:

Laura Dunbabin
Amy Sempf
Andrea Gadon
Kristy-Anne Lee Youd
Kerryn Haslam

Well done also to Cameron McCollum (Nitrox to 40 per cent and Boat Diver) and Graham Jordan (Advanced Nitrox and Tech Foundation).

Discover Scuba. Discover scuba introductory dives held by BDC over the last few months saw a total of 53 people trying scuba for the first time. The dives were run in either Waub's Bay or the Denison River depending on weather conditions, and both venues saw some wide-eyed enthusiasm by participants at the wonderful underwater



world we tend to take for granted. Quite a number of the participants have expressed interest in returning to undertake the full open water course, and without doubt will help swell the ranks of Tassie's diving fraternity in the near future.

Dive trips

The **Truk Lagoon trip** mentioned in the last newsletter for six nights from 2 Sep 11 now has another four spots available in addition to the 10 already booked. You'll need to be quick if you want to get onboard so contact Bruce for details.

And if you're looking for a **local trip** you might consider this – a long weekend aboard a 10 metre PowerCat diving the Tassie coast from **Hobart to Bicheno** and return, taking a maximum of seven divers. Contact Sue Wragge at Underwater Adventures Tasmania on 0417-015654 if you're interested in some great local diving.

The yacht *Brenda J* is now sitting in her new home port of Bicheno after a relaxing



seven day cruise down the east coast from Brisbane. She's presently undergoing a maintenance and fitout program in preparation for **Bathurst Harbour, Deal and Kent Island dive trips** in the new year. Just a little more polish needed on those sleek, teak timber decks now, with Dive Controllers Rhys, Phil and Bob pencilled in for the job right after

Christmas. Then she'll be ready to start showing off some of Tassie's prime dive locations to visiting divers from interstate and around the globe.

On the local front we'll be welcoming back some of our regular visitors on another of their dive trips to Bicheno – Russell Robinson's Hamilton Sports Scene Group are again booked in for four days diving with BDC in the new year – that'll be four full days of side-splitting laughter, good fun and great diving. We're looking forward to it.

Instore Products

The **Intova IC-12** underwater camera and strobe mentioned in Newsletter 5 has been so popular that BDC has decided to acquire one of these units for hire. The latest outfit has a new improved external strobe and screw-on wide angle 'wet lens' attachment. To recap, the camera is a 12 megapixel compact digital camera with 6 cm LCD screen, 3 x optical and 4 x digital zoom, 720 DPI HD video capability, and is YouTube ready. The housing is waterproof to 54 metres, shock resistant, and provides full function controls. The strobe offers TTL capability in addition to a range of manual power settings. So, you're welcome to come in and try one of these to capture your own seahorse, weedy seadragon or buddy diver pics at just \$55 per day, which includes us loading your photos onto CD. Or you can buy your own setup including IC-12 camera, housing, strobe and wide angle lens for under \$900.



Alpha Products new **Deepstar Torch** is proving to be another popular line, with the first unit sold literally before it hit the store. This wonderfully compact and lightweight Australian made product retails for between \$695 and \$895, depending on customer choice of stainless steel or PVC battery case, and NiCd or NiMH battery pack. The Deepstar

powerhead with its rotating on/off bezel has three large LEDs that produce a true 900 lumens of light. So if you want to switch on the sun beneath our southern oceans order your Deepstar now. Availability of this product in Australia is expected to be extremely limited.

Critter Corner

The common gurnard perch (*Neosebastes scorpaenoides*) ranges from NSW around the Victorian coastline to SA, and is particularly prevalent in Tasmania. Found at depths from two to 140 metres, gurnard perch can reach 40 cm in length and a kilo in weight. Older fish generally inhabit deeper water while youngsters keep to the shallows, and this appears to be the case at Bicheno where most gurnard perch encountered by divers would be younger fish around 20 cm or smaller.

The species belongs to the Scorpionfish family and like other members of this family possesses a powerful sting. Poison glands at the base of the dorsal, anal and ventral fins can inject venom via sharp spines and cause severe pain ... reason enough for divers to be wary of this sluggish little critter. Like its cousin the stonefish, gurnard perch employ camouflage to lie in wait and ambush their prey. This consists of small fish, squid, crabs and other small crustacea as well as marine worms. And



like many other predatory fish they have the ability to change their colour pattern to match the surroundings.

Many underwater photographers tend to give these critters a wide berth, firstly because there's a remote possibility of being stung, and secondly because they seem



such an ugly little fish - large bony head adorned with small spines and big mouth, and dull reddish grey body with three irregular darker saddle-like bands. The fact is though that under the right circumstances these little critters make ideal photographic subjects. They're relatively unperturbed by the presence of divers and prepared to stand their ground, even when a camera is literally shoved in their face. Their red mottled colour pattern and big blue/black eyes are beautifully highlighted by strobes, and when approached they often raise themselves on their pectorals and erect their dorsal spines - the perfect pose for a great fish portrait!

There are plenty of these little critters around Bicheno just waiting to present some wonderful photo opportunities. You just need to take reasonable care when photographing them - don't attempt to touch them and be careful when you're taking your shot, there are occasionally two or three in the one area and they're sometimes hard to spot!



So that's the news for this issue. Once again we wish you a very Merry Christmas, and look forward to seeing you in the New Year and sharing the fabulous underwater world that Bicheno has to offer. Oh and by the way, if you've missed any of our newsletters you can find past issues on our website.

Safe diving,

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