



**April 2016**

## **Welcome to our Newsletter**

As usual, we have had quite an active period with one of our members going as far afield as the Philippines (read a really good report on p7).

A major issue of concern to the dive community has been the high number of dive deaths over the summer throughout New Zealand, and in particular in the Wellington area. In three months nine people died in NZ, four in Wellington. This prompted a local dive operator and the Police Dive Squad to hold a safety briefing which was well attended by divers from across the region. The report from this is on page 3 in this newsletter. We like to think we are safe divers and we certainly take safety seriously, but there is no room for complacency. It's wise to periodically refresh and update your dive knowledge.

Last newsletter we reported on the arrival of the Club's underwater scooters. In February we had the first training sessions for Club members, and at the moment we are completing the procedures, an important aspect from a safety point of view. These scooters are possibly the biggest purchase in the Club's history and are our point of difference locally - there are not many scooters in the region. We will welcome high usage of this equipment, but insist that everyone is properly trained and conversant with the safety procedures before venturing into the sea.

TecFest is coming up at Taupo in early May. WUC will have really good representation at the event. Now we have the Club scooters, we are in the technical diving world. At Tecfest it will be good to

### ***Next Club Meeting:***

#### **TecFest 2016**

***Friday 6<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May, Taupo.  
Follow updates on FB or join us  
after TecFest for updates over a  
dive and a cuppa***

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### ***Want more information?***

If you want to know more about any of the articles in the newsletter, or just want to contact us, then email:

[wellington.underwater@gmail.com](mailto:wellington.underwater@gmail.com)

meet up with other technical divers and those planning to go that way. We'll report more fully next newsletter.

One last point – if you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please feel free to send something in i.e. comments, photos, interesting discoveries, queries etc. Use the email address below.

Thanks to those who contributed to this newsletter. There's plenty of interesting info in the following pages. Happy reading, and stay safe when you are diving.

## Upcoming Activities

For more information on Club activities, please see our regular emailed news bulletins or visit our website [www.wuc.org.nz](http://www.wuc.org.nz).

### Club meetings

- **Breakfast & pool sessions:**  
**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June & Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August**
  - Club breakfast at 0845 – locations to be advised
  - Pool session is at 1015 at Kilbirnie Pool

A shore dive may also be included.

### Planned Club Dive trip

#### **White Island dive trip – any organisers available?**

- Last newsletter we indicated that we were investigating a diving trip to White Island using a live-aboard boat.
- Our organiser has had to pull out – can anyone else take over organising?

### Other Activities

#### **Techfest at Taupo (6 – 8 May 2016)**

To be held at MiCamp, Taupo. The event is fully subscribed. A group of WUC members has registered to attend.

#### **SOLOMON ISLAND'S TIN & FIJI SHARKS**

**(14<sup>th</sup> Oct to 1<sup>st</sup> Nov 2016)**

Organised by Western Underwater Club.

Pick one leg or both:

- Solomon Islands leg: 14<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> Oct
- Fiji leg: 26<sup>th</sup> Oct - 1<sup>st</sup> Nov

See the WUC emailed news bulletin for more details including costs, or

Email: Sarah at [EZTIGER2@ICLOUD.COM](mailto:EZTIGER2@ICLOUD.COM)

## WUC's scooters



Halcyon HDV R-14 scooter

Last newsletter we reported on the arrival the two Halcyon HDV R-14 scooters recently purchased by the Club. The scooters will be available to use for a moderate fee which is needed to cover maintenance and other administration.

One of the main rules we have set is that Club members who wish to use the scooters must receive training. The first group of Club members were trained in February.



Club members discuss the finer details of the new underwater scooter

Arrangements about further training sessions will be advised by email notices and on the Club website. If you are keen, please let us know so that we can make sure you get the information.

## DIVING SAFETY MEETING – 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016

During three months over summer, there were nine dive deaths throughout NZ, and four of those were in the Wellington region. This prompted Dive and Ski HQ to organise a safety briefing by the NZ Police Dive Squad at the Petone Workingmen's Club. Other speakers were Coroner Peter Ryan and Mark Lindsay of Water Safety NZ.

There was an emotional joint talk by the dive buddy along with the wife of a free diver who lost his life some years ago. This obviously was a tragedy for the family and dive buddy, but there is also a long-lasting impact on a much wider group of people, especially those in the dive community.

The Police Dive Squad has analysed a proportion of dive accidents over the past few years. Here's a list of the top of causes, based on their statistics:

- **Dive with a buddy** – a large proportion of accidents occurred while the buddies were out of contact.
- **Make sure you are medically fit** – illness was a significant contributor to accidents.
- **Do a pre-dive equipment check** – gear set up can change over time so it's worthwhile checking on each dive, even if buddies dive together a lot.
- **Faulty equipment:** equipment failure caused a number of accidents:
  - Make sure your dive equipment is serviced regularly.
  - Don't dive with faulty equipment, e.g. flat computer battery, tank or regulator leaks.
- **Make sure you are correctly weighted** – some divers will drop their weight belt in an emergency but keep hold of their full catch bag.

- **Monitor your gauges** – a number of divers were not aware of how much air and no-decompression-time they had left
- **Plan to surface with 50 bar** – some people left no room for the unexpected at the end of a dive and sucked their tank dry.
- **Everyone must know the dive plan** – a disorganised dive can exacerbate things if problems occur.

Water Safety NZ statistics were available at the meeting. Here are some facts about underwater drowning deaths in NZ:

- In 2015 there were 9 deaths, compared to the annual average of 6 over the preceding 5 years.
- 2011 to 2015 underwater deaths: SCUBA 14; snorkelling 9; free diving 9.
- Of the 9 deaths in 2015, five were in the 35–44 age group, two were 55–64 and one each for 25–34 and 45–54 groups.
- 69% of deaths occurred when buddies were separated or were on a boat or onshore.

At the meeting, there were questions about timely review and reporting of dive accidents. The speakers were unable to clarify the causes of the current spike in deaths. Coroner reports are the most reliable but these take 12 to 18 months.

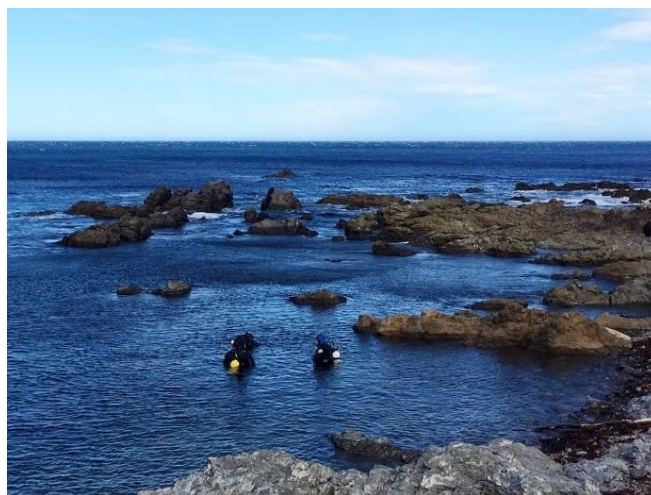
It pays to keep abreast of accident reports. The NZ Dive Magazine provides dive incidents case studies. You can also visit DAN case studies at:

<https://www.diversalertnetwork.org/diving-incidents/>



## Breakfast meeting and dive – 2<sup>nd</sup> April

On Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April a group of Club members gathered at Spruce Goose for breakfast.



Jane and Karl dived at Mermaid. Jane planning the dive (left) and getting started (right).



Owhiro Bay, at the end of the road on the South Coast, is an attractive place to dive, with ship wrecks, good underwater scenery and plenty of marine life.

Adding to the attractions is this mural.

## Club meeting at Pataka Art Gallery exhibition

### ***Bottled Ocean 2116***

On 20<sup>th</sup> March, WUC members got together at Pataka Art Gallery for brunch and to view an exhibition titled *Bottled Ocean 2116*, by George Nuku. The exhibition presented a translucent double-hulled waka, appearing to float in space, surrounded by imagined creatures of the deep created from recycled plastics.

<http://www.pataka.org.nz/2014/08/george-nuku-bottled-ocean-2116/>

You can find out about the exhibition at the above website, however here's a summary from the exhibition literature:-

*Bottled Ocean 2116* exhibited a familiar yet unnatural world made of transparent plastics. This imagined world is unfortunately a very real possibility in the near future. Today the ocean is inundated with so much plastic that it has become part of our ecosystem.

Plastics break down into small particles which are ingested by fish and other sea-life. We consume this sea-life and in doing so unknowingly introduce plastics into our diet. *Bottled Ocean 2116* asks us to analyse our role in this cycle and, more importantly, our place within a changing world. Here in the Pacific our immediate attention turns to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch – a mass of floating debris the size of Texas that now migrates around the ocean upon the seasonal currents.



The Pataka web site has photos of the exhibition, but here are some of ours.





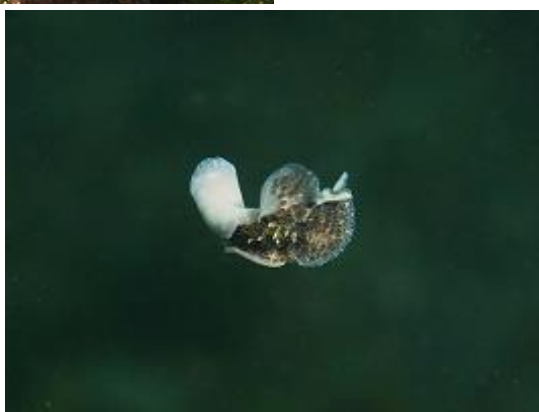
## Dives around Wellington – Owhiro Bay – by Mike J

Frannie and I dived at Owhiro Bay one April Sunday afternoon. There had been onshore winds and a swell for a few days before and the wind was offshore on the day, but a slight swell persisted. The boat dives that weekend had been called off because of the conditions, so we sought advice before the dive – 'you'll get 2 to 3m viz' we were told. Wrong – we got 5 to 7m and only minor surge. It was a very nice dive and worthwhile doing, as always.



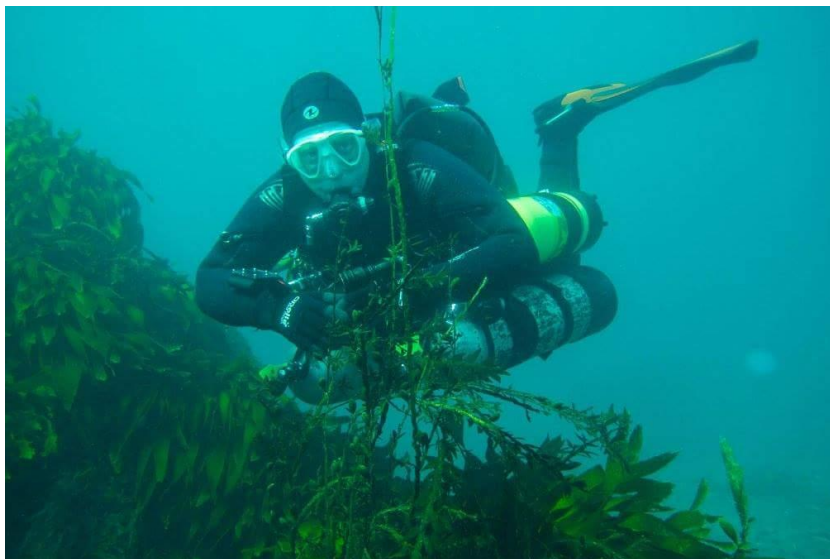
### An interesting critter – comments?

An interesting aspect of the dive was what looked like a nudibranch free-swimming in mid-water. It swam in a writhing motion (like a Spanish Dancer) and, although fish investigated it, they left it alone. About 1.5cm in length. Here's a photo (right) – unfortunately it's not the best as the critter was hard to focus on. The consensus of those consulted is that it was a nudibranch, but I haven't seen them swimming like that before – my search of the internet didn't confirm it. Anyone else got other thoughts?



## Dives around Wellington – Mermaid

Jane, Geoff Infield and Mike J went for a dive at Mermaid in March. It was a beautiful, calm day. We all had different reasons to dive – mainly to check gear. Geoff had to practice with five tanks and I wanted to try out my recently purchased drysuit and some new camera settings. And Jane just wanted to dive, but we both had cameras (that's Jane in the collage). Again, another pleasant dive on the South Coast.



Geoff Infield with his five tanks.



## Feature article: Diving the Philippines – by Geoff Stevens

In March Dean Danford, from Auckland, and I made a two-week trip to the Philippines to do a course and some fun diving.

Dean and I met in Auckland and flew via Sydney to Manila. This took about fourteen hours including stopover. Air NZ will be flying Auckland to Manila, direct from December. Flying direct would cut about three hours from the trip.

Our destination was Anilao. This is an area on the east side of Balayan Bay about two to four hours drive south of Manila. We were lucky with traffic and arrived at the resort in time to meet Matt (instructor), Sam (another course participant) and Karl (the owner of Pro-Tech Philippines) over dinner.

We stayed at [Acacia Resort and Dive Center](#) (3.5 star), which is in the middle of a strip of resorts along several kilometers of the Anilao coast. These resorts range from one to five star and Acacia is the only one that genuinely supports tech divers – through their partner [Pro-Tech Philippines](#).

Acacia is a small resort with rooms ranging from standard doubles through to deluxe suites. All rooms have air conditioning and modern bathrooms. There are the usual resort type facilities – pool, open-air dining room and bar, sun deck, giant inflatable unicorn, etc. More importantly Acacia has a well-deserved reputation for great staff. The only slight annoyance, for those with FOMO, was the slow internet connection. Resort costs are on a partly-inclusive basis. That-is, inclusive of room, meals, soft-drinks, recreational-type dive gear and air-fills. Not included are airport transfers, alcohol, 'real' coffee, dive boats, dive guides, rebreather sorb, oxygen and helium. Note for rebreather divers – you only pay for bailout gas that you use (as it should be). Karl complained about the price he'd recently had to pay for sorb – but I found that helium, oxygen and sorb were about the same price or cheaper than we would pay in NZ. Get in touch with me if you'd like more detail on costs. There was heaps of space to wash and hang gear and separate benches and cupboards for rebreathers. There are even a few scooters.

The main point of our trip was to do the JJ CCR Normoxic Mixed Gas course (60 m cert). Sam, from Malaysia, was combining this course and the Hypoxic Gas course (100 m cert). Our instructor, Mathew Partridge, has a good reputation – though we heard some horror stories about how tough he was.

The course consisted of class work and seven dives over four days. The first was an easy shake-down dive to sort out buoyancy and trim after the shift from cold to warm water gear configuration. It's so much easier clipping and unclipping tanks without





gloves and thick undersuits! The next five dives were at increasing depth, ultimately to 60 m, and with increasing stress – with several equipment ‘failures’ occurring within the team each dive. The final dive was an easy experience dive with no skills to demonstrate – though I think we were all keeping an eye on Matt and expecting a ‘failure’ to occur at any time. Matt and Sam did one more dive the following day to complete Sam’s hypoxic gas course.

After the course Dean had a few days free before flying home so we did a few nudi hunting dives on the house reef.



On Dean’s de-saturation day we took a trip to Taal volcano – having an enormous (and cheap) lunch over-looking the crater. Taal has a claim to fame in that it contains a third order island – an island in a lake on an island in a lake on an island. We also got to experience typical (that-is – rather heavy) Filipino traffic – with the creation of four or five lanes where there were really only two.

Dean departed and I didn’t. I had more diving – some deep-ish reef dives and shallow muck dives. It is absolutely worth taking a guide if you’re interested in seeing the little stuff. I wouldn’t have seen a tenth of what I did on the muck dives if I’d been without a guide.

The Acacia house reef has some nice coral and areas in the shallows. We saw a Leopard Moray being bullied by some fish in waist-deep water. There are several coral walls separated by sandy slopes as you go deeper. There is a fixed line in front of the resort running from an anchor at 9 m to past 120 m (I was told) so navigation is easy.





Water temperatures ranged from 28°C in the shallows to 24°C at 60 m. Our group all dived in shell drysuits (mainly because they were recommended for the course). With just a thin under-suit they were good in the water but a bit warm out. Visibility ranged from 15 m to 30 m and could vary quite a lot even in a single dive. Currents were non-existent to light (easy enough to swim against with a rebreather and a couple of bailouts). Above-surface weather was ~32°C temperature with not too high humidity (it gets very humid around December) and light breezes. We had only one day with passing showers.

Pretty much all diving except the house reef is from pump boats. These are outrigger canoes and make for very stable dive platforms. You can either gear-up on the boat or then jump in or gear-up in the water. Boarding after the dive is usually by removing your gear in the water and passing it up before climbing the ladder. Most dive sites are a five to twenty minute boat ride away. It pays to be comfortable sending up and ascending under a SMB, even for shore dives, as there's quite a lot of boat traffic. If you're feeling energetic you could do five dives a day, including a night-dive.







The Anilao area is well known for 'muck diving'. There are also good areas of coral and one wreck (so to speak) but it's not the place to visit if you're looking for big fish. I was told that the east side of the Batangas peninsular, about fifteen minute drive or forty five minute boat ride from the resort, has very good coral reef diving. The Anilao shore is mostly rocky with a few small sandy beaches.

It was easy to see a dozen or so different nudibranchs, annelids and crustaceans in a single dive. Many of them were too small for me to photograph (I *need* a real macro lens!).





All-in-all I'd recommend the Anilao area for a dive trip – especially if you're interested in muck-diving. I'd also recommend Acacia resort as a good place to stay.

Pro-Tech Philippines have a well organised setup for technical diving and instruction. As well as diving in the Anilao area they organise live-aboard trips to [Tubbataha reef](#) (only open for diving a few months each year) and land-based trips to Coron and Subic Bays (wreck diving).

All photos are by the author except the first and last (courtesy of Mathew Partridge).



## NZ Underwater Association photo competition - closes 10 June

NZUA is advertising an underwater photo competition. Here are the details:-

### Categories

1. Close up / macro (any subject). **Prize of \$75**
2. Fish study (marine life being the primary subject). **Prize of \$75**
3. Diver study (diver or free diver being the primary subject). **Prize of \$75**
4. Any underwater scene. **Prize of \$75**
5. Any entry in the above 4 categories will be judged for Overall Best Photo. **Prize of \$100**

That's up to **\$400** up for grabs.

### General Rules:

- Photos must be from anytime between the 12 month period from 01 June 2015 to 31 May 2016.
- Entries close 10 June 2016.
- Contestants must compose the photograph and trigger the camera themselves.
- Images can be enhanced but no imaging to be added or removed from photos.
- Contestants may enter a maximum of two photos per category.
- Amateur\* photographers only.
- Judging of each category except the Overall Best Photo will be by "likes" on Facebook.
- The Overall Best Photo will be judged by award winning photographer Andy Belcher.

\* Amateur determined as someone who does not make their livelihood from photograph



### ITS PHOTO COMP TIME!

SUBMIT ANY UNDERWATER PHOTO  
IN THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES

- CLOSE UP
- MARINE LIFE
- DIVER OR FREE DIVER AS SUBJECT
- ANY UNDERWATER SCENE
- BEST OVERALL PHOTO

BE IN TO WIN UP TO \$400!



ENTRIES  
CLOSE  
JUNE 10  
2016

CONTACT  
EMILY@NZUNDER  
WATER.ORG.NZ  
FOR ANY QUERIES



## Western Underwater Club dives – May and June

WESTERN UNDERWATER CLUB is offering places on two dive trips (see the following flyers):

- **13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> May:** their annual **May mystery dive weekend** (it's at a marine reserve midway between Auckland and Wellington). WUC members have joined previous trips and had a lot of fun.
- **4<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> June:** There are currently [2 places left on the Saturday \(4<sup>th</sup> June\)](#) and the boat is empty on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June (requires 6 divers or increased costs).
- **See the WUC emailed news bulletin for details**



Friday 13 May -  
Sunday 15th MAY

Organiser Mark Stoneman.



WHITE ISLAND ADVENTURE  
**Saturday 4th June 2016**



## Notices

### Guardians of the Bays:-

#### Submission on Wellington airport runway extension

Guardians of the Bays is a residents' group that is very concerned about the Wellington airport runway extension – in fact they are opposing it on economic, environmental and social grounds.

Wellington International Airport Limited (WIAL) has lodged its resource consent application with the Greater Wellington and Wellington City Councils. The Guardians of the Bays is preparing to make submissions for the Environment Court hearing which will be held later in the year.

The Guardians have released some leaflets on the subject. If you are interested, see:

<http://guardiansofthebays.org.nz/media-release-local-residents-launch-myth-busters-on-proposed-wellington-runway-extension/>

For more information on the Guardians, you can check their website:

[www.guardiansofthebays.org.nz](http://www.guardiansofthebays.org.nz)

### **World Oceans Day: 8<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

This annual event aims to raise global awareness about issues facing the ocean. The theme this year is 'healthy oceans, healthy planet' – promoting prevention of plastic pollution (our article on p5 is appropriately relevant).

If you are interested, see:-

<http://www.worldoceansday.org/>

### What to do if you see poaching in the Marine Reserve

Friends of the Taputeranga Marine Reserve (FOTMR) advise what to do if you see poaching in the Marine Reserve.

Basically, the answer is to record details of the activity (i.e. when, where, what, who and how) and phone the DOC hotline.

DOC Hotline: **0800 DOCHOT (0800 362468)**

DOC duty officers have been asked to contact the callers who report poaching and provide an update on the response taken.

### Club Items for Sale

#### Prices

Woollen Beanie	– \$14.00
Merino Beanie	– \$29.00
Embroidery and T-Shirt	– \$19.00 (m/f)

Also, we have the WUC logo set up for embroidery and can order T-shirts, jackets or other clothing for club members or you can get the logo on your own piece of clothing or accessories.

Email [wellington.underwater@gmail.com](mailto:wellington.underwater@gmail.com) for more info.

### Club subscriptions

We welcome new members. If you are recruiting someone new to the Club, it may be helpful to know the annual subscriptions and membership categories:-

- New Members pay \$30 for their first year
- Membership Renewal - \$35 (\$45 if received after 1<sup>st</sup> Dec)
- Student Membership Renewal - \$30