

Autumn
2025

OCTOPRESS

Wellington Underwater Club Newsletter

Topics

- Ko wai au? Who are we?
- Club Constitution update
- Photo competition winners and runners up
- Favourite Wellington Dive Sites

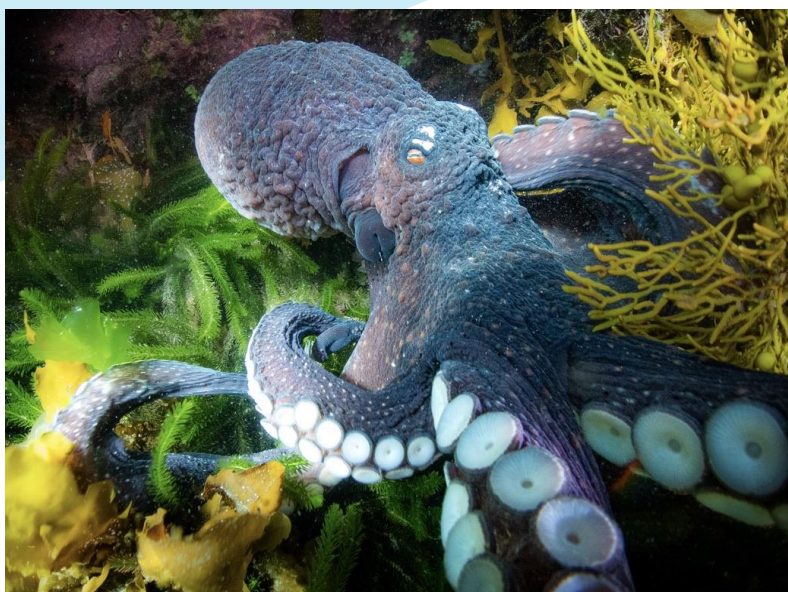
Octopress needs YOU!

Please email photos/stories/underwater updates/ planned trips/memorable dive sites to judyormandy@hotmail.com or alison-grant@xtra.co.nz for us to share in the club newsletter.

Upcoming Events

Monthly WUC Dives

Watch your emails and Facebook for our monthly club dives and register your interest. And let us know if there's a spot you really want to explore! This wheke joined the last club dive on March 2 and was captured in all its curiosity by Judy Ormandy



AGM – Save the Date

It may take you by surprise that we're at that time again, but our new constitution realigned our membership and AGM dates to fit in with the financial year, so from 2025, our AGMs will take place in MAY. Please join us on Tuesday 13 May for an AGM and a catch up with your dive buddies in Wellington – we'll confirm location and time somewhere in Wellington CBD as soon as we have a room booked. While we're at it, we want YOU! Our committee is struggling with only four people and one of the current committee members is ready to step down at AGM after several years. If you care about keeping WUC alive and fresh and active, and want to join the committee, let us know!

April 2025 – Ko wai au? Who are we?

It's already been 7 months since our August AGM and we are well past due for an update as you haven't heard much from us since then. Apologies for the delayed Octopress. Our committee shrank after the AGM as is the way of things; diving is after all, a hobby only for most of us, even if we wish it could form a much bigger proportion of our daily lives! The focus through last year was all on meeting our legal obligations in terms of updating our constitution which we achieved.

Now we need to start turning our attention to figuring out what we – all of us who see value in belonging to WUC – want to get out of membership, and perhaps growing our club a bit again. Our wee committee spent a lot of time during 2024 trying to think about what the future might look like for our little club. Groups like Love Rimurimu, Explore Your Coast and Friends of Taputeranga Marine Reserve are doing lots of organisation in the science and communication space, and Ghost Divers continue their excellent mahi organising clean-up dives. There are clubs associated with the various dive shops. It's really cool – a marker of just how much we love the underwater world and diving - that many of us are members or supporters of more than one of these. So where do WUC put ourselves? What is OUR purpose with all these diverse groups doing the mahi in this region?

One of the interesting things about Wellington diving is just how many divers we have locally, who will turn up at least every now and then to enjoy the local dive scene. Some will attend a dive shop-associated dive, some go it alone with a group of friends, others turn up to our dives. Although we can all tend to be a bit protective of our favourite dive spots, there's something really special in turning up to a spot and finding that it's the dive site du jour, and that multiple groups of divers are all kitting up side by side. Sometimes it's a chance to catch up with old friends, sometimes just a friendly greeting with a stranger with a shared interest, and sometimes it's a really great chance to share information about the site, conditions, dive gear configurations or more.

It was pretty clear that amongst those who attended our AGM in 2024, camaraderie, local dive buddies and local dive opportunities are big draws, but plenty of other ideas also came out of the conversation, and we want that conversation to involve you all so that WUC can continue to be a club well into the future, and one with a distinctive role in our region. Please follow the link <https://www.menti.com/alf2n65x3gt9> to our survey to tell us why you belong currently, and what you want from belonging to Wellington Underwater Club, and come to our AGM to discuss it more. We'll certainly be continuing the monthly club dives, and as attendees have enjoyed the opportunity to follow a dive with coffee or food and conversation afterwards, we'll endeavour to choose dive spots where that's feasible. We have some other ideas too though, and most importantly we want to hear yours.



Constitution Update

WUC has a new constitution, passed at our AGM, pending a few small technical/grammatical changes which were completed shortly after the AGM, and signed off by attendees as being in line with those discussed at AGM. The fact that the previous constitution was created on a typewriter should give you some idea of how much times have changed since the last version was created. The new constitution meets our legal requirements under the new Incorporated Societies Act, but we worked hard to create something that recognises the club's heritage, the much broader heritage of this area and the people who lived in it, and that future-proofs the club against financial misuse. We wanted the constitution to be both descriptive of the club and what we stand for, but also to provide scope for us to develop and grow to meet challenges ahead, and be a bit aspirational about our purpose.

What are the main changes?

- The key changes required by the new legislation are set out [here](#) and our new constitution meets these requirements.
- WUC membership is now primarily focused on diving in its various guises, not the broader "underwater swimming" that captured UW hockey and water polo, and the constitution reflects that. UW hockey is not left without a home; since the previous constitution was developed, three dedicated UW hockey clubs have developed in the Wellington region, all affiliated with NZUA, as well as a water polo club. That frees us to focus our energy where our members' own energies lie, and on an environment that needs all the protection it can get. We have worked hard to balance the history of the underwater club with a clear commitment to sustainability; we want to ensure there's an underwater environment to explore well into the future, and that we're all alive to explore it.
- In terms of what it means to us, the members, the biggest changes are therefore in the purpose and tikanga/culture sections of the constitution.

"The Society is established and maintained exclusively for charitable purposes (including any purposes ancillary to those charitable purposes), namely:

- Benefiting the community by supporting the underwater exploration, promotion, and protection of the undersea environment of Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington, and the surrounding region
- To promote all aspects of the amateur sport of diving, and its attendant activities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand
- To promote and participate in the protection of, and scientific study of, the marine environment, marine life, marine fish and animals, and their habitats

Any income, benefit, or advantage must be used to advance the charitable purposes of the Society."

"The *tikanga* or culture of the Society is as follows:—

- To promote fellowship/*manaakitanga* amongst divers
- To promote safe and correct (*tikanga*) use of underwater equipment amongst members and all divers, including proficient working knowledge of such equipment, lifesaving and artificial respiration
- To promote safe and just practices amongst members and all divers, including thorough dive briefing, planning and debriefing practices, sharing of experiences and lessons for the benefit of other members
- To uphold the historic legacy of the Society through safe and careful protection of those records and information pertaining to the history of the Society.
- To recognise Tangata Whenua as the first explorers and guardians/*kaitiaki* of the waters surrounding Te Whanganui-a-Tara
- To identify and make the general public aware of changes in the underwater environment of Te Whanganui-a-Tara that may relate to human environmental degradation and climate change, and advocate for the protection of the underwater environment

and this Constitution shall be interpreted having regard to that tikanga, kawa, culture or practice."

Photo Competition Results – Theme "Love"

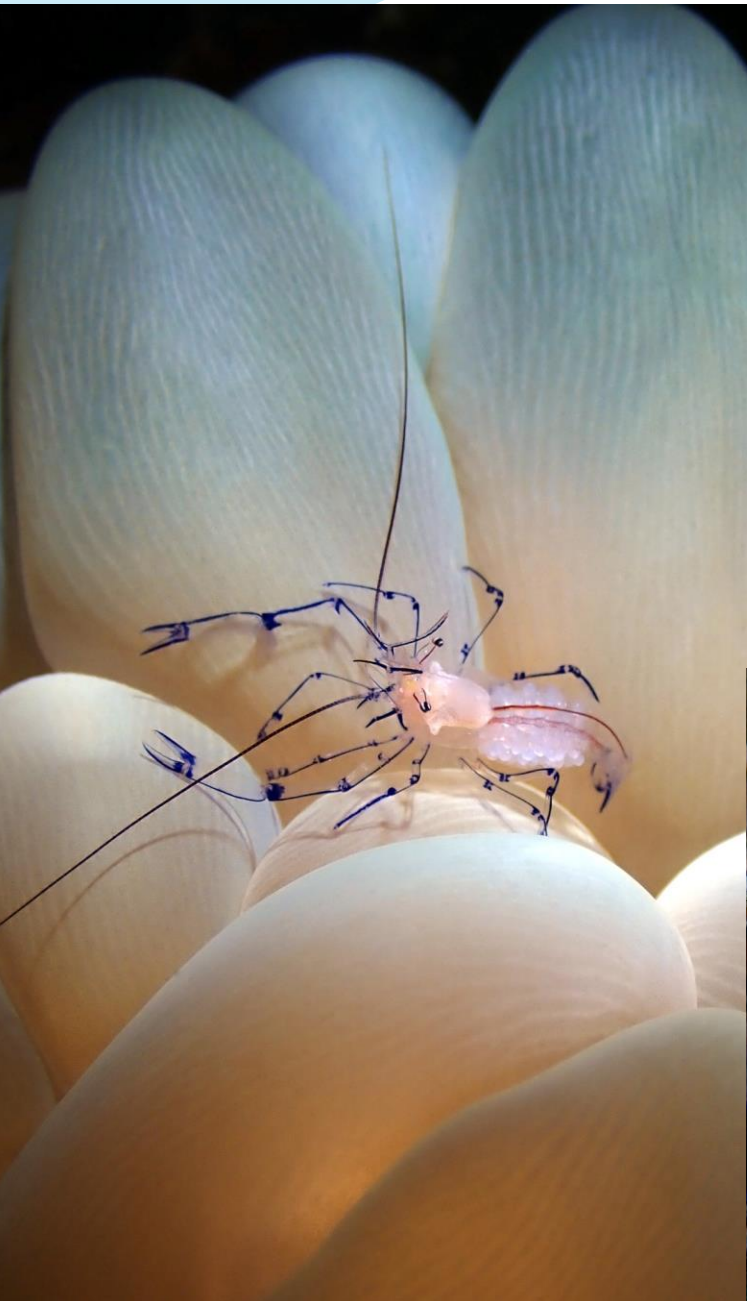
Every photo competition is bringing in a range of great photos taken locally and further afield by our members; see some of the recent place-getters below.



First Place: Sarah Milicich, "Brooding Love"

Judge's comments: A dynamic composition where every inch of frame is sharp, complementary and interesting in its own right; vividly filling the frame with freezing fast moving subjects and telling a story that perfectly echoes the theme of 'Love'. A great behavioural shot with high aesthetic value, capturing beautifully contrasting and complementary textures through judicious framing and lighting. Publishable, printable and framable.

Second place: Lizz Santos, "Pregnant Mamma"



Third place: Luca Davenport, "Threesome"
Highly Commended: Alison Grant, "Fatherly Love"



Dive spots of Wellington

This issue WUC committee member Alison Grant tells us about a favourite Wellington dive site and why it holds a place in her heart. Please tell us yours! Maybe we'll be inspired to make a WUC monthly club dive out of it!

Dive site: South Sea Wreck, Wellington Harbour

If I'm honest, I can't give you one favourite dive site in Wellington. We are too replete with options, and I can be just as happy exploring the wrecks of Ōwhiro, the mussel ropes, weedline and Mazda wreck of Mahanga, or the looming walls of Breaker Bay's Butterfish Rock. But one site has delighted me on every visit, day or night, and it's far from Wellington's best known; I adore the South Sea minesweeper wreck sitting upright on the silty bottom of Wellington Harbour (1500m ENE of Pt Halswell -41.279, 174.843, according to my dive computer) for its ease of navigation, the whole-body experience of the interisland ferries rumbling past and the cacophony of pastel encrusting life on its hull.

It makes little difference whether you're there to dive night or day, as you won't see daylight regardless – treat it as a night dive and take two torches at least. The dive starts by dropping directly onto the wreck, so as not to get lost in the gloom, but once there, the wreck is perfectly sized for a simple circumnavigation (this is not a place to try your wreck penetration skills), with detours deeper and shallower to peer into holes and across the hazard-laced remaining deck (the upper decks were removed for the safety of the shipping lane.)

With torchlight the effect is anything but gloomy, despite the surrounding black-green. As your narrow torch beam illuminates the advancing curve of the hull you could be almost anywhere in time and space. The South Sea's all-encompassing encrusting cover is a tumult of texture and colour, but it's not bright. Silken fabrics, delicate pastel lacework, shimmering filaments of lavender, peach, lemon yellow and rich cream; the life here is ancient, alien, unfamiliar, and somehow enticing. After one visit I found myself moved to write poetry for the first time in years; though hardly rare around Aotearoa, here the dead man's finger corals seem to reach with particular intentionality, and it's hard to believe that the various pillowy textures will sting, not support you if you burrow in.

Seasonally I have seen the wreck a refuge for thousands of juvenile sea perch, several per torch beam tucked in the embroidered layers of sponges and ascidians. In another season it was gold-rimmed nudibranches punctuating the wreck in their hundreds. My last dive, the striped anemones were the richest purple and russet orange, and the largest I've ever seen in the species, set off by the delicate white octocorals that colonise the upper edges of the wreck.



The pastel prow of the South Sea Wreck – Alison Grant



Octocorals form a delicate halo for South Sea wreck – Alison Grant



Exposed structures on the hazard-laden top of the wreck – Alison Grant

This is a dive to take slowly. 45 minutes will let you complete a circuit of the wreck and return to the line just ahead of your NDL, stopping to admire a hundred delicate oddities will catch the attention of your light along the way. If you are lucky enough to feel the passing ferry vibrating your bones, you'll wonder yet how the filmy lacework and silk tapestry isn't ripped apart with every passing trip.

