

MARINE *Life*

Aug/September 2011

ISSUE 14

For the damper side of life...

**Conservation, Marine Sciencey Nerd Facts, Local News,
Coastcare, Kids Fun, Crazy Critters, Maritime History
and MORE!**

Marine Life magazine

Our Goal

To educate, inform, have fun and share our enjoyment of the marine world with like-minded people.

The Editorial Staff

Michael Jacques, Co-Editor and naughty little raccoon

Emma Flukes, Co-editor, despite our tendency to victimize anyone with an excess of talent, we were forced instead to promote her.

Geoff Rollins, Generalissimo of multi-media.

Phil White – NW correspondent and humble u/w photographer. So humble we never get to see his pics.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of the editorial staff or associates of this publication.

We make no promise that any of this will make sense.
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Cover Photo ; “Emma” the red handfish, with eggs. By Emma Flukes

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NEWS

Ocean Planet Marine Park seminars/Info sessions

The sessions were recently held in all parts of the State and provided an update on the political situation with MPAs.

Ocean Planet is putting forward a proposal to urge the government to restart the stalled MPA assessment process. We have had some new parks in the South-East (with no fisheries limitations – don't get me started!) but the East Coast and North Coast haven't been assessed yet.

Apparently an options paper is being prepared for Cabinet. One option is going to be to do nothing, another probably a minimalistic fiddling with the written strategy, and one to restart the assessment process. This government seems a bit more receptive to MPAs [pardon my cynicism but is it something to do with a coalition that keeps the government in power]. Others take the view that they are showing a reasonably genuine interest and don't have the hard-set attitudes of previous Cabinets.

If you care about MPAs and want to help kick start the process, Ocean Planet's have asked that you send a letter of support, maybe your macramé club, or Chess outfit want to have their say? Contact http://www.oceanplanet.org.au/contact_us.php for more info and a template.

This magazine has said before that it's generally into education and awareness rather than activism but there seems to be no harm in having a open process on MPAs. We will take a punt on our "open letter" that it doesn't offend too many of you. We would love to hear your feedback if you are strongly for or against the stance that we have taken.

Australian Marine Parks update

New South Wales

As part of its election commitments to influential fishing and shooting groups, the Liberal Government has begun to unravel recent MPA declarations. These include the changes to the Jervis Bay and Solitary Islands marine parks that came into force less than a month before the March state election. An offshore Commonwealth MPA off Coff's Hbr has also attracted objections from fishing groups.

The NSW government has also signalled support for Shooters and Fishers Party legislation which calls for a moratorium on new parks and sanctuary zones. The Government has also announced a wider audit of all state Marine Parks to assess their effectiveness. A coalition of 45-conservation groups has today condemned it as setting a dangerous precedent for marine management nationally.

South Australia

There is a federal proposal for a protected marine zone which would stretch from Kangaroo Island across to Western Australia's western coastline. Commercial fishers have promised to oppose this. The Save Our Marine Life Alliance says the proposal does not affect tuna fishing grounds. The industry has stated that it "supports marine parks" and has suggested "alternative win-win" sites for both the industry and environment.

A newspaper report said the number of coastal areas to be covered by proposed State sanctuary zones could be halved. Environment Minister Paul Caica says wherever possible, the zones will be located in areas of low use and there will still be plenty of places to fish.

The push was made by Family First and the Opposition to reopen an assessment of the science underpinning the draft marine park plan and potential effects on professional and recreational fishing. The Wilderness Society says he does not hold great hope for the committee's investigation. "The terms of reference I've seen are fairly negative toward the [marine parks] program and it certainly seems to miss some pretty important stuff about what it will mean for the environment,".

Western Australia

Last year, the Government announced that Roebuck Bay, along with three other areas, would be given marine park status under the Kimberley wilderness initiative. However, the state budget only provided funding for the Camden Sound and Eighty Mile Beach marine areas.

The Federal Government will soon announce areas of Commonwealth waters that have been flagged to get the sanctuary status. Recfishwest says the marine sanctuaries to be established off WA's coastline have the potential to "gut" the commercial fishing industry. "We're not against marine parks per se, we believe that marine protected areas can have some conservation benefits if they are applied effectively but on the west coast at the moment there's very little information or evidence to suggest that they are effective tools in managing fish stocks".

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory Amateur Fishermen's Association general meeting has been told the number of mud crabs in the harbour is diminishing. An MPA has been suggested but the chief executive says marine parks are not the answer.

Queensland

The Federal Government wants to create two 'no take' zones - one in the Coral Sea and another off the southern tip of Fraser Island. De Brett Seafood managing director Gary Heilmann says he and four other operators are willing to stop fishing in the Coral Sea if they get a \$75 million compensation package.

Victoria

Victoria is looking at invoking the same moratorium as New South Wales and I understand they're very close to making an announcement. In a report on MPAs that was tabled in State Parliament, the auditor-general says little environmental management activity is evident

across these areas. The report says the parks are underfunded, understaffed and there are gaps in biosecurity programs. The auditor-general has recommended more funding and staff be allocated to manage the parks and that a marine pest biosecurity plan be developed.

Tasmania

Marine parks process is stalled after the controversial Bruny Bioregion RDPC hearings resulted in 14 new 'paper' parks with no fisheries restrictions. No further assessments are underway in the remaining unassessed areas on the East and North Coasts. The Cabinet will soon consider further options and a report is being prepared by DPIWE. One of the options will be to do nothing, another might recommend a restart of an abridged assessment process.

Creepy things Starfish do when they're spawning

Info & images pilfered from [The Echinoderm Blog](#). Please check out their photo credits before you sue us.

Ok so it's hardly breaking news, but you guys have said that you like to look at pretty pictures and read small words that have nothing to do with climate change. Like "crays" and "abs" and "where to bash crays and catch the biggest abs". I guess we can work with that. - Emma

Today's odd animal behaviour is the curious tip-toe spawning posture that has been observed in seastars. While the ballet prowess of seastars is well recognised, interestingly there is no real info kicking about as to why stars adopt a "step up on the tippy toes" posture to help with spawning. I can't imagine why. This stuff is world-changing.



Lazy Australians

Some science folk think the behaviour aids with spawning success by providing a higher platform from which gametes can be emitted. But then a host of lazy Australian seastars seem to just lie about doing very little. Is this all part of a global covert echinoderm line dancing network we're unaware of?

Marine Life – ALWAYS ASKING LIFE'S BIG QUESTIONS



Film Review – *Oceans*



Recently the State Cinema has been showing the French documentary "Oceans". This is from the distinguished creators of "Microcosmos" and "Travelling Birds", docs emphasising great camerawork and a strong musical score to create the right ambience. In *Oceans* they went one further and added an English narration. The narration is a bit insipid (sorry, Pierce Brosnan) but it's low key and the images still dominate.

For a guy who has 'been there and done that' when it comes to watching marine docs, I felt it was nice and that's it. I've seen more informative BBC docs and for visual effects, you can't go past some of the widescreen IMAX stuff, or any David Attenborough/Natural History unit offering. This is perhaps the greatest of insults to a Frenchman, suggesting that the English do it better.

Considering how much harder it is to take spectacular underwater shots because of the relatively camera-hostile environment, they still did an excellent job.

Jaundiced old divers aside, the real test was when Amy and Alison watched it. They loved it, so the documentary has hit the mark as an educational/awareness tool for a more mainstream audience. There were a few "Oohs and Ahs" as the filmmaker anthropomorphized the marine creatures. The photos of baby Walrus being cuddled by their mothers hit the right emotional engagement notes, along with some spectacular whale shots, and shots of cute swimming lizards and the like. There were no reproductive details, or nasty bloodlust predation shots. A bit too sanitised and certainly not a doco to help you keep up with current issues.

Having said all that, its not a bad thing to have a film you can show to kids of any age. A bit of relaxing enjoyment might engage people more effectively than an endless stream of doomsaying, and this film has been beating mainstream Hollywood films at the box office in France. The filmmakers have said, "*We're entertainers, and I don't want to be pretentious and start moralizing. But Océans is part of our means of persuasion. We must react urgently, protect, create blue helmets for the sea. Otherwise, humanity is headed toward an unbearable solitude.*"

Ok, got that, except for the 'blue helmet' thing.

So, there you go. It's like a sugary candy. Have some fun and enjoy it. Just remember that you can't have a well-rounded diet unless you eat your meat and greens too.



Serious Kids Stuff

By AMY



Weird Animals

MARINE SNOT BALLS

Scientists have discovered a host of giant mucus snot balls called 'sinkers'.



The mucus is produced by tadpole-like animals not much bigger than your finger called giant larvaceans. They spin a mucus web, about a yard (metre) in diameter. They sit in the middle of the house and use it to filter food that is small enough for them to eat.

Kid you not, they have been found by a scientist named Sherlock. He said. "We do know that they build very rapidly for a short while, and they probably go through about one house a day." They're so fragile that sometimes just touching one causes it to rapidly break apart. As sinkers drop to the sea floor, small sea critters and other food particles get stuck to the mucus and end up on the bottom of the ocean.

For years scientists have observed loads of life at the bottom of the ocean. But they weren't able to find enough food - carbon - to support all that life. Sinkers, previously overlooked, may help explain why there are so many animals being dragged down to the sea floor.

(see more http://www.livescience.com/animals/050610_mucus.html)

The World's Ugliest Fish

FRILLED SHARK



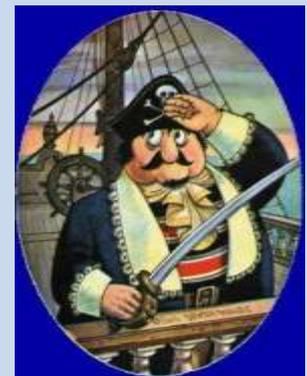
More scary-looking than ugly, the Frilled shark is often called a living fossil, because it has changed very little since pre-historic times. It doesn't resemble its fellow sharks very much, looks more like an eel, except for the six gill slots that give it away.

The Frilled shark is rarely seen in shallow waters as it likes to swim at depths between 50m-1,500m. Because of this very little is known about the Frilled shark, and the few sightings are attributed to the fish being sick and disoriented.

Icons of Marine Conservation

Captain Pugwash, 1957

You might remember the adventures of a cardboard cut-out pirate crew. This was created by the BBC in 1957, but was still being afflicted on us in the 1980s. Captain Horatio Pugwash sails the high seas in his ship called the *Black Pig*, ably assisted by cabin boy Tom, pirates Willy and Barnabas, and Master Mate. His mortal enemy is Cut-Throat Jake, captain of the *Flying Dustman*. There is an urban legend that the crew names were made to be saucy, eg, Master Bates but this was not the reality. This internet blog was repeated in a major British daily and the creator sued for defamation successfully. Captain Pugwash is renowned for his exclamations, "Dolloping doubloons/dolphins!", "Coddling catfish!", "Lolloping landlubbers!", "Suffering seagulls!", "Staggering stalactites!", "Nautical nitwits!", "Plundering porpoises!", "Kipper me capstans!", "Tottering turtles!", "Dithering dogfish!", "Scuttling cuttlefish!", "Stuttering starfish!", "Blistering Barnacles!".



Seabird Extravaganza

TAS FIELD NATURALISTS

Eaglehawk Neck Pelagic Trip—27 November 2010

by Bill Wakefield



Thirteen people on board the *Pauletta* left Pirates Bay Jetty at 7:00 am and headed down the coast towards the Thumbs then out via the Hippolyte to the continental shelf drop-off followed by a further couple of nautical miles further out to sea. The weather could not have been kinder to us as there was only a gentle breeze and a one to two metre gentle swell with barely a white cap to be seen. Not until we reached the Little Hippolyte were there many birds



about, although we had passed small numbers of kelp and silver gulls plus a sooty oystercatcher sitting on their nests as we moved down the coast to the Thumbs. The pairs of Pacific gulls seen did not appear to be involved in breeding activities. Gannets, black-faced

cormorants, gulls and crested terns were feeding around the Little Hippolyte with a good number resting on the rock. Interestingly, at least two of the gannets had what appeared to be full complements of tail feathers that were all black, perhaps indicating that they could possibly have been Cape gannets. On closer checking of their plumage from our photographs, it was possible to see that the black stripe leading down from below their bills was not long enough to identify them as South African birds. Their under-wings had a few dark coverts present showing that they were young birds.

The usual complement of fur seals was present on the Hippolyte along with black-faced cormorants and our three species of gulls. On rounding the eastern side of the island, short-tailed shearwaters began to increase in numbers, and along with them a Buller's shearwater, passed close enough to permit us all reasonable views. Over the day we had ten sightings of this species, which exceeded the highest number seen on any single day's pelagic trip. Previously, the highest number seen in a single day was six. This together with the increasing frequency of dates on which we are seeing this species seems to indicate that there is a change in their distribution



Black-browed albatross

The wonders of modern digital cameras are certainly improving our ability to identify more distant birds as proved by Ian May when he managed a shot of a distant low flying bird. On blowing up the image, it could clearly be seen to be a Gould's petrel, later followed by another bird of the same species.

As there was not a lot of activity inside the continental shelf drop off zone or the area of the sea just beyond, we moved a couple of nautical miles further out . At this point, four wandering albatross appeared along with a couple of black-browed albatross, Wilson's storm-petrels, a grey-backed storm-petrel, and more sightings of Buller's shearwaters along with white chinned petrels that don't show white chins.

On our return to shore, one or more whales breached way to our north towards Maria Island as we passed a vast number of short-tailed shearwaters sitting in a long line on the sea. The climax of the day then appeared, heralded by a pod of common dolphins. Nine hump-backed whales were feeding and came almost up to the boat. When one of the animals blew from up wind we all looked at one another wondering which of us had blown the most awful fuse imaginable! But no, it was the whale's breath which is not the kind you would wish to come up against when in close and intimate conversation with another person, a real conversation stopper!



The birds did all the right things over the day, apart from the raptor hunting over the Hippolyte, the two jaegers and a single storm-petrel that provided only the briefest of glimpses to a couple of the folks on board. I believe that I can truly say that it was the most enjoyable day's birding and company that we have had—one out of the bag!

Source: [Tas Field Naturalists Bulletin](#)

FISHING HOOKS

Famous fishing quotes

Ok, bring out those blank tea towels and screenprinter, and you'll be in business selling tourist souvenirs.

There he stands, draped in more equipment than a telephone lineman, trying to outwit an organism with a brain no bigger than a breadcrumb, and getting licked in the process. *Paul O'Neil*

Fishing is a delusion entirely surrounded by liars in old clothes. *Don Marquis*

Fishing is like sex, everyone thinks there is more than there is, and that everyone is getting more than their share. *Henry Kanemoto*

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day. ~Author Unknown

Give a man a fish and he has food for a day; teach him how to fish and you can get rid of him for the entire weekend. ~Zenna Schaffer

Give a man a fish, and he can eat for a day. But teach a man how to fish, and he'll be dead of mercury poisoning inside of three years. ~Charles Haas

Who cares about seaweed? Part III

THE FRAGILE GREENS

Brown macroalgae basically shut down their growth in the very low light levels and low temperatures on offer in winter, and that leaves an opening for green algae to exploit. Green algae, like species of *Caulerpa*, can also grow in the unexploited soft sediments. They anchor themselves either with long root-like rhizoids or simply by entanglement around seagrass fronds. They aren't as obvious as the big brown seaweeds, but they occupy important ecological niches, especially in winter.



Some species of tropical *Caulerpa* contain toxins and have become pests when introduced by man into temperate zones. *Caulerpa filiformis* is a major pest in NSW and has crowded out a lot of native algae.

Their dominance of the reef is only fleeting. As the water warms in Spring, the fragile greens are slowly overtaken by faster growing brown algae, that thrive the greater concentrations of nutrients and light.

Chaetomorpha coliformis

There are many species of green algae, especially in inter-tidal pools. One of the more noticeable species is the beautiful Mermaids Necklace, seen in the image on left. The name and photo say it all.

Caulerpa – King of winter pastures

Caulerpa species are very common at places like Primrose Sands and grow best in the late Winter when they flourish and maintain big 'pastures' of weed like a grassy paddock. As they are a common ground cover in the Spring when animals are trying to breed, they are a very important egg laying structure for many species of snails and fish.

They are 'king of the hill' only for a short time so they have to exploit this advantage quickly. Their creeping horizontal mat of root-like rhizoids spread quickly over large areas of reef. *Caulerpa* species can become the most dominant plant species on reef and sandy areas in the waters of southern Australia. *Caulerpa* reproduces sexually and asexually and can disperse through fragmentation. It has been demonstrated that a fragment as small as 1 cm can settle and start growing.

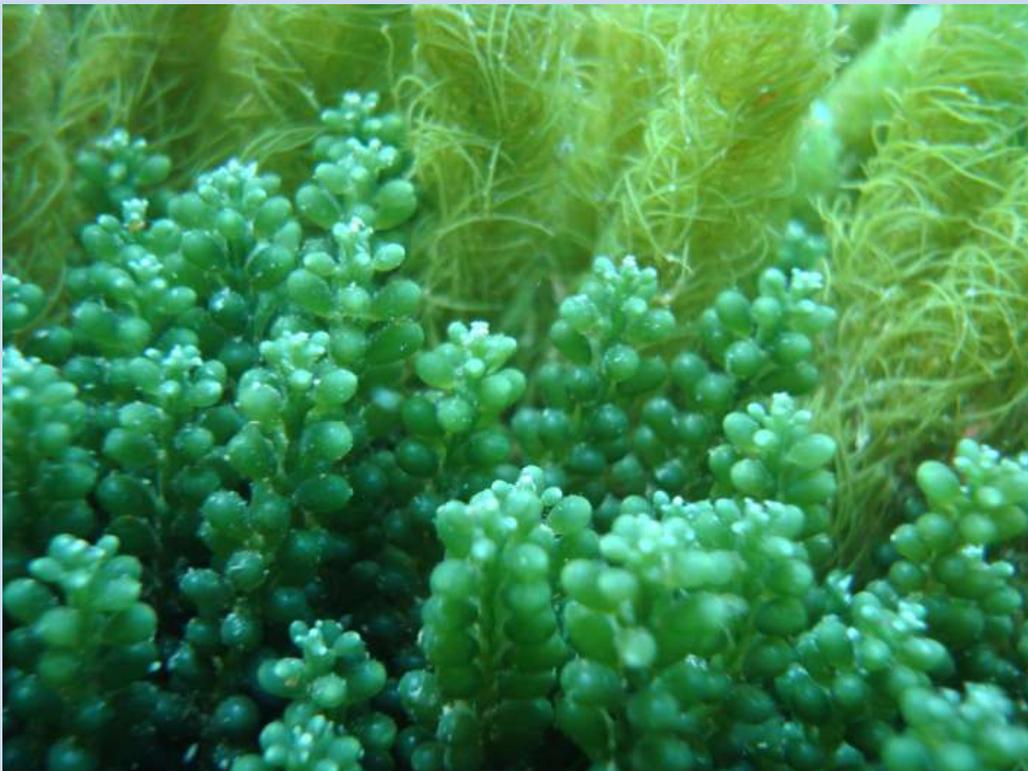


Caulerpa trifaria

Caulerpa trifaria is a fairly delicate *Caulerpa* species that used to be popular in marine aquariums as a decorative plant. *Caulerpa trifaria* is found in the temperate waters of southern Australia from Cottesloe Beach in Western Australia around the south to Western Port in Victoria. It is also found around Tasmania where it is a dominant plant in the sandy sheltered bays of southern Tasmania. The maximum thallus (adult plant) height of *Caulerpa trifaria* is approximately 25 cm.

Caulerpa cactoides

This attractive seaweed is common around Australia from Champion Bay, W. Aust. around southern Australia and Tasmania to the Richmond R, N.S.W.



Common in rock pools on rough-water coasts and in the upper sublittoral on both rough-water and sheltered coasts where it may cover extensive areas in a sandy mud substrate. It is common in rock pools, extending into bays with moderate water movement. It has been recorded to as deep as 38 m.

Codium fragile



Codium fragile is a large branching green alga also known as 'dead man's fingers'. It is now found world-wide in various species and forms and is spreading fast thanks to humans. *Codium fragile* has wide tolerances to varying temperature and salinity and is found in estuaries and marine waters.

There are numerous subspecies of *Codium fragile*, of which two are native to Australia, *Codium fragile* ssp. *tasmanicum* (J. Agardh) and *Codium fragile* ssp. *novae-zelandiae* (J. Agardh) P.C. Silva.

The northern hemisphere version of *Codium fragile*, *C. fragile* ssp. *fragile* is a potential pest species. This species arrived in New Zealand in 1975 and was moved to Australia on ship bottoms by 1995. It was found in Tasmania in 1999 in high densities of 40 – 60 per m² among Pacific Oysters at a shellfish farm.

The pest species looks almost identical to the native species. Australian native species tend to prefer moderate to rough areas, while the pest prefers protected to semi-exposed areas. The pest species can form dense stands in both intertidal and subtidal areas and be found attached to mussels and oysters as well as artificial and natural habitats.

C. fragile tends to demonstrate a seasonal die back on Australian shores. They can be as numerous as 10 – 60 plants m² in January to May, and as low as 0 – 5 plants m² from July to December. Recruitment of juveniles occurs in autumn and again in late winter to spring.

What will be next in *Marine Life's* exciting chapter of seaweed exposés? Keen on your algae? Have a preference? Let us know! Who knows, the sordid world of reds may just be the next revelation. Stay tuned...

Critter Files

An Interview with the Long-Spined Urchin

Caitlyn G. Parker – Grade 8 ACT

Caitlyn contacted me some time ago about her school project and was kind enough to send me the results. She has taken a very interesting twist on the story by pretending to interview the sea life.

The problem is that the Long-Spined Sea Urchins are eating too much of the kelp beds. By doing this they have caused many barrens [areas of bottom] which are causing other aquatic creatures to leave in search of new food sources [die actually]. So to get a better idea of the problem I packed my bags and went to Tasmania to see for myself.

Once I arrived in St Helen on the north east coast, a place abundant with urchin life, and got my swimmers on I went in search of my first interviewee a Long-Spined Sea Urchin. They don't go out as much during the day but there are still plenty about. After about five minutes I found one by the name of *Centrostephanus rogersii*.

Long-Spined Sea Urchin

- *Excuse me Mr Rogersii but I was wondering if I could ask you some questions about what you think of this whole invasion thing?*

Of course you can.

- *Are you happy in Tasmania?*

Yes, we are thank you. We love Tasmania and its abundance of kelp beds. And its lovely water temperature.

- *Do you find the Tasmanian waters to be a good place to bring up your children?*

Oh very much so. We Long-Spined Sea Urchins are very picky when it comes to the perfect place to live. We only have children in 12 degree waters; this ensures that most of our children survive.

- *What are your thoughts on the now large population of Rock Lobsters living in your neighbourhood? [large lobsters recently placed at Elephant Rock by scientists]*

Don't like them, not one bit. They just came in and took over. They ate half my family in the first week they were here. I mean yes we've always been eaten by other animals but there are other urchins that they could eat but they don't.

- *Do you think it's fair that we the humans are trying to get rid of you?*

No, I don't think it's fair but it's how you have always dealt with your 'problems'. I mean just look at what you did with the Cane Toads. You introduced them into a different habitat and they got rid of the 'problem' but they caused another problem.

Just moments after I finished my questions with Mr Rogerii a Rock Lobster came out of nowhere and started eating him. I took this opportunity to ask the large crayfish what his thoughts where. Ms Rocky, as I soon found out, had a lot to say.



Rock Lobster

- *Um excuse me. Would you mind answering a few questions on Rock Lobsters, such as, yourself being moved to places where there is a large population of Long-Spined Sea Urchin?*

No I don't think so.

- *But Ms you just ate my interviewee?*

Well if you put it like that...fine.

- *What are your feelings on being moved to a different place?*

Well, I don't really mind that much. I mean yes it was nice where we were but it's nice here too. And there is loads more urchins to eat.

- *How do you intend to get rid of the urchin population?*

We hope to just eat as many as we please. I mean we could go in with a plan if we wanted to but... I guess we thought eating whenever we liked better.

- *Are you happy with the new [proposed] restrictions on fishing for [large] crayfish?*

Most definitely, it means a better future for our children and their children. Yes we will still fear the pot and you humans, but I find this a symbol of hope for a fishing free life for all crustacean kind.

- *Do you think that you will end up like the Cane Toad?*

No I do not believe that we will ever be the cause of a problem as we are natives unlike Cane Toads. We lived here happily before, but too many people caught and ate us. Now we are back where we belong.

After the last question Ms Rocky found herself bored and hungry, even though she just ate someone, so she upped and left. I found this quite rude but decided to go and interview someone else. About half an hour later I found a group of scuba divers taking pictures of the barrens and urchins. So I decided to interview one of them. Michael Jacques was a great help to me and answered all the questions I had.

Michael Jacques

[no- I didn't put her up to it]

- *Do you think that introducing the Rock Lobsters to the waters where the Long-Spined Sea Urchin is causing havoc will do any good?*

I have found statistics that show that the crays are eating up to 40% of the Long-Spined Sea Urchins and leaving the native urchins alone. With this information I think that it will help get rid of a large population of the Long-Spined Sea Urchins. But I do think that we will also need to do other things to get rid of the problem completely.



- *Do you think that this will end up being like the Cane Toad all over again?*

No I don't. The Lobsters were here before and they are natives to this area. They belong here and already have things that eat them to keep their populations in balance. Too many of the big crayfish were removed before by fishing and that upset the balance of things and helped the urchins get a foothold on the reef.

- *Do you think that we can help reduce or get rid of the barrens that are already covering the ocean floor?*

I think if the population of urchins are decreased dramatically then yes there is hope for the kelp beds to return to their former glory.

- *Do you think climate change has had a hand in this?*

Yes very much so. If the water temperature hadn't increased then the urchins would never have been able to survive and breed in Tasmania. They never used to because the cold winters killed them. We have made the planet and ocean currents warmer by burning too much fossil fuel like coal and oil.

After reaching dry land I found myself asking the question 'Whose side am I on?' I still wasn't sure what person or animal had the most valid point all I knew was:

A - The Long-Spined Sea Urchins were causing barrens which aren't good.

B - They were being eaten by large crustaceans like Rock Lobsters.

C - It wasn't just the ocean ecosystem that was being affected. Abalone and fish were becoming scarce so fishermen could not fish a lot of them. They were also being told to fish only a restricted amount of crayfish.

I think that I really just want the balance in the eco system to be restored and if that means having an animal eat another, which is perfectly natural, then so be it.

The Secret Life of Seadragons

Images courtesy of Keith Martin-Smith, sourced from [BBC Website](#)

In exciting news for seahorse enthusiasts, Tassie's very own Dr Keith Martin-Smith has recently published a paper on the wonderful world of seadragon spots.

Weedy seadragons, known affectionately as 'weedies' are found only in southern Australian waters. While their vibrant colours and flashy markings make them a hot subject for photographers, weedies can be surprisingly difficult to spot due to fancy weed-like projections on their bodies that provide camouflage in their kelp habitat.



In the first-ever published photographic study of weedies, Keith has found that individual adults can be identified by their unique spot patterns in a form of fingerprinting. "Given that each dot pattern consists of more than 700 separate dots and blotches, there are literally millions of unique combinations," he said.



By ~~stalking~~ 'monitoring' forty-three adults over a period of 18 months, it was revealed that weedies can live to more than 12 years of age, with Tassie cold-water specimens far outlasting their northern counterparts. In comparison, the maximum life expectancy for other members of the pipefish and seahorse family is only four years. In a surprising (and exciting!) twist, Dr Martin-Smith found what he called "creche" areas where many large males gather together to incubate eggs. As they develop, the eggs become covered in algae in what is presumed to be a sneaky form of camouflage. Perhaps a few fathers out there might benefit from some of these attentive parenting tips...



Male weedy seadragon carrying eggs camouflaged with an algal coating

The verdict of Keith's research is that the slow-paced lifestyle of weedies makes them vulnerable to sudden changes in their environment. "New seadragons only rarely appeared during the study, and this may mean it will take them a long time to recolonise an area if they are killed or the habitat is lost.", he said. So next time you're thinking of stealing a dragon or two for your nephew's aquarium, or tearing up that pesky seaweed that's getting in the way of the perfect shot, realise that the world of weedies is a fragile one. Why not dig out some seadragon snaps taken on your favourite reef and check out the spot patterning of your weedy subjects. You never know - you might just have your very own long-term stalking portfolio.

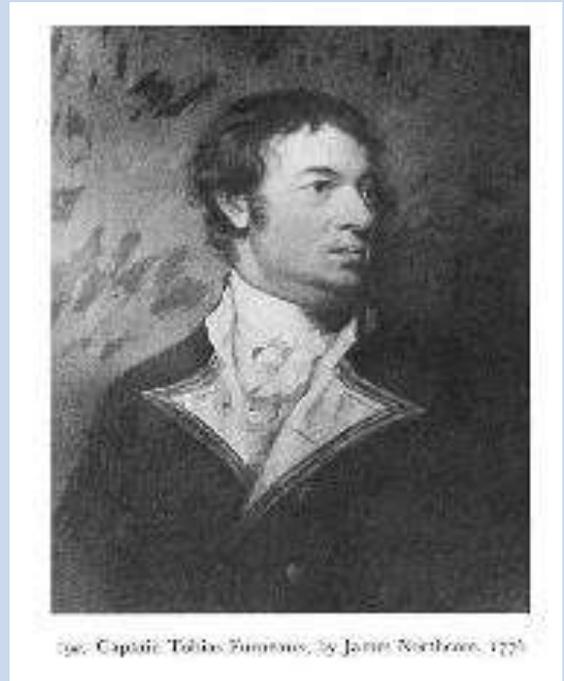
Pics can be found on the [BBC website](#). If you're feeling particularly nerdy, the full article is available free for download from the [Journal of Fish Biology](#).

Early Tassie Explorers - their marine observations

TOBIAS FURNEAUX

This fellow was English rather than French. His ancestors came to England from France in 1066. Joining the Royal Navy, in February 1755 he was stationed for a time in the West Indies. During the Seven Years War he was promoted to lieutenant in November 1759 for good behaviour in action. In 1760 he returned to England.

He went with Wallis' expedition to Tahiti in 1766, and often assumed command when other officers were sick. Thus, he planted the flag and took possession of Tahiti, declaring it to be 'King George's Island'. In 1772 he was promoted commander and appointed captain of H.M.S. *Adventure* under Capt James Cook, on Cook's second voyage of discovery.



He was experienced, if somewhat unimaginative. George Robertson, master of the *Dolphin*, described him as "a gentle, agreeable, well behaved good man and very humane to all the ship's company". Cook was sometimes frustrated by his decisions, but he was seen as a fairly solid commander.

In the southern ocean the two ships became separated and Furneaux made for the known coastline of Tasmania. A year after Marion had left Marion Bay, Furneaux became the next European visitor to Van Diemen's Land. He made the *South-west Cape* on March 9 1773, and steered eastward, close to Maatsuyker Island. Furneaux named the Mewstone. After passing Maatsuyker, captain Furneaux sent a boat to the mainland, and found places where the natives had been, and where pearl scallop shells were scattered about.

"The soil seemed to be very rich; the country well clothed with wood, particularly on the lee sides of the hills; plenty of water which falls from the rocks in beautiful cascades, for two or three hundred feet perpendicular, into the sea; but they did not see the least sign of any place to anchor in with safety."

On the return of the boat, captain Furneaux made sail, and came to South-East Cape. From the Friars he followed the coast N. by E. four leagues, and the same evening anchored in Adventure Bay, after mistaking it for Lagoon Bay.

Adventure Bay proved to be a valuable discovery, being a good and well-sheltered anchorage, where wood and water were abundant. The country was found to be pleasant; the soil black

and rich, though not deep; the sides of the hills covered with large gum trees. The easternmost point of the bay was named Penguin Island, "from a curious one we caught there"

"The land birds we saw, are a bird like a raven; some of the crow kind, black, with the tips of the feathers of the tail and wings white, their bill long and very sharp [a Currawong]; some paroquets [parrots]; and several kinds of small birds. The sea-fowl are ducks, teal, and the sheldrake. I forgot to mention a large white bird, that one of the gentlemen shot, about the size of a large kite of the eagle kind [sea eagle].

The fish in the bay are scarce; those we caught were mostly sharks, dog-fish, and a fish called by the seamen nurses, like the dog-fish, only full of small white spots [Gummy Shark?]; and some small fish not unlike sprats.

The lagoons (which are brackish) abound with trout, and several other sorts of fish, of which we caught a few with lines, but being much encumbered with stumps of trees, we could not haul the seine.

Seeing an Aboriginal camp, they saw more signs of abundant marine life. "In the middle is the fire-place, surrounded with heaps of muscle, pearl, scallop, and crayfish shells, which I believe to be their chief food. Though we could not find any of them". [Europeans were use to finding lobsters on mud and were probably looking in the wrong spots].

After remaining five days in Adventure Bay, captain Furneaux sailed along the coast to the northward, in order to discover whether Van Diemen's Land was joined to New South Wales. He passed Maria Island, Schouten, "but no signs of a harbour or bay, where a ship might anchor in safety." He saw Bass Strait but it seemed to be only a wide, rocky and uninviting bay full of navigation hazards. He then left for New Zealand and managed to rejoin Cook.

The vessels were again separated in October and Furneaux returned to England, arriving at Spithead in July 1774. He was the first man to circumnavigate the world in both directions.

During the American War of Independence, in August 1775, he took command of the 28-gun frigate *Syren*. The ship was sunk in Narragansett Bay in November 1777 and her crew imprisoned. Furneaux was acquitted by a Royal Navy court martial of any misconduct, but he was no longer given an active command. He died, unmarried, in Swilly in 1781.

Icons of Marine Conservation – Take 2!

Did we all get our initiation into marine matters by getting wet as adults, or by reading the comments of smart alec's pushing marine magazines. Of course not, popular culture has been instrumental in exposing people to a marine world they do not otherwise see.

Jacques-Yves Cousteau

Jacques-Yves Cousteau was a naval officer when France was conquered by Hitler in 1940. Cousteau continued to carry on his duties in the southern zone, where the collaborationist Vichy France government was permitted by the Germans to have a small military force. With the French fleet inactive and rusting away at anchor, he had time to experiment. He was a colleague of great French underwater experimenters like Léon Vèche, originator of the depth-pressure-proof camera case.

1943 was a big year for Cousteau. He made the first French underwater film: *Par dix-huit*



mètres de fond (18 meters deep), all done on snorkel. In 1943, he tried out the first prototype aqua lung designed by himself and Emile Gagnan which finally made extended underwater exploration possible. He then used this invention to make the film *Épaves (Shipwrecks)* the same year.

Cousteau had a slightly checkered naval career in my opinion, which is not surprising in the confused politics and divided loyalties of that time. He worked within a collaborationist regime but kept his distance from his pro-Nazi anti-semitic brother, who was later convicted as a war criminal. He led a commando operation against Italian spies in France, and won several military decorations for his deeds. He did not assist in the Allied liberation of Southern France in 1944, instead escaping by bicycle from the war zone.

France had been ruined by the war and its military utterly humiliated. This probably helped Cousteau. His peace-time admiral may have been more open-minded about low cost ideas for restoring prestige in the military. Cousteau set up the Groupement de Recherches Sous-marines (GRS) (Underwater Research Group) of the French Navy.

In 1948, between missions of mine clearance, underwater exploration and equipment tests, the small team also undertook the exploration of a Roman wreck off Mahdia (Tunisia). It was the first underwater archaeology operation using autonomous diving, opening the way for scientific underwater archaeology. The subsequent film was shown at Cannes in 1951.

He left the Navy in 1949 and in 1950, he founded the French Oceanographic Campaigns (FOC), and leased an old minesweeper called "Calypso". 1953 he issued an account of his early exploits "The Silent World", which went on to be an international bestseller. It inspired all the major figures that followed him. He won the "Palm D'Or" in 1956 for a film of the same name. He started the craze for having Gismos in every underwater show, by trying out his experimental equipment on set.

After a meeting with American television companies he agreed to create the series *The Underwater Odyssey of Commander Cousteau*. He would act as himself, but a larger than life version with a trademark red bonnet. All his work had a very strong marine conservation focus. He was involved in a proliferation of underwater films and was also an activist against nuclear waste dumping and many other issues.

On 28 June 1979, his eldest son died in a flying boat crash during filming. Cousteau was deeply affected. He then relied on his other son, Jean-Michel, to assist him. In 1990, his wife Simone died of cancer. In June 1991 Cousteau remarried to Francine Triplet, with whom he had had (during this first marriage) two children. This caused a rift with his son. To add insult to injury, in 1996 he sued his son for opening a holiday centre named "Cousteau" in Fiji. In 1996 the *Calypso* was accidentally rammed and sunk and towed to France, a derelict. Jacques-Yves Cousteau died in 1997, aged 87.



What a great Gallic symbol, that nose - c'est magnifique!



The 6th annual Tasmanian Combined dive Clubs Weekend (CCW) was held over the weekend of 11-13th June, 2011, at the iconic east coast town of Bicheno. This year saw the Tasmanian University Dive Club (TUDC) host the event for the first time, with record numbers of close to 150 divers in attendance. The three day event attracted divers from all over the state, with eight clubs represented as well as members from Victoria's GetUnder Dive Club. In addition to providing an opportunity for some serious bubbling, the weekend included informative presentations, try-dives of the latest gear available from top dive brands, great food and socialising, high-octane events, and almost \$10,000 in prizes given away.

A large 4m swell rocked the Tasmanian east coast in the days leading up to the event which dramatically reduced the visibility. However, fine weather and calm conditions throughout the weekend saw the vis substantially increase over the three days resulting in some fantastic diving, particularly on the Monday. Divers hit a number of the top sites throughout the weekend including The Castle, Hairy Wall, Trap Reef, Canyon, Blue Waters, Split Rock, Muirs Reef, Bird Rock, The Steps and the Chimney.



South-easterly swells hammered Governor Island in the days leading up to the event.

While Saturday was best enjoyed with some leisurely dives in the shelter of Waub's bay, it also provided a great opportunity for trying out the Scubapro and Oceanic trial gear, with many club members making the most of the drysuits, fins, cameras, BCDs, regulators and computers on offer. Sea & Sea's free introductory lessons to underwater photography were a hit with new/novice photographers, with participants learning

some basics from instructor Jim Dyer and going into the draw to win a Sea & Sea DX-GE5 U/W camera and housing. Dave Waterhouse was the star of the show, taking home the camera with his colourful shot of a Nudibranch.

The great gnome hunt had a slow start, with weather hindering early attempts at top-secret planting



missions. But eventually 5 gnomes were hidden around popular Bicheno dive sites with awesome prizes going to the lucky finder of each. The sunshine held, making the scuba Olympics a popular afternoon event, with clubs



Sea & Sea novice photocomp winner, Dave Waterhouse

competing in the (on land) disciplines of navigation, shot put (using a dive weight), javelin (using a dive fin) and relay (featuring fins and a host of other dive gear). Spectators were delighted with a range of impressive efforts and spectacular failures.

Many took the opportunity of the shorter daylight hours to head in for an early night dive before heading to Bicheno community hall for the evening's festivities. We were treated to informative and entertaining talks ranging from an innovative reefball project, to deep sea life, handfish, Antarctic diving and photographic displays across the two nights. The traditional quiz pitched club against club in a fiercely contested battle to be crowned the most knowledgeable. The party continued on to the wee small hours in the biggest rave Bicheno has ever seen! DJ Dave ripped out the beats and TUDC danced the night away. Shame the other clubs couldn't stick around, but by all accounts they had parties of their own to attend to...





The traditional great golf ball hunt had a turnout of over 40 divers, with heaps of prizes up for grabs, including a semi-dry wetsuit donated by Anchor wetsuits. The evening brought about the highly anticipated Videography competition – world-first premieres of “the Royal Wedding”, SCUBA style! With 300% more entries than last year (do the maths), the standard was of course exceptionally high. But there could be only one winner, and ODP took out the coveted title of ‘best underwater brides’. Check out their winning video and other entries [on our Facebook site](#) [clicky the link] - well worth a watch for the planking alone!

This year’s underwater photography competition was hotly contested, with over 140 entries across four categories exhibiting the fantastic talent of local photographers. The competition was again judged by our resident pro photographer Jon Bryan, who commented that the standard of entries keeps increasing in leaps and bounds every year. Stop it Jon, you’re making us blush. With so many exceptional entries there were no landslide winners, and it was great to see the compact camera owners mixing it up with the dSLR-wielders. We here at CCW think you’re all amazing but unfortunately there could only be prizes for the top 3 in each category. But what prizes they were! Underwater cameras, torches, dive computers, photography books and much more were generously donated by our sponsors. The top honours were taken out by Eric Fillisch, James Parkinson, John Smith and D Mitchell.

The introduction of early entries for the People’s Choice category allowed for a public display of entries showcasing the outstanding life and colour of Tassie Diving. Local photographer John Smith was voted the overwhelming favourite with his colourful Nudibranch shot, and was awarded with a magnificent trophy for his efforts. If John is prepared to give up this coveted centrepiece it may return as a perpetual trophy, so keep honing your skills!



John receiving (and treasuring) the People’s Choice Photocomp award.



2011 Photocomp winners: 1. Wide angle "last 12 months" – J Parkinson; 2. Macro "last 12 months" – E Fillisch; 3. Wide angle "on the weekend" – J Smith; 4. People's Choice award – J Smith; 5. Macro "on the weekend" – D Mitchell.

Keeping in line with tradition, the perpetual “Tug Boat” prize was awarded to the club with the highest points accrued from the events of Scuba Olympics, Gnome Hunt, quiz and underwater Videography competition. The Tas Uni Dive Club took out the honours this year, followed closely by Sea Green Dive and Ocean Divers Plus. Bringing up the tail and collecting the “bucket” award was Club Go Dive. We wonder if perhaps the bucket may have been useful for some of their Saturday night shenanigans...

Club	Points
Tas Uni Dive Club	32
Sea Green Diver	25
Ocean Divers Plus	22
Leven Scuba Club	12
Tas Sub Aqua Club	12
Tas Scuba Diving Club	9
Go Dive	8

An enormous thankyou goes out to all our sponsors, without whom this event would not be possible. Be sure to show your appreciation by supporting these generous businesses and suppliers. We hope to maintain a great relationship with each and every one of them to continue to make Combined Clubs Weekend a fantastic FREE event packed with activities and prizes.

For those who didn’t make it to Bicheno for CCW 2011, check out [GetUnder Dive Club’s video footage of the weekend.](#)

See you all next year for CCW 2012 – bigger and better than ever!
 - CCW 2011 Organising Committee



WHAT'S ON in August - September 2011

WOULD you like to advertise an event with a marine flavour, or advertise a web address? Let us know! So far only the scuba divers send me stuff.

Scuba diving clubs online calendars

TUDC – http://www.tudc.org.au/diving/dive_calendar.php

TSDC – <http://www.tsd.org.au>

Contact us for TSAC, Ocean Plus and Leven upcoming events.

Recent Sea and Shorebird Sightings

Swamp Harrier - Gould's Lagoon

Immature bird, gliding north up the railway line. Mobbed by twenty or so lapwings. Perhaps a young bird sticking out the winter?

Ruddy Turnstone – Shoreline between Kelso and Greens Beach

Among a flock of Red Capped Plovers numbering approximately 30 birds.

Swamp Harrier - Don Hills, Devonport area

Single bird gliding over Don Hills. Very late leaving, or very early arriving back?

Brown Quail – Cape Bruny

Brown Quail (8) feeding in and around the grounds of the old keeper's cottage.

I have also see a sea eagle over South Arm Beach in the last few weeks

See also <http://www.ereamaea.com/BirdlineRecentSightings.aspx?Birdline=3> for more details

How to help us get the message out

We are asking people and organisations to help circulate the newsletter. Please ACTIVELY distribute Marine Life amongst your interest group, friends and colleagues so we can get the message out there, or give us email contacts (after asking your people for any objections to release of email contacts) so that we can distribute it for you.

How to make a contribution

This involves sending us an article by email, preferably not too long and with a photo or two. Sorry, no money, its all a love job and just for the glory. We'll use your contribution for the purpose for which it was given, for non-commercial uses and with attribution. *Contact Us;* marinelifetassie@gmail.com

Back Issues

We have been gathering together a lot of information and stories since November 2009, so if you are new and interested, please log on our back issues page which has been generously hosted by the Tasmanian University Dive Club,

<http://www.tudc.org.au/news/marinelifelife.php>