

SDFSFA Newsletter – JUNE 2020

SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA, Inc.

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This is what happens when divers call an Uber!

Winning Caption submitted by Jean-Louis van Mackelenberg

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OUR LEAD STORY: Cuttlefest!

The Giant cuttlefish aggregation has started near Whyalla! According to Experiencing Marine Sanctuaries (EMS):

“The Giant cuttlefish are back, and they are ignoring gathering laws! Our friends at Calypso Star Charters swam with thousands off Stony Point Whyalla this week (May 30) and reported “best swim with them so far” with crystal clear water and heaps of colourful action.

EMS is running CuttleFest snorkel tours 4-12 July. The first weekend has sold out, so EMS has just released more tour dates during school holidays. Ticket price includes accredited guide, all snorkel gear, warm wetsuit, hood, gloves and boots for a safe and comfortable experience. Book tickets at <https://www.emsau.org/ems-community-tours/>.”

With the regions opening up, SDFSA is encouraging everyone – scuba and free divers, and snorkellers – to head to the Eyre peninsula, experience this amazing phenomenon and support Whyalla businesses.

MAY's CAPTION CONTEST RESULTS

Many thanks to Alex Suslin for his great photo and congratulations to Jean-Louis van Mackelenberg for the winning caption!

And the runners up:

- ❖ I must've mis-read those tide times – from Steve Reynolds.
- ❖ This spot was all ocean when I was a boy – from Max Janssen.

There were several sharp comments about Alex's navigation skills:

- Comrade Alex, you must improve your navigation skills. We have surfaced in the Oz desert.
- Captain, you've surfaced too far North!
- Captain we've missed Port Adelaide!
- The Captain reflects on his passage through the Bermuda Triangle.

And some SUB standard puns...

- Diving - there is no SUBstitute.
- SUB Standard Fenzies suit older divers.
- Aquaman stands firm, delivering a SUBliminal message from the deep .

It prompted a few global (and local) change observations as well:

- Ice Age hits Backstairs Passage.
- GLOBAL WARMING!!!!!!
- Good Vis!

And finally, people mused on what was this thing anyway?

- Least successful WW2 Naval operation Alex managed to uncover in his search for Australian wrecks.
- Captain, you said I could dive off the side when we surfaced.
- There's water inside, and I'm goin' in.

- Cheers but I'm not going to beat a midget sub!
- Nice doggie. Sit!
- Now, how do I get it through customs?

For those of you who have wondered where this “submarine” is, Steve Reynolds informs us that it marks the entrance to the Mt Ive sheep station, 200km west of Port Augusta in the heart of the Gawler Ranges. The sub was constructed by a local service club out of an old boiler and other scrap bits. See https://www.flickr.com/photos/joy_snow/4798273052.

Many thanks to all who participated in our contest, with great captions and votes for the funniest.

PHOTO COMPETITION THIS JUNE

Call out to Photographers!

We are looking for an amazing photo of a diver exploring South Australian waters.

SDFSFA is designing a new marquee to be used for the Science Alive! Exhibition at the Adelaide showgrounds later this year; and for other events like the opening of the 2020/2021 dive season late November/December. We want the back canvas panel of the tent to be one giant image of a diver or divers – 3 metres by 3 metres.

So we are running a competition! **The best photo** (selected by the SDFSFA Committee) **will be the photo on our marquee!**

Rules:

1. The photo can be a jetty, reef, wreck or cave dive – anything that shows **one or more divers in action**, enjoying the beauty of our unique southern environment.
2. Doesn't matter when it was taken.
3. **Anyone anywhere is eligible to submit** – you don't have to be a South Australian resident, but the photo must have been taken in South Australian waters.
4. Because of the size the photo will be enlarged to, the file should be 10mb jpg format (landscape orientation: note that the printer will adjust the image for laser printing on a square canvas 3mX3m). We will also consider smaller files if the printer thinks they will work.
5. Permission from the diver(s) in the photograph must be available for the winning photo. Not needed at the time of the submission, but a written acceptance of the use of the diver's image will be required for the chosen photo.
6. No cost to enter. You can submit up to three photos.

Prize:

- Free promotion (and bragging rights)! **The winning photographer will be able to place her/his wordmark** in a visible location on the enlarged image for credit and promotion.
- SDFSFA will arrange for a **print enlargement** (A2) of the photo to be delivered to the winning photographer.

How to enter:

- **Email your photos to comms@sdfsfa.net**. If it is a large file, please compress or send a

smaller version, with details on the file size of the original.

- **Include your first and last name, and the general location of the photo** (eg, Edithburgh jetty).

If you aren't yet a member of SDFSFA, it would be great if you could take the time to join the Federation as well! Membership is free – go to <https://sdfsfa.net/membership-form/> to sign up.

And be sure to share this competition with all your mates!

Competition closes June 30.

SDFSFA COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The SDFSFA Committee is developing a three year Strategic Plan (2020-2023). We will be putting final touches on a draft on June 10. We will then circulate the draft to all members, shops and clubs for input. Our intention is to have a final version ready for the 2020 Annual General Meeting in July. The Strategic Plan is an important step in the growth of the Federation, and will guide our activities in terms of membership, communications, promotion, advocacy, special projects, management and financial resources for the coming years.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

- Alex Suslin for his Amazing Alphabet Book of Underwater Wonders! 26 entries of South Australian marine life, each accompanied by a humorous epigram. With Alex's permission, we ran a letter a day on Facebook throughout May. Stay tuned – we may issue the full book on the SDFSFA website!
- Chelsea Haebich on being awarded the Downunderpix Underwater Photographer of the Month for May.
- Amanda Vincent for winning the 2020 Indianapolis Prize. Amanda was the first biologist to study seahorses in the wild. She has spent decades researching seahorses and striving to protect their natural habitats.
- Professor Kristofer M. Helgen on being appointed as Director and Chief Scientist of the Australian Museum Research Institute.
- The Australian Marine Conservation Society on turning 55 during May. The Society held its founding meeting in May 1965.
- Dean Cropp, son of Ben Cropp, on his YouTube documentary series Sailing Into Isolation, made during COVID-19 restrictions.

2020 EVENTS

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY: Friday, 5th June. The theme for this year is biodiversity, a call to combat species loss and degradation of the environment.

WORLD OCEANS DAY: Monday, 8th June: Calls on world leaders to protect 30% of our blue planet by 2030. Plan your Oceans Day event and post it at <https://worldoceansday.org/>.

NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK 2020: 15th–23rd August

National Science Week 2020 will now only be conducted as an online science festival. National Science Week is an annual festival of science that takes place in August each year. The school theme

for this year's National Science Week is "Deep Blue: innovation for the future of our oceans". Visit www.scienceweek.net.au for more details.

Postponed / Cancelled / Rescheduled events

Several upcoming events have been postponed, cancelled or rescheduled. Keep checking on the following events by visiting the relevant websites:

South Australia

Adelaide Boat Show 2020 Cancelled – visit <https://www.bia.org.au/community/future-boat-show-dates> for future show dates.

World Fisheries Congress 2020 - Adelaide – POSTPONED to September 2021 (dates TBD) – <https://wfc2020.com.au/>.

SCIENCE ALIVE! This year's Science Alive! Exhibition at the Adelaide Showgrounds has been postponed, with possible new dates in November.

Interstate/International

MIDE 2020 - Malaysia International Dive Expo – POSTPONED to 4-6 December 2020 - www.mide.com.my .

6th International Eco Summit Conference - Gold Coast, Queensland – POSTPONED TO 14-18 June 2021.

Australian Marine Sciences Association/New Zealand Marine Sciences Society 2020 Conference - Sydney – POSTPONED, dates TBD – <https://amsa2020.amsa.asn.au/> .

AIDE 2020 - Australia International Dive Expo - CANCELLED - www.australiadiveexpo.com .

ICRS 2021 – International Coral Reef Symposium 18th to 23rd July 2021

The 14th ICRS is being held in Bremen, Northern Germany the primary international conference on coral reef science, conservation and management, bringing together leading scientists, early career researchers, conservationists, ocean experts, policy makers, managers and the public. Visit <https://icrs2021.de/> for more details.

OZTEK CONFERENCE & OZDIVE EXPO 21 11-12th September 2021

Next year's OZTek, the Advanced Diving Conference & Exhibition, will now be combined with the OZDive Expo, Melbourne Conference & Exhibition Centre,. Visit <https://OZTek.com.au> and <https://OZDive.net.au> for more details.

SCIENCE STORY for the month

By Steve Reynolds

Have Animal Sightings Increased During COVID-19?

It has been suggested that wildlife has been taking the opportunity to fill abandoned spaces during the recent coronavirus restrictions. It was observed, for example, that rays, sharks, and dolphins have been amongst the animals enjoying new-found freedom whilst humans deserted the oceans and pollution was much reduced.

Natalie Banks, founder and president of Dubai-based marine conservation group Azraq, suggests that human absence provides some breathing space for aquatic species. She says,

"Marine life is benefiting from there not being as many boats in the water, as many people, or as much pollution."

She points to sightings of large groups of animals, rather than just individuals, as a potential indication of the growing boldness among marine species. A large pod of around 2000 Risso's dolphins, *Grampus griseus*, (adults & juveniles) were filmed off the coast of Fujairah in mid-April. It was one of the largest pods ever seen in the region's waters. There was a rare albino individual amongst them.

Although she counsels against jumping to conclusions, suggesting that species might be in their normal habitats but coming to the surface more often, or that we are seeing moments of opportunism rather than lasting changes, Banks does see opportunities in this heightened visibility of marine species.

She says that conservationists are pushing to increase the coverage of marine protected areas. There is also potential for new limits on boats and jet skis where they might threaten wildlife. Such measures have already been introduced at sensitive sites in the UAE.

Azraq has had to rely on the public to report sightings of marine wildlife because lockdown restrictions prevented direct observation by staff, and the group's work with beach cleanups, mangrove tree planting, and school visits were interrupted.

There has been greater public awareness of biodiversity due to the recent spate of sightings. Banks said, "There is an opportunity to increase the awareness of the species in our waters and to make people care about them."

Minna Epps, director of the Global Marine and Polar Programme at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) says, "When tourism activities pick up again, or other kinds of (human) traffic, that will reverse the potential benefits that might have occurred. I think the kind of sightings of marine animals we are seeing are likely to be short lived."

But she believes that there is the potential for lasting gains, such as through the management of fishing. "The biggest impact on marine resources is fishing pressure, and we are seeing the world's commercial fleets coming to a halt because there has been a huge decline in demand for seafood products. This is where we can see impact...We have seen from other historical events such as wartime and piracy that these bring opportunities for fish stocks to recover," she says and suggests that a months-long hiatus of commercial fishing could have "really big implications".

She warns, however, that the absence of humans might induce fewer positive effects. If one species claims new territory, it could wipe out another species in that area and imbalance an ecosystem. "Conservation efforts will suffer where they rely on revenue from tourism."

She says that ultimately, the current crisis has not changed the agenda for marine conservation. "A top priority remains a long-sought treaty under the UN Convention on the Laws of the Sea that would create protected areas in the vast spaces beyond any national jurisdiction."

She hopes that the devastating effects of coronavirus might reinforce the message that protecting nature is protecting ourselves.

Visit <https://www.9news.com.au/world/coronavirus-rays-sharks-and-dolphins-enjoy-new-freedom-as-humans-abandon-oceans/b4a3ba83-21db-4166-bdaa-7da68a08a616?ocid=Social-9News> for more details.

According to the webpage found at <https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/world/over-100-000-flamingos-reportedly-descend-on-mumbai-amid-india-s-strict-coronavirus-lockdown/ar-BB13woPb?ocid=msedgdhp>, during the spread of the coronavirus, wild animals began to enjoy the new open spaces. A record-breaking number of flamingos migrated to the metropolitan region of Mumbai, India for example. The Bombay Natural History Society estimated that around 25% more flamingos had migrated to the region compared to the previous year, probably caused by the decrease in human activity. The Science Times calculated that around 150,000 flamingos had come to the area.

Some conservationists are hoping to be able to maximize the possibilities of this moment. Zoologist Andrea Mangoni notes that fauna in the city of Venice has not changed at all, rather that people have had more time to see the animals. John Gitsham, Birds SA President, says that birds may seem to have become more prolific in the suburbs, but he thinks that people are hearing them more because noise has been reduced and people have more time to observe the birds too. Associate Professor David Paton from Adelaide University thinks that people are seeing more animals around because things have slowed down, and people are spending more time outside.

Personally, I've always thought that shark sightings are higher in summertime simply because people spend more time on the beach and in, or on, the water.

ABOUT THE SDFSFA...

SDFSFA is a non-profit, incorporated membership association dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of our unique underwater world.

JOIN US FOR FREE:

<https://sdfsfa.net/membership-categories/>

The more members we have, the stronger our influence. We serve as a peak body representing the interests of South Australian recreational scuba divers and the related sports of freediving and snorkelling, including the provision of information to government and the general public.

Together we can have real impact on the issues affecting the South Australian diving community.

If you wish to be added to the mailing list for this Newsletter, join the SDFSFA!

You can also read about the Federation's work in monthly issues of DiveLog Australasia, Scubadiver ANZ and on our website at <https://sdfsfa.net>. Stay up to date with the latest news through our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/scubadivesa/>.

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