

SDFSFA Newsletter – March 2022

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SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA, Inc.

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Scuba diver tragedies, Victor Harbor, 2021 and Kangaroo Island, 2022



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OUR LEAD STORY: A SOBER REMINDER ON DIVER SAFETY

Sadly, the South Australian diving community has lost two scuba divers within the past 12 months. On 3 April 2021, upon returning from a dive in Encounter Bay, Victor Harbor, a diver collapsed on the shore and could not be revived (<https://www.victorharbortimes.com.au/story/7194796/police-investigate-mans-death-at-encounter-bay/>). More recently, on 14 Feb 2022, a diver was found unconscious in the waters near American River, Kangaroo Island. Best efforts to revive him were unsuccessful (www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-14/scuba-diver-drowns-and-drivers-killed-in-regional-sa/100827116).

Although the cause of death in both cases is not known to SDFSa, these unfortunate events are a sobering reminder that our sport is not without risk of injury or fatality. Even a health issue that may not be fatal on land could put a diver at risk from drowning if a medical event takes place while under water. Divers must remember to take measures to minimise the risks. It is important to ensure a safe and rewarding experience at all times, not just for yourself, but also for your buddies, friends and family.

1. **Maintain your general good health.** It is always advisable to have regular checkups to ensure you are in good shape. Consider getting a specialised dive medical if you have any health issues that may impact on your ability to dive safely. A list of hyperbaric medicine, dive medicals and diving health resources can be found on the SDFSa website: <https://sdfs.net/directory/hyperbaric-medicine-dive-medicals/>.
2. **Always do gear checks well in advance of a dive** to ensure your equipment is functioning properly. See Alex Suslin's latest Gear Note on page 6 on how to conduct a regular gear check and all the little things to watch out for. And be sure to service your gear regularly.
3. **Follow safe diving practices, including diving within your capabilities and diving with a buddy.** If you are diving with a buddy you are unfamiliar with, chat to them about their experience beforehand, particularly if they are not used to diving in SA waters — don't assume you are both at the same experience level.
4. Ensure you conduct buddy checks and undertake a dive brief prior to every dive — **complacency is a diver's worst enemy.**
5. Where experience and conditions influence you to dive solo, you should do the training course in solo diving to learn what to consider and how to plan in advance for dealing with equipment failures and other emergencies when you are on your own.
6. **Never be afraid to cancel a dive.** If you are not feeling quite up to it, or the conditions look a bit dodgy for you, just bow out. Your buddies should understand — and if they don't, then you should find someone else to dive with!
7. **Join DAN — Divers Alert Network.** DAN's magazine and online resources provide a wealth of information on diver safety and good diving practices, as well as the latest information on dive medicine.

In response to the death of the diver in Encounter Bay, and other incidents in recent years, the **City of Victor Harbor has raised the funds and installed an automated external defibrillator (AED) at the Victor Harbor Bluff boat ramp on 22 January 2022** (<https://www.victor.sa.gov.au/notice-board/the-latest/latest-news/new-defibrillator-installed-at-the-bluff-boat-ramp>). The AED is clearly visible near the ticketing machine. The SDFSa thanks the Council for taking this step, and hopes that other local councils follow suit to ensure that safety equipment is readily available for all ocean users.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

- Breaking news: **The exclusion zone buoys are gone from Rapid Bay**, suggesting that the old jetty is once again open for diving.
- **Spearfishing is now allowed from Kingston Park to Hallett Cove**, including Marino Rocks. This is briefly explained at https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/fishing/closures_and_aquatic_reserves/fishing_closures. You can view the area on the map at https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/331597/PIRSA_Sign_18_-_Spearfishing_Prohibited_Adelaide.pdf.
- A reminder that while people are beginning to dive at the **old Port Stanvac jetty site**, the **exclusion zone for that area still applies**, according to <https://dpti.sa.gov.au/news?a=499588>. SDFSFA is investigating whether the exclusion zone can finally be removed.
- **AED now at Victor Harbor**. As noted in our lead story, there is now an automated external defibrillator (AED) installed near the ticketing machine at the Bluff boat ramp, Victor Harbor.

Our First Letter to the Editor

While we know all of you love to read the SDFSFA newsletter, we don't get a lot of feedback. But this short note from Steve Reynolds was well worth sharing with our members and the larger diving community.

Thanks to South Australians who serve the SA diving community

We [should] thank the many South Australians who continue to serve the SA diving community one way or another. They include dive shop operators, equipment servicers, dive club committee members, dive association committee members, environment group committee members, etc. Special thanks also go to the hard-working members of the SDFSFA committee and our ears and eyes on the ground who keep us all posted on their local conditions and circumstances (including Peter Corrigan [for Second Valley and Rapid Bay], and Steve Simmons [for Edithburgh]).

And our response:

Thanks, Steve! The SDFSFA Committee will begin profiling dive shops, clubs and organisations that are members of the Federation to give more recognition to the excellent service they provide to South Australian scuba, free divers and snorkellers. This month, we are shining a light on a new shop in Coffin Bay that just joined SDFSFA — should be of great interest to divers living on or travelling to the Eyre Peninsula.

HIGHLIGHTING DIVE CLUBS, SHOPS and ORGANISATIONS MEMBERS

Our newest dive shop member: Coffin Bay Scuba Co.

Manny Katz has registered Coffin Bay Scuba Co. as our most recent dive shop member of the SDFSFA. He reports that "Coffin Bay Scuba Co. is a small eco-tourism based startup by two friends who are avid divers, surfers, photographers, and conservationists. We found ourselves on the west coast of the Eyre Peninsula, where we noticed that there were no dive shops or resources within a convenient driving distance to Coffin Bay, and that there are virtually no marine-based conservation efforts taking place. Our aim is to develop a community of divers and citizen scientists on the Eyre Peninsula by providing the training, resources, and education necessary to carry out community-

based programs. These programs will focus on cataloguing local flora and fauna (on iNaturalist.org), as well as tracking ecosystem-health over extended periods of time, to help government organizations like PIRSA and the Department of Environment and Water to make more informed decisions on resource allocation and local legislation.



Coffin Bay Horseshoe Reef: Where the desert meets the sea... Photo courtesy of M. Katz

Divers visiting Coffin Bay can expect lots of macro-life, as well as safe diving within the various estuaries. Nudibranchs, octopus, seahorses, rays, and sea-lions are just some of the creatures you might encounter while diving in Coffin Bay! Dives are typically < 10 metres in depth, and the average visibility is around 4-6 metres. At the moment, all courses and dive-tours are shore-based, but we are looking into getting a boat to access more sites soon! After the dive, feel free to come hang out with the crew at the pub while we edit photos, talk about diving, and learn about this special stretch of coastline."



Photo courtesy of M. Katz

Marine Life Society of SA: MLSSA current interests

Four years ago, Andrew Wright reported that what appeared to be a female blanket octopus had swum into Calypso Star Charters' shark viewing cage at the North Neptune Island marine park. The Blanket octopus (so-called because of the webs that connect several of the arms of adult females) is a rarely seen pelagic cephalopod that navigates subtropical and tropical ocean waters. While none have been reported in southern waters since 2018, there have been more recent sightings on the Great Barrier Reef (by a snorkeller) and in Queen Charlotte Sound, New Zealand (by two divers during a spearfishing competition). MLSSA is continuing to track this unusual species that inhabits Australasian waters. <http://mlssa.org.au/2022/01/25/blanket-octopus-sightings/>.

SDFSFA COMMITTEE BUSINESS

A warm welcome to **Andy Burnell, the newest member on the SDFSFA Committee.**

The Committee has agreed to begin **working with Peter Cetra on his excellent project, divedb.net.** DiveDB is an online searchable database of South Australia dive sites, including GPS locations, notes on level of difficulty and accessibility, special features and photos. We will be exploring with Peter how to incorporate our own list of dive sites into DiveDB and adding historical notes to wreck sites, as well as encouraging more contributors to and users of DiveDB.

And here is our occasional feature profiling a member of the SDFSFA Committee, so you can get to know us a little better!

Introducing our President: Anthony (Tony) Leggatt – President, SDFSFA

I first became interested in diving when my sister took up the sport. I learnt to dive in 1990 through the Adelaide Skindiving Centre in Compton Street Adelaide. As I was working afternoon shifts, I decided to start a Thursday morning dive group by asking fellow shift work divers if they wanted to join me on the Glenelg Scuba boat *Laris*. This soon became a hit with 10 – 20 people joining me most weeks. As my experience grew, I did all the dive qualifications available to me and then became an SSI and then FAUI instructor. Diving has brought me a lot of pleasure, long lasting



friendships and has given me reasons to travel to places I might never have visited. The Thursday morning group is still active with several original members, proving it is a lifetime activity; and if the weather doesn't allow us to dive, we can still talk up a storm over coffee!

I am very proud to be able to use my diving experience to give something back to the sport I love via my volunteer work with RecLink (helping disadvantaged people), and by serving on the Scuba Diver's Federation of SA Committee.

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

- Mark Tozer on his recent appointment as a director of Sharks and Rays Australia (SARA).
- Andrew Burnell whose video footage (via crab.e.cam) showing an octopus attacking a blue swimmer crab over bait and a squid changing colours as it tries to steal the lot was shown by the ABC at <https://www.msn.com/en-au/news/australia/crab-cam-reveals-a-hectic-underwater-world-off-adelaide-s-metropolitan-beaches/ar-AATCB6N?ocid=msedgdhp&pc=U531> . The story also featured on the TV via the ABC News. Details can be found at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-09/underwater-world-off-adelaide-metropolitan-beaches-uncovered/100812698> .
- Andrew Viduka's efforts, with many others, to have Australia sign and ratify the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. Senator Marise Payne has now tabled "the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage and an associated National Interest Analysis in the Australian Senate and House of Representatives for consideration by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties." This action commences the formal consideration of ratification of this Convention by Australia.

DIVE GEAR REPORT: All I need is the air that I breathe — or is your dive gear ready?

By Alex Suslin

Diving in a couple of days? Do a gear check now, so you've got the time to attend to any issues. If something can't be fixed immediately, buy or hire it from your favourite dive shop.

Start with mask, snorkel, boots and fins. The straps and mask OK? Enough tread on the boots for a safe and comfortable walk to the entry point? The rocks at Second Valley's second bay are sharp and slippery! Check the boot zips as well as the one on your wet/dry suit. Check suit for wear and tear — a dry suit with a nick or damaged seals will impact considerably on your diving pleasure.

Fit BCD on cylinder. Are the cinch bands holding it firmly in place? It's uncool to walk Noarlunga jetty with the cylinder hitting the back of your knees! Now's a good time to check the BCD pull dumps to make sure they aren't stuck and the dump cords are OK. Also examine clips and buckles.

Check the regs, particularly hoses and mouthpieces, then hook them up but don't turn the air on. Try to inhale normally through the second stage and occy. That's right — you shouldn't get any air. If you do, it may be some seaweed caught in the exhaust valve, stopping it from sealing. A forceful exhalation will dislodge it. Otherwise, check the mouthpiece again for tightness, split or pinhole. If that's OK, look for a crack in the regulator body — usually at the inlet. Other causes could be a damaged diaphragm or the front cover not being fitted properly.

Now turn the air on. The valve o-ring sealing properly? Does the gauge show a nice fill or is it an "o bugga — forgot" moment? (That's why I have several cylinders.) It's ok — you've left yourself plenty of time to get your tank filled. While you're at it, take a breath from the second stage and occy. To prevent freeflow, the occy is usually a little harder to breathe. If it has a dive/pre-dive setting, make sure it is on pre-dive.

One last thing — check the inflator. BCD inflates OK and stays inflated? Inlet button doesn't jam and auto inflate? Good. Enjoy the dive!

STEVE'S SCIENCE STORY: TAXON CHANGE FOR WASPFISHES

By Steve Reynolds

Further to last month's report regarding the new name for magpie perch, according to [iNaturalist](#), there has been a taxon change/taxonomic swap for Waspfishes.

According to Wikipedia, "The Waspfishes are a family, the Tetrarogidae, of scorpaeniform fishes native to the Indian Ocean and the West Pacific. They are closely related to the Scorpionfishes. As their name suggests, Waspfishes are often venomous; having poison glands on their spines. They are bottom-dwelling fish, living at depths to 300 metres (980 ft).[1] They are small fish, from 2.5–23 cm (1–9 in) long with spiny fins. These creatures usually live in hiding places on the sea bottom."

iNaturalist reports that the Family Tetrarogidae has now been replaced by Tetraroginae. That doesn't appear to be much of a change. Genera affected by the change are Ablabys, Centropogon, Coccotropsis, Cottapistus, Glyptauchen, Gymnapistes, Liocranium, Neocentropogon, Neovespicula, Notesthes, Ocosia, Paracentropogon, Pseudovespicula, Richardsonichthys, Snyderina, Tetraroge and Vespacula.

I'm no expert, but I recognise those to genera beginning with 'G', Glyptauchen and Gymnapistes. According to Wikipedia, "*Glyptauchen panduratus*, the Goblinfish, is a species of Waspfish endemic to the reefs off the southern coast of Australia at depths from 5 to 60 metres (16 to 197 ft). This species grows to a total length of 20 centimetres (7.9 in). This species is the only known member of its genus."



Also included in the family is "The South Australian cobbler (Gymnapistes marmoratus), often called "Cobbler", "Estuary cobbler" or Soldier in Australia. This is a brown coloured fish that lives in estuaries in southern Australia, both on the eastern (New South Wales) and western (Western Australia - Perth) coasts [EDITOR: and has been spotted at Port Noarlunga and at the base of the Dredge!]. It grows to around 22 cm in

length. Its pectoral and dorsal fins have embedded spines that contain venom. Puncture wounds from these spines can be very painful. The species is found in estuaries and silty bays. This species lies motionless through the day, becoming active at night, when the smaller ones eat shrimp and crabs, while the larger cobblers eat other fish. They spawn in August and September."

I didn't recognise any of the other genera listed, other than perhaps Centropogon. *Centropogon australis* is the scientific name for (Eastern) Fortesque, a fish that is not known to occur in SA waters. No such sightings have been posted to iNaturalist at all. Without further research, I can only assume that most, if not all, of the other genera are (overseas?) tropical fish species.

FOR YOUR CALENDARS: FORTHCOMING EVENTS

South Australia

5 March 2022, 7-10pm: The Ocean Film Festival. Capri Theatre, Goodwood Rd, Adelaide. Tickets at oceanfilmfestivalaustralia.com.au.

6 March 2022: Clean Up Australia Day: Adelaide events. Add an ocean/beach cleanup to the roster of cleanups being organized across Adelaide and the rest of the country. Register at Cleanup.org.au. If you register online with Clean Up Australia, you will be covered by their public liability insurance.

8 June 2022: World Oceans Day: South Australia Events. Now's the time to start preparing your celebrations for World Oceans Day! Go to Worldoceanday.org for information on planning, listing and promoting your event. So far, there are no ocean events listed for Adelaide or South Australia, although several are planned in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. **SDFSFA will be discussing how we can help to promote World Oceans Day.**

21-23 September: Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology (AIMA) Conference, Adelaide (details TBC). The theme for the conference is 'Decolonising Maritime'. It is the 40th anniversary of AIMA and the 20th anniversary of the Maritime Archaeology Program at Flinders.

Interstate/International

13th – 21st August 2022: NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK 2022. See www.scienceweek.net.au.

1-2 October 2022: OZTEK Conference and OZDIVE Expo. Held at the Melbourne Conference and Exhibition Centre. Visit <https://OZTek.com.au> and <https://OZDive.net.au> for more details.

Australian International Dive Expo - AIDE 2021—postponed to 2022. See www.australiadiveexpo.com.

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 bimonthly issues of DiveLog Australasia 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/>.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed by authors of material in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Federation.