

# SDFSA Newsletter – January 2024

Editor: Heather Creech

## SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA, Inc.

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## SPLASH INN

### 22 March, 6:30-8:30: A Talk and Community Get Together

#### Join us and Splash Inn with our inaugural presenter, Mark Tozer!

The SDFSA is starting Splash Inn at the request of dive clubs and divers who would like a chance to get together occasionally when dive conditions are poor. Splash Inn will be a series of free evening events to bring us together — divers, free divers and snorkellers — during the autumn/winter months when it becomes more challenging to get out into the waters we love. **Splash Inn** will be an opportunity to socialise, meet other divers and exchange experiences. It will also be a venue to share knowledge on skills, equipment, good practices and dive sites, and to learn about science, culture and technology related to freshwater and marine environments. In addition, your SDFSA committee will provide quick updates on the work of the Federation to preserve those environments for the enjoyment of all.

Details on the venue and agenda and Eventbrite booking will be announced later this month or early February on the SDFSA Facebook page, our group SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions, and in the newsletter. But for now, save the date 22<sup>nd</sup> March in your calendar!

## CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECTS to support

### Marine Hitchhikers

by Janine Baker

The community-based Marine Hitchhikers project will be running for the next 12 months at least in the Gulf of St. Vincent. We are aiming to reach out to coastal and marine NGOs, dive groups, snorkelers, fishers, Councils, Kaurna, Friends of Parks groups and others who value and use the marine environment.

It is hoped that through the project, more people can keep eyes out along the metro coastal waters for introduced marine species. The target area for this project is the metro coast - Port Gawler in the north through to Sellicks in the south, including the beaches, reefs (intertidal and subtidal), seagrass beds, jetties, port, marinas / boat harbours, and shipwrecks.

Biosecurity of SA waters is in everyone's interest. We know that marine pests can impact the marine environmental health and diversity, fisheries, recreational uses, tourism and other values. More species from overseas have been arriving and settling regularly in Gulf St Vincent over the past decade, and that will continue. Port Adelaide is the number one receiving area in SA for marine introductions (with the other ports high on the list too), and they can easily move around the Gulf of St. Vincent and beyond via boats, equipment and other means. Most of the observations of existing and new marine introductions over the past decade have some from community being out in the water or looking along the coast. Government surveys are very infrequent and target few locations and few species. The marine community are the "eyes in the water" for biosecurity in SA. As part of this project we have educational workshops, an iNaturalist project with multiple collaborators, and community fieldwork.

We are hoping that people who have cameras, phones or Go Pro will take photos of species that might be introduced and upload them to iNaturalist, so that they can be picked up by our project page: <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/marine-hitchhikers-of-the-green-adelaide-region?tab=species>

We have a small budget that can pay a gratuity to contributors for their time in uploading photos. Introduced species are detected during many activities – diving, snorkelling / swimming, fishing, beachcombing, rock pooling, boating, kayaking etc

Slideshows will be held in several locations to seek community input about what changes they have been seeing over the past few years in the local marine environment, and discuss how marine hitchhikers arrive, settle and spread. The previous and new legislation for ballast water management and anti-fouling are also briefly discussed. Slides include some species already established here in large numbers, and others to look out for. Some of the latter have arrived in small numbers at specific locations, have been found by fishers (for example) and eradicated by PIRSA, and other species haven't hit SA waters yet. A few have become environmental issues in Spencer Gulf (e.g. Pale Pearl Oyster) but have not arrived in Gulf St Vincent, as far as we know.

First free presentation for 2024 will be 13 January, Pt Adelaide at the Environment Centre: <https://events.humanitix.com/marine-hitchhikers-port-adelaide>.

For more information, contact [jannebaker@bigpond.com](mailto:jannebaker@bigpond.com)

## **Reviving Coffin Bay's Lost Oyster Reefs update**

By Manny Katz, Coffin Bay Scuba

Coffin Bay Scuba Co. has begun the next phase of its community-driven citizen-science project. "Reviving Coffin Bay's Lost Oyster Reefs" aims to create habitat, increase biodiversity, and improve the water quality issues within the estuaries of Coffin Bay. They have started to place sediment panels around the bay to measure oyster recruitment around various sections of the bays. This will help determine where reefs will be installed next year.

Coffin Bay Scuba Co. is also donating 10 PADI Open Water Diver Courses to year 9 and 10 students at various schools around the Eyre Peninsula. Successful applicants were asked to write a 500 word essay about their relationship with the ocean, and the selected students will be completing their course over the summer. Once completed, the students will be assisting with analysis.

Surprising as it may seem, Coffin Bay received a "Very Poor" water quality rating from the EPA. This could be due to a variety of factors, including nutrient enrichment from nearby farms, increasing coastal development, and the demolition of the native oyster reefs.

[https://www.epa.sa.gov.au/reports\\_water/douglas-ecosystem-2019](https://www.epa.sa.gov.au/reports_water/douglas-ecosystem-2019)). The Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board has released a statement, confirming that they have put together a working group to determine where the water quality issues are stemming from.

"Key objectives of the Coffin Bay Water Quality Improvement Working Group include:

- **Monitoring and Assessment:** Conducting regular assessments of groundwater and surface water quality, as well as monitoring coastal environments, to identify areas of concern and potential pollution sources.

- Research and Innovation: Collaborating with Flinders University to advance scientific research and understanding of the Coffin Bay ecosystem.
- Community Engagement: Engaging with the local community to raise awareness of water quality issues, and encourage participation in activities that reduce nutrient input into the bay."

<https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ep/news/231123-coffin-bay-water>

As an initiative for Reviving Coffin Bay's Lost Oyster Reefs, they have published Conservation Conversations - an interview series highlighting industry leaders, marine biologists, and locals who are getting involved with the project. Episodes are released bi-weekly and will include updates about the project. The podcast can be found on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and all other major streaming platforms.

To stay up-to-date about the project and to find the link podcast, head to [coffinbayoysterreef.org](http://coffinbayoysterreef.org). Contact Coffin Bay Scuba at 0401 811 020 / [coffinbayscuba.com](http://coffinbayscuba.com) for more information.

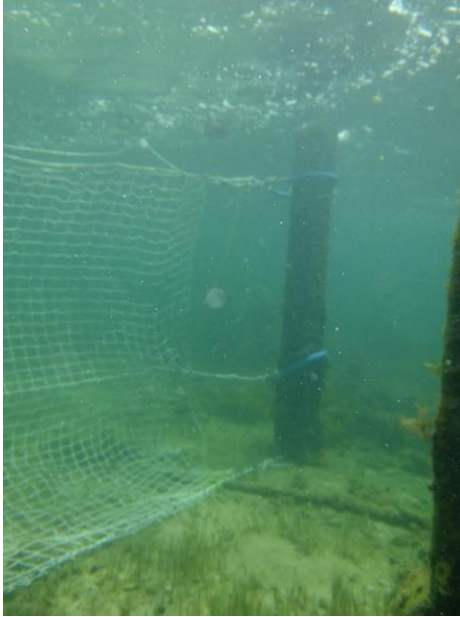
## Shark Net at Edithburgh

By Steve Simmons

There has been a shark net put in place at the Edithburgh tidal pool, it is attached to posts that were still in place from the original shark net that was removed many years ago. It is a different type of net which to my understanding is usually used in the tuna farm industry. The net is held in place by buoys and attached to the posts in a way that it will move up and down with the tide. We believe the net will be in place for 12 weeks and was fitted a couple of weeks before Christmas. Council approved the installation on the provision it will be installed and removed by professionals at a cost of around \$14,000. The net also has to have daily inspections but we are not clear on what action will be undertaken if issues arise ie holes or large amounts of weed or marine life deaths.

Below are pictures of the net above the water note it does not go to the shore line and on the sign referencing the shark net it is referred to as a "marine wildlife deterrent" .

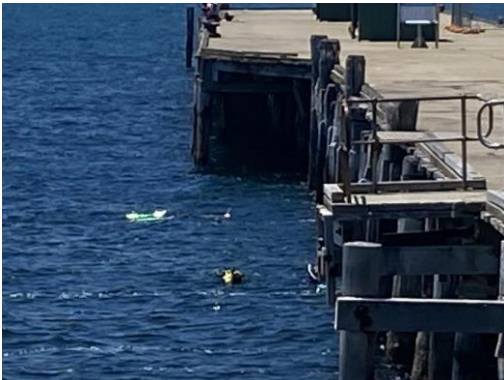




Note this picture of the net below the water was of the test piece placed a year ago but is the same net fitted the same way with just some minor modifications.

## Abalone Poachers at Edithburgh

By Steve Simmons



A large and well organised group of snorkel divers were observed taking large amounts of sea cucumbers and abalone just before Christmas. Most divers who visit Edithburgh would know that legal sized abalone are scarce. The group was well organised with around 6 snorkel divers in the water at any one time and rotating out catch bags and taking their catch from the jetty and the swimming pool area. They were trying to be discreet but were not very successful, Fisheries were notified.

The divers were back last weekend on Saturday 6th January 2024 using the same discreet techniques. As they placed their haul in their vehicle to leave, Fisheries pounced and caught them red handed. It is unknown what the consequences were for the group there after.

Photo of the group at the jetty before Christmas.

## Lifeless Large Smooth Ray found at Seacliff Beach

By Carl Charter

My early morning stroll along Seacliff Beach took an unexpected turn today. The plan was a quick walk followed by some snorkelling with the resident eagle rays before the impending storm. As I filmed these majestic creatures, my attention was diverted by a somber scene. A group from the Surf Life Saving Club and concerned onlookers gathered around a blue tarp near the water's edge.

Upon closer inspection, I discovered a large smooth ray, approximately 1.7 meters in disc width, lying lifeless or paralyzed, bearing multiple stab wounds to the head. There was another injury on the front flap, just to the right of the snout, presumably caused by heavy fishing tackle during the unfortunate capture. Overwhelmed with a mix of emotions—sickness, anger, and sadness—I took a few photos and retreated up the beach as an electrical storm approached.



Driven by a desire to make a difference, I immediately reported the incident to FishWatch, Flinders Uni Shark and Ray lab, and informed my EMS media manager for potential news coverage. Channel 9 news arrived on the scene amidst lightning and heavy rain. I shared a few words on camera, drawing attention to the tragic fate of the Southern Eagle Rays, classified as Near Threatened, and the Smooth Ray, classified as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List. These majestic sentient creatures are not protected under current animal welfare legislation - something many have been pushing for in SA for over a decade now. [For more information on these efforts, join the Facebook Group "Supporting Sharks and Rays in SA". — Editor]

The Surf Life Saving Club members, especially the younger ones, eloquently expressed their love for the rays, describing them as part of their training squad. It was a poignant moment that highlighted the importance of raising awareness to prevent such incidents in the future.

Since leaving the scene I have been informed that ray has been removed by Flinders Uni staff for further investigation.

These beautiful creatures need our help. You can contribute by being mindful of your impact on the environment: dispose of litter properly, carry a bag to collect trash during beach walks, avoid pollution, eat locally caught /sustainable seafood, don't actively target rays and sharks, and release any accidentally caught rays back into the water. Let's turn this heartbreaking event into an opportunity to protect and preserve these incredible marine sentient beings.

## IMPORTANT NOTICES

**PICCANINNIE PONDS STILL CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.** According to <https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/parks/piccaninnie-ponds-conservation-park>, Piccaninnie Ponds are closed to the public for water-based activities until further notice.

## SDFSA COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Our next meeting is Wednesday 24 January at the Arab Steed Hotel, 7pm in the upstairs meeting room.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO...

- Prof. Bronwyn Gillanders on becoming the new President for EMS as part of a new management committee.
- The science to revive lost oyster reefs team, winners of the Excellence in Science and Industry Collaboration Award at the 2023 SA Science Awards.

- Ian Lewis & Peter Stace on the recent limited reprint of the 1982 edition of “Cave Diving in Australia” to mark the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Cave Divers Association of Australia.
- Samantha Whitcraft to be inducted into Women Divers Hall of Fame. Aggressor Adventures’ Director of Conservation and Outreach Samantha Whitcraft will be inducted into the Women Divers Hall of Fame in 2024 in recognition of her efforts to protect and preserve marine environments worldwide.
- The Divers Alert Network has received NAUI’s 2023 Innovation Award. The prestigious prize is awarded to organizations and individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of diving education and have had a significant impact on the industry through innovation.
- Organizers of the Beneath the Sea show have announced the people who will be honored at the 2024 show. Underwater filmmakers Michele and Howard Hall will take home the “Legends of the Sea” award.

## HISTORY STORY: Doug Seton, Diver and Explorer of Shipwrecks AND HOW HE DROVE AN AMPHIBIOUS JEEP ACROSS TO KANGAROO ISLAND FOR DIVING

By Steve Reynolds

The late Doug Seton actually drove a World War II amphibious Jeep across Backstairs Passage to Kangaroo Island for diving activities. Unfortunately, Doug died in January 2023, aged 90. Doug’s widow, Mara and good friend Graham Meyer, however, have since provided me with more details about the jeep and the sea crossing.

It seems that Doug bought the amphibious jeep around 1968. Doug wrote that it was built by the Ford Motor Company for the US Army in 1942. Despite being a boat on wheels, it could reach speeds of 110km per hour down a highway, according to Doug. According to Graham Meyer, the amphibious vehicles (ducks) were built at Ford’s plant at Dearborn, Michigan. They were 17’ long and capable of speeds of “60mph on the highway and 6mph in the water. .... They had a capstan winch for hauling, and a 2-inch centrifugal pump in case of flooding.”

Doug wrote that the jeep had a propeller “cast from steel and designed to slice through anything it struck (such as) weeds, coral out-crops or barbed-wire entanglements”. Despite that, it had trouble propelling the 1½-ton vehicle. It was replaced by “a big bronze clover-leaf propeller, designed to be driven through a gearbox. It spins in the opposite direction to a conventional direct drive propeller.”

Doug’s voyage across Backstairs Passage to Kangaroo Island was reported in a KI newspaper:-  
“Residents of Penneshaw on Kangaroo Island were dumbfounded on Saturday when a four-wheel-drive vehicle left the water, drove up the beach and headed into town. Mr GD Seton, who has a property on Kangaroo Island, drove his amphibious Jeep into the water at Cape Jervis and emerged on the beach at Penneshaw 2½ hours later.

“I had no trouble on the trip whatsoever,” Mr Seton said. He said that if the weather was suitable he would drive the Jeep back across the sea. He had been working on the then 20-year-old Jeep for more than 18 months to prepare for the trip.

“Mr Seton is vice-president of the Underwater Explorers Club, and the Jeep will be used for diving work in the waters around Kangaroo Island. The Jeep was very stable, he said, and just as good as a conventional boat.”

According to Doug though, he never did push his luck and drive it back again. I wonder what became of it.

George D (Doug) Seton was well-known in diving and shipwreck circles. He held many positions, including that of Assistant Information Officer at the South Australian Museum. More importantly perhaps, he had been President of both the Underwater Explorers Club of SA and the Society for Underwater Historical Research (now South Australian Archaeology Society). The Underwater Explorers Club of SA celebrates its 70th anniversary, and the South Australian Archaeology Society celebrates its 50th anniversary, this year (2024).

Doug and his groups were all well-known for the recovery of shipwreck artefacts, especially anchors. Some of the better known anchors recovered are ones from Matthew Flinders' HMS *Investigator*, the *Loch Vennachar* and the *John Pirie*. A cannon (carronade or gunnade) from the *Star of Greece* wreck was also recovered by Doug and other members of the UEC.

*Several of the following photos of Doug provided by Mrs. J. Walsh and Graham Meyer.*



## They say it's lovely weather for ducks!

Restoring veteran and vintage cars is a well-known hobby among motorists, but a group of local enthusiasts have given it a new twist — they are restoring amphibians.

The group is at present restoring three of these amphibians — built for the U.S. Army and known popularly in World War II as "ducks." The three under reconstruction were built at the Ford Company's plant at Dearborn, Michigan.

Seventeen feet long, and built like a boat on wheels, the craft were capable of 60 mph on the highway and 6 mph in the water. Fitted with four-wheel drive and a low-range gearbox, the vehicles could handle almost any conditions, including sand, mud and snow. They had a capstan winch for hauling, and a 2-inch centrifugal bilge pump in case of flooding.

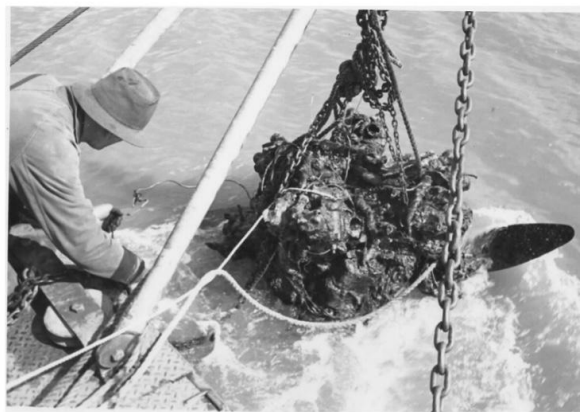
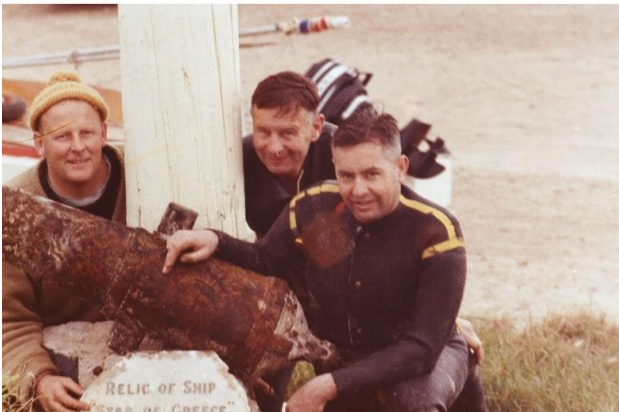
The group is looking for more "ducks" that can be broken up for parts, and — most urgent — a Maintenance Manual

TM-10-1263 to help with the work of restoration.

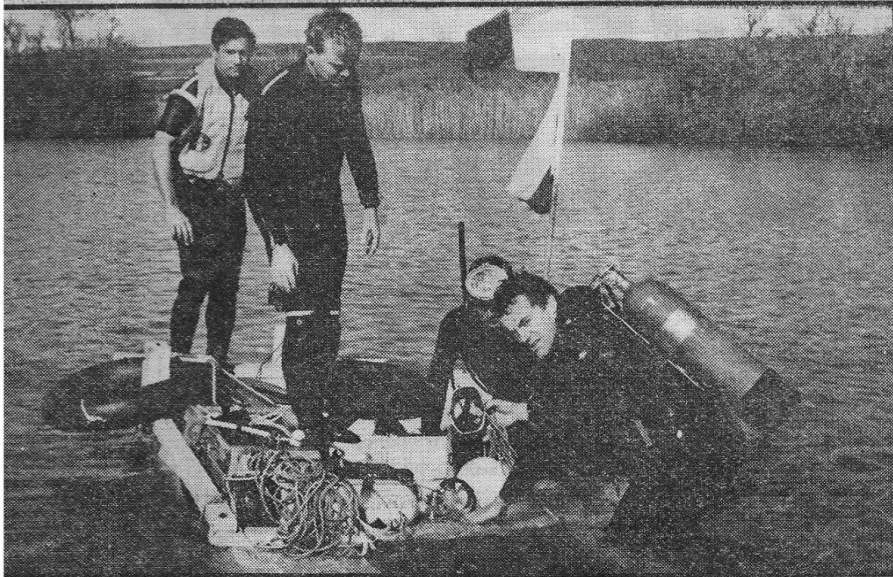
They believe that there are several of these manuals in South Australia, but so far have not been able to run one to earth. The group can be contacted through Mr D. Seton, at the South Australian Museum.







Y MAIL, October 29, 1972



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the UEC is a

with an experienced older member, who watches his  
charge while he gains confidence.

All new members are expected to be able to  
attain the club's B Grade diving proficiency certifi-  
cate, a basic test of skills which aims at obtaining  
a uniform level of ability from all. An A Grade  
certificate is also available for those who wish to  
reach the highest level of training available from  
the club. (All diving clubs in this State have  
similar tests for their members). But even this  
was not sufficient for the UEC. When the National

*MEMBERS of the South Australian  
Underwater Explorers' Club recover  
relics of a World War II bomber which  
crashed into the River Murray near  
Monteith during a training exercise in  
1942. Left to right, John Martin, presi-  
dent of the club at the time, Graham  
Meyer, Phil Prust and Phil Wakefield.*

## FOR YOUR CALENDAR: FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### ***South Australia***

**Sat 13th January:** Marine Hitchhikers, a free event being held at the Port Environment Centre - see <https://events.humanitix.com/marine-hitchhikers-port-adelaide> for details.

**25 February 2024:** Dive for Cancer, Port Noarlunga Jetty & Port Noarlunga Surf Life Saving Club. Further details will be announced soon. <https://www.facebook.com/diveforcancer/>

**7 March 2024, 6PM - 7.15PM. Online and Allan Scott Auditorium, Hawke Centre, University of South Australia. Humpback Highway.** Discover the fascinating world of whales with acclaimed wildlife scientist **Dr Vanessa Pirotta**. Register at <https://www.unisa.edu.au/connect/hawke-centre/events-and-exhibitions/events/2024/vanessa-pirotta/>.

**22nd March 2024, 6:30 to 8:30.** (Venue TBD): Splash Inn. Presenter: Mark Tozer. Organised by the SDFSA.

**2024:** The Underwater Explorers Club of South Australia turns 70 in 2024 and the club is seeking to contact past members to help them to celebrate. If you haven't yet been in contact with the club, contact Sue at [Sue\\_C@inet.net.au](mailto:Sue_C@inet.net.au) or on 0438 882 509.

### ***Interstate/International***

**7 - 9 June 2024:** The 18th Malaysia International Dive Expo (MIDE) 2024 being held at Level 1, Hall 2, Malaysia International Trade & Exhibition Centre (MITEC) Kuala Lumpur.

**10 – 18th August 2024:** National Science Week.

**15-16th March 2025:** ADEX Australia, incorporating OZTek Advanced Diving Conference 2025 is being held at the Sydney International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour Hall 2. OZTek Advanced Diving Conference will be celebrating 25 years, ADEX celebrates 30 years in 2024.

**August 7 to 17, 2025:** According to [https://www.deeperblue.com/2025-world-games-to-include-freediving-as-part-of-its-program/?mc\\_cid=2a9b8e09dd&mc\\_eid=d4cc43123c](https://www.deeperblue.com/2025-world-games-to-include-freediving-as-part-of-its-program/?mc_cid=2a9b8e09dd&mc_eid=d4cc43123c), “The 2025 World Games in Chengdu, China will include dynamic freediving and para-freediving as part of its athletic program, according to the World Underwater Federation (CMAS). The 12th edition of the World Games will take place between August 7 to 17, 2025, and Freediving and Para-Freediving will join Finswimming and 35 other sports.”

## ABOUT THE SDFSA...

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

**JOIN US FOR FREE!**

**<https://sdfs.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 SDFSA!

You can also read about the Federation’s work in monthly issues of DiveLog Australasia, Scubadiver ANZ and on our website at <https://sdfs.net>. Stay up to date with the latest news through our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/scubadivesa/>. And follow our FB group, SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions for current diving conditions shared by the group members.

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### *Disclaimer*

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