

SDFSA Newsletter

August/September 2024

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SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA, Inc.

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SDFSA Patron:
Dr. RicharHarris



Navigation trail at Rapid Bay, doing its job in low vis conditions

Photo courtesy of Daniel Field

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UPDATE ON RAPID BAY NAVIGATION TRAIL

Many of you will now be aware that the SDFSA and SAPOL Water Operations Unit have installed an underwater navigation trail at Rapid Bay. The old jetty at Rapid Bay has continued to deteriorate, leading the State Department of Transport and Infrastructure to set up an exclusion zone around the collapsing wooden sections. In polling the diving community for a major project to undertake, divers suggested the need for a series of markers to help divers navigate from the end of the new jetty out to the T-section and avoid the exclusion zone.

On August 22nd and 23rd the SA Police Water Operations unit, at the request of SDFSA, installed over 40 star droppers at Rapid Bay Jetty to create the underwater trail, approx. 215m long, starting at the end of the new jetty to the T-piece of the old jetty. Under the leadership of our previous SDFSA President Tony Leggatt, we ensured we had the funds to acquire the star droppers. Permission was sought and received from the relevant government authorities to install the trail, with the proviso that the installation was done by commercial divers. Our 2024-25 President, Helena Wescombe-Down, approached the SAPOL Water Operations Unit to see if they would be willing to do the installation, and they generously agreed to volunteer their time and resources for this project.



The installation of this underwater trail promotes safe diving activities by allowing divers to:

- Avoid the unstable section of the old jetty which is subject to an exclusion zone
- Reduce the surface swim, thereby reducing exertion and excess CO2 build up
- Make their way directly to the T-piece, reducing the risk of becoming disoriented and veering off track.

Helena was invited to attend as an observer on Friday to see the culmination of a project that has been several months in the planning stage. A huge shout out of thanks to Darian, Kevin, Chris, Harry & Tristan from SAPOL's Water Operations Unit. *Photos courtesy of Helena and SAPOL.*

NOTE: Subsequent to the installation, as luck and winter storms would have it, a number of the markers have already come out of their anchor point. Two of the pickets are located at the T section of the old jetty and the other two are in the middle of the trail.

SDFSA is now viewing options for re-positioning the missing pickets and anchoring them more securely. We hope to have this addressed in the coming month.

Some comments received on our project:

- What a truly brilliant initiative 👍😊. Congratulations to all involved. Congratulations and THANK YOU for installing this navigation trail for divers. I look forward to diving it. A win for diver's experiences and safety. SDFSFA and Water Police, thank you!
- Great news. A huge help to navigate to the T of the old Jetty, with confidence. 👍😊🐟🐟🐟
- Well done everyone involved and water ops 👍
- Great idea
- Well done guys this is awesome
- Huge shout out everyone involved great work SDFSFA
- Thanks to SAPOL and the SDFSFA for the organisation to complete the task. This will be much safer for all divers particularly night dives
- Excellent outcome- congratulations! And thanks SAPOL!
- That's fantastic!
- That's a great job well done to all involved.
- Awesome job, it was handy to have today the visibility was terrible.
- From SeaWolves dive club: Well done, everyone.

SDFSFA ANNOUNCES a new annual award: THE SEA STAR

The SDFSFA Sea Star Award recognises and celebrates the outstanding efforts that an individual is making/has made to diving, snorkelling or freediving and/or a wide range of other activities concerned with the protection & promotion of our marine and freshwater environments & cultural heritage in South Australia.

Nominees should be residing in South Australia, with the impacts of their work primarily demonstrable in South Australia but also may be of benefit across Australia and internationally.

The first call for nominations will be announced at the end of September/early October. More details will be provided in the SDFSFA October Newsletter and our Facebook page.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

NEW GUIDELINES TO ASSESSING AND MANAGING IMPACTS TO UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE IN AUSTRALIAN WATERS

Andrew Viduka, founder and director of GIRT Scientific Divers was very pleased to announce the publication of new Guidelines to Assessing and Managing Impacts to Underwater Cultural Heritage in Australian Waters - Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). The guidelines can be found at <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/publications/assessing-managing-impacts-underwater-cultural-heritage> .

DREDGING MAINTENANCE AT NORTH HAVEN

According to Marine Safety SA, "SA Infrastructure and Transport will be undertaking routine dredging maintenance at the North Haven Boat Marina. The work will not require the closure of the boat ramp, but there may be access changes during the dredging. If you're taking the boat out around North Haven over the next few months, make sure you take care in the area. If you have any questions, you can contact DIT.Engagement@sa.gov.au or call

1300 794 880.” Further, “Skippers only need to remember, pass on side of Diamonds in day and Greens at night.”

BOTH EWENS PONDS & PICCANINNIE PONDS ARE CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Both Ewens Ponds and Piccaninnie Ponds are closed to the public for water-based activities until further notice. It is best that you check the current situation before making any plans to visit the ponds.

According to <https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/parks/ewens-ponds-conservation-park> , “The ponds are currently closed to water-based activities due to very low water levels resulting in the connecting channels being too shallow to navigate without damaging the delicate aquatic vegetation and site natural values.”

And according to <https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/parks/piccaninnie-ponds-conservation-park>, “Piccaninnie Ponds is remaining closed for immersive water activities until further notice to allow for the regeneration of aquatic vegetation and fauna species following an outbreak of filamentous algae. The conservation park remains open to the public, however entry into the water for diving and snorkelling is not permitted and permits are not being issued.”

According to our Patron, Dr. Richard Harris’ recent postings on Facebook, “Ewen Ponds has been closed due to low water levels. The first pontoon is 'beached' and the channels between ponds are too low to safely swim through without risking damage to the aquatic plants. This appears to have followed a large cut back of the rushes and reeds, thus allowing too much water to flow out of the system. The cut rushes now cover the beach. With the recent low rainfall and increase in local irrigation allocations, the Gambier aquifer is in a perilous state. The nearby unique, Ramsar listed Piccaninnie Ponds are closed due to an overgrowth of filamentous algae. A spring near Ewens is now brackish due to the lowered hydrostatic pressure of the aquifer allowing saltwater intrusion. Some neighbouring properties have springs that have become dry for the first time in colonial times.”

SDFSA COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Introducing the SDFSA Committee for 2024-2025

Executive	Committee Members	
President: Helena Wescombe Down	Amanda Biddle	Melissa Gorton
Vice President: Tony Leggatt	Andy Burnell	Sara Leggatt (Membership)
Secretary: Sue Booth	Heather Creech (Communications)	Heather Petty
Treasurer: Farzad Atefi	John-Paul Davies-Morgante	Craig Tonkin
	Max Janssen	

SPLASH INN: Friday 15 November, with Dr. Chris Acott as guest speaker. Details and booking information to follow in October.

Our next committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 23 October at the Arab Steed Hotel, 7pm in the upstairs meeting room.

NEWS FROM SHOPS AND CLUBS

BSAC Adelaide members enjoyed Christmas in July at Vik's Place Bar & Dining.

The **South Australian Archaeology Society** (formerly the Society for Underwater Research) just fell short of reaching its 50th anniversary. It was thought that the SAAS was being deregistered in July 2024, just some 2 months shy of the 50th anniversary. The good news (?) is that deregistration is taking some 2 months to finalise and will likely occur on the 50th anniversary of the SUHR. (The Society was formed on 30th September 1974 and incorporated 22nd November 1976.) If nothing else, we can be satisfied in the knowledge that the Society managed to last 50 years. Mind you, it continues as a [Facebook](#) group and in a [blog](#), so there is still a presence for the Society.

We note that **Coffin Bay Scuba** appears to have evolved into **EyreLab: Educating Youth in Restoration Ecology lab**, operating as a non-profit organisation aimed at promoting education, training, engagement and awareness of youth in the field of restoration ecology and environmental stewardship.

Experiencing Marine Sanctuaries has issued a call for volunteers, with excellent training and benefits for those keen to help others explore the South Australian ocean world.

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

- Kirsty Bevan on being appointed as the new CEO of the Conservation Council of South Australia.
- Rodney Fox Great White Shark Expeditions on being placed in the Travellers Choice Award - Top 10% in the World.
- Andy Burnell on having his jellyfish photo taken at Edithburgh jetty published in the Sunday Mail recently, and Josh Dostal on being featured in Andy Burnell's photograph in the Sunday Mail.
- Flinders University staff who got to perform just the second ever octopus squid dissection in SA recently. It was a Dana octopus squid (*Taningia danae*). See Rare octopus squid found dead west of Kangaroo Island dissected by researchers at SA university - ABC News. More details below in Steve's Science Notes.
- Everyone who recently received a PADI RTO Certificate of Excellence, including Carl Charter
- and Allan Bartlett (who was also awarded a PADI award for 20 years of outstanding service).
- Professor Charlie Huveneers on being made a finalist in the 2024 SA Science Awards Excellence in Science and Industry Collaboration category.
- Sheree Marris on the publication of her book Octopuses - Underwater Wonders.
- Mike Bartick on the release of the e-Book The World of Blackwater which shows exotic creatures that drift in the open ocean at night.
- Will Passos and the Soggy Wombats team on their completion of "another photogrammetry project", The Pines (5L61).
- The divers from Sea World who successfully rescued an 8m humpback whale calf off the NSW north coast. The whale was anchored to the ocean floor by a 20mm cable from a fishing trawler.

- Steve Ellis on his discovery of a bronze cannon from the 17th century protected shipwreck the London. One of Historic England's licensed divers, Steve has been diving this nationally important wreck site in the estuary of the River Thames for the past 14 years. The exceptionally well-preserved cannon was found after 360 years of being buried in silt and clay in the Thames Estuary's seabed. Over 300 people died in an accidental explosion of the London in 1665.

STEVE'S SCIENCE STORIES for the month

By Steve Reynolds

LITTLE IMPACT FROM THE NORTHERN WATER PROJECT ON FISH SPECIES

According to the Northern Water Project, a study commissioned by them to investigate the potential impact of the project on Snapper and King George Whiting life cycles is now complete. A report detailing the results of the study concluded that there is a low to very low likelihood of impact to either species from the planned desalination plant at Cape Hardy. Marine scientist, Dr Troy Roger, under the direction of Dr Mike Steer, Research Director, SARDI Aquatic and Livestock Sciences, carried out this research and analysis before presenting the report to Northern Water. The study investigated the life cycles of Snapper and King George Whiting from spawning to egg and larval dispersal, recruitment areas, and adult movement and habitats concluding the overall risk should be considered as low. The 9-page report summary is available at [ca221a194ee93f7e017f7cf2ccec5f9b_SARDI_Advice_Note_MSF - NWSP Snapper KGW in Spencer Gulf.pdf](https://ca221a194ee93f7e017f7cf2ccec5f9b_SARDI_Advice_Note_MSF_-_NWSP_Snapper_KGW_in_Spencer_Gulf.pdf) (ehq-production-australia.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com).

DANA OCTOPUS SQUID

Flinders University staff recently got to perform just the second ever octopus squid dissection in SA. It was a Dana octopus squid (*Taningia danae*). See details and video footage at [Rare octopus squid found dead west of Kangaroo Island dissected by researchers at SA university - ABC News](#). The Dana octopus squid has also been called the Spectacular Strobe Squid because of its light-producing organs on its tentacles. These can dazzle and bite its prey.

According to Wikipedia, "*Taningia danae*, the Dana octopus squid, is a species of squid in the family Octopoteuthidae. It is one of the largest known squid species, reaching a mantle length of 1.7 m (5.6 ft) and total length of 2.3 m (7.5 ft). The largest known specimen, a mature female, weighed 161.4 kg (356 lb). *Taningia danae* is named after Danish fisheries biologist Åge Vedel Tåning (1890–1958), who often traveled on the research vessel Dana. *Taningia danae* possesses bioluminescence, like other octopoteuthids. Its photophores are some of the largest such organs known to science, the organs being compared in size to fists or lemons. They possess a black membrane over the photophore that may conceal the organs, allowing the squid to blink its lights; this membrane has been compared to eyelids as a result."

BLUE WHALE RESEARCH

Former South Australian, Dr Karen Edyvane is now a marine ecologist for the Australian National University. She is also program leader for the ANU's whale study team which has studied blue whales for over a decade. The team annually monitors the Austral-Indonesian population of pygmy blue whales. During a recent monitoring of the whales, the team recorded the first evidence of reproduction in blue whales, including footage of courtships and of a mother nursing her calf. Dr Edyvane said that the waters of Timor-Leste really are providing blue whale scientists with some of our first glimpses into the private lives of one of the world's largest but most elusive animals.

MORE WHALE STORIES

Rescuers from Sea World said in July that they had already had to rescue three whales so far this year. Their latest rescue in July involved a 8m humpback whale calf which was anchored to the ocean floor by a 20mm cable from a fishing trawler. It was off the NSW north coast and the rescue was carried out in rough seas.

According to <https://9now.nine.com.au/today/dramatic-whale-rescue-off-nsw-north-coast/36e0c4f0-3537-4c3f-8e2a-82c4e6a0e283>, "Rescuers spent three days battling 3.5-metre swell and harsh weather to help save the giant mammal, with divers eventually having to jump in the water to get up close to release its tail. Sea World Foundation's Head of Marine Sciences, Wayne Phillips (said that) he believed the whale was actually stuck for eight days and the outcome could have been a lot worse if they waited any longer."

Sea World divers had to use special underwater grinding tools to cut the fishing cable from the distressed whale.

"The whale was in significant distress, so the team hit the water, went out to inspect the whale and found it was anchored to the seafloor. Traditionally we cut whales out of these situations when they are entangled in nets and ropes, but on this occasion, we found that the whale was stuck on a wire cable and none of our cutting gear could effectively release it," Mr Phillips said.

"Rescuers confirmed the whale still had some of the cabling attached to its tail when it swam off, but hopefully that would come loose on its own. And with that trawler cabling still there on the ocean floor, Wayne said this type of thing was becoming a real problem for Australian sea life.

"We have about 30 whales each year that travel past our coastline with some sort of commercial fishing gear interaction, and we only get to about 10 per cent of those, which is quite sad, really," he said.

"This is our third whale this season, so it's becoming quite a problem - the commercial operators need to follow all the rules and regulations and if they do lose some of their gear, they need to report that and do the best they can to get it out of the ocean."

Good on those Sea World divers who risked their own safety to cut the whale free in poor conditions.

BRAZILIAN SHARK TESTING GIVES POSITIVE RESULTS FOR COCAINE

Brazilian sharpnose sharks caught off the coast of Rio de Janeiro all tested positive for the cocaine. According to <https://gizmodo.com/brazilian-sharks-test-positive-for-cocaine-2000477390>, trace amounts of cocaine have been detected in sharks near Brazil. "Cocaine makes its way into the ocean through several avenues, including release from inadequate sewage treatment facilities and stray packets dropped into the water by smugglers that then get bitten open by wildlife Due to these processes, traces of cocaine have been detected in sewage and surface waters in at least 37 countries between 2011 and 2017. The drug has also infiltrated various forms of aquatic life, including mollusks, crustaceans, and bony fish. But with all that said, no studies had ever looked into whether sharks are affected.

"In a paper published in the journal Science of the Total Environment, Brazilian researchers sought to rectify that by capturing 13 Brazilian sharpnose sharks off the coast of Rio de Janeiro. scientists dissected them to get samples of their muscles and livers, which were then analyzed for signs of cocaine and related chemicals. Every single shark tested positive for cocaine, while 12 of the 13 had benzoylecgonine—a chemical produced when cocaine is filtered through the liver—in their systems.

"..... the researchers didn't rule out the possibility that other species could also be exposed to water-borne narcotics. They noted that many shark species are facing serious decline due to overfishing.

Being exposed to cocaine could result in severe damage to shark health, including harming their DNA, affecting their ability to metabolize fats, or causing behavioral changes.

“Considering the psychotropic effects of drugs of abuse on vertebrates, behavioural changes may occur, which, although sub-lethal, could impact the species’ survival in ways that remain unexplored,” the researchers wrote.

“..... “the possible effects on humans of cocaine being ingested by the carnivorous fish is slightly more subtle. These findings are indicative of potential human health risks, as sharks are highly consumed in the state of Rio de Janeiro, in fact, throughout the entire Brazilian territory and indeed, worldwide,” they wrote.”

According to The Advertiser in July, all of the cocaine-positive samples from the 13 sharks had concentrations up to 100 times higher than previously reported in other aquatic creatures.

OCEAN LITERATURE

The book “Deepwater” by James Bradley gives “an epic account of what we know about the oceans”. It is also pleading for an end to treating the oceans as Earth’s rubbish dump. “Deepwater is a Penguin publication, RRP \$37.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR: FORTHCOMING EVENTS

South Australia

Friday 18 October: Talk by internationally acclaimed wildlife and underwater photographer and explorer Amos Nachoum at the Rodney Fox Shark Museum & Learning Centre. Tickets will be \$25.

Friday 15 November: SDFSA’s Next SPLASH INN, with Dr. Chris Acott as guest speaker. Details to follow in October.

Interstate/International

7 September to 8 December: The Fantastical Sharks and Rays display at the Australian Museum, Sydney. Entry to the exhibition is free.

2 to 16 September: The 2024 Freediving Depth World Championships are being held in Corsica.

15 to 20 September: The AMSA & NZMSS 2024 Conference is being held in Hobart, Tasmania.

26 to 27 September: The 2024 AIMA Conference - Collectively Navigating Ocean Horizons* is being held at the New Zealand Maritime Museum, Auckland. The AGM will be held on Thursday 26th September at the museum. The conference dinner will also be held there on Friday 27th September. See <https://www.aima-underwater.org.au/app/events/events/view?event=aima-conference-2024> .

* (The theme of “Navigating Ocean Horizons” is described as “Collectively Building Combined Capacity, Interconnectivity, Advancing Research, Fostering Knowledge Exchange”).

28 to 29 September: The GO Diving Show ANZ is being held in Sydney – see <https://godivingshow.com/anz/home/> .

28 September to 13 October: Nature Festival with public art and park celebrations, secret gardens and scavenger hunts, forest dreaming and tree treats. There are activities for kids, food and wine for adults and everything in between. See www.naturefestival.org.au

30 September to 7 October: Deep Week is being held in Greece.

18 to 20 October: the Portugal International Diving Show is being held in Lisbon (where they get >300days of sunshine per year)– see <https://www.divingtalks.com/>

15 to 18 November: The Archaeology of Waterways Conference is being held in Durham, England see https://www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org/annual-conference?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZWQCMTAAR1u1FRafIVdwNSa9BHiTGbG8ghNL08Y01oKaJd6qQ3IUxOfiOrretIGgSQ_aem_AU0xE1hbTIH-wtcU0N9eH4okB29piKGqjED2bCbcd73NxWU9noufxui2J1ldtk9Plo-yhL15qYbf2GD5PT5P3mhA .

19 to 22 November: This year’s DEMA Show is being held in Las Vegas, Nevada.

15 to 16 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 whilst ADEX celebrates 30 years this year. See <https://diveoztek.com.au/> for more details.

4 to 9 May 2025: The 25th International Seaweed Symposium is being held in Victoria, BC, Canada.

2025: According to 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://sdfsanet/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://sdfsanet>. Stay up to

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