

SDFSA Newsletter – January 2025

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SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA, Inc.

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SA Dive Sites Viz & Conditions: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/568109670769809>

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SDFSA Patron:
Dr. Richard Harris



Ocean Guardian Shark Shield [image from Amazon.com]

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SHARK SHIELD REPAIRS AVAILABLE

Does your shark shield no longer work? Whether there is an issue with the battery or the antenna, there is now a service in Perth available to repair non-functioning shark shields. The SDFSFA recently arranged a video conference with Mitch Kelly, an electronics engineer who has been repairing Shark Shield units for approximately 6 – 8 months. He is handling repairs for about 30 units per week and is currently keeping up with demand, primarily from the Perth diving community.

The main issue he has encountered with the units is that the cables leading from the power unit to the antenna are corroded and in many cases totally disintegrated. He can successfully replace the wiring. For those units where the whole antenna needs to be replaced, he has manufactured his own replacement antennas and holds a small amount of extras in stock. Other issues that he has encountered and repaired are: corroded charging ports; circuit board repairs; and battery replacements. Mitch offers a 90 days workmanship guarantee, and will fix at no charge if there is a failure to his repair within that time. He cannot offer warranties on the Shark Shield itself, only on the actual repairs he has done.

Costs of repairs may include:

- \$140 to replace the wiring
- Antenna replacement \$180
- Battery replacement \$110 - \$120
- Freight is additional.

At this time the SDFSFA has no first hand knowledge of the quality of the repairs. Several members of the SDFSFA Committee are sending their units to him to be repaired; when we get these back we will report further. If you wish to contact Mitch directly about your shark shield issues, he can be reached by email at sharkshieldrepair@gmail.com.

While the plans for the new company that has taken over Ocean Guardian are not widely known, Underwater Australasia in Byron Bay (<https://underwater.com.au/>) reports that the Ocean Guardian Shark Shield FREEDOM+ Surf Bundle and Tail Pad is back in stock for shortboards (6'6" and under).

SHARKS AND RAYS PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

New Fishing Rules to provide better protections for Sharks and Rays

According to the ABC, the new rules will “prohibit the fishing of some species while giving bag and size limits to others. They also include penalties for the mutilation or inhuman treatment of species” (abc.net.au/news/sharks-and-rays-protected-adelaide-metropolitan-beaches/104706604). Many organisations, marine biologists and concerned divers and ocean users have worked hard to advocate for these new rules, although clearly there is more work to be done, especially on education and enforcement.

Sadly, as many of you will have seen on the Crab.e.cam Facebook page, (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100079774972834>), the mutilation of these species is continuing. Crab.e.cam reported mid-January the discovery of a discarded corpse of a 2 metre Smooth Ray on Tennyson beach: “Caught and landed, where her tail spine was cut off as souvenir (fresh wound) and left dead. This is illegal, rays over 1m disc size are fully protected, it's also illegal to mutilate these species.”



The new rules for Sharks and Rays are available at https://pir.sa.gov.au/recreational_fishing/shark_fishing_and_safety/recreational_fishing_for_sharks_and_rays. **Any infringement of these rules should be documented and reported to Fishwatch.**

Information can also be shared with the Facebook group Supporting Sharks and Rays in SA (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1248099575237369>). There is also a new Facebook group, the Shark and Ray Collective which is following on the work with PIRSA about the protection of sharks and rays. Join the group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1643636903230550>.

Potential impacts of Witton Bluff Trail Reinforcement on Sharks and Rays

Concerns have been raised about potential impacts on the marine environment of the Witton Bluff Base Trail and seawall repairs at the southern end of Christies Beach. Onkaparinga Council began the work in December 2024, with its plans to add large stones at the base of the seawall, new armour rocks on top of the seawall and reshape the seawall to help break up waves and reduce water splashing over the wall. The seawall repair is adjacent to a shallow reef where Port Jackson sharks aggregate and lay eggs and southern eagle rays occur year-round.

As of 17 January, work has been temporarily halted by order of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA SA) due to a plume of clay sediment that has suddenly emerged over the nearby shallow reef. According to the ABC, "The EPA spokesperson said it would continue to liaise with contractors and the council to ensure the "necessary controls and monitoring are in place to ensure this doesn't happen again" (https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-01-17/epa-christies-beach-seawall-witton-bluff-clay-sediment-sa/104828954?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR0soQYWtqVigBBVUIH-9T8t7tggcfoHLsAzV5aOSXD1kkBKpRGHOKSJm0_aem_MOjug7J5j9HqvYOSjhYpDQ).

If you visit Christies Beach, please consider recording your observations of any negative impacts on the marine environment to share with the Facebook group Supporting Sharks and Rays in SA

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1248099575237369>). Also consider raising concerns about better monitoring and impact assessment with Onkaparinga Council at mail@onkaparinga.sa.gov.au, attention Project leader Rob Bau.

Global Status of Sharks and Rays

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature has released its latest report on the global status of sharks, rays, and chimaeras (<https://iucn.org/resources/publication/global-status-sharks-rays-and-chimaeras>). This is an update on the first report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC), Shark Specialist Group published in 2005, documenting the significant changes that have taken place over 20 years with respect to habitat, population and other factors. Professor Charlie Huvneers at Flinders University contributed to several chapters in the report.

SPLASH INN 21 MARCH 2025 & SEA STAR AWARD

Our next Splash Inn will be held Friday 21 March at the Rob Roy Hotel. In addition to our guest speaker (to be confirmed) we will be presenting the SEA STAR award. The SDFSA is pleased to announce that we have not one, but four, exceptional champions of the South Australian ocean world who will receive our inaugural SEA STAR award. The recipients will be announced next month. Each recipient will talk about their passion for our sport and our unique marine environment at the next Splash Inn, so mark the date in your calendars.

PORT ELLIOT PONTOON UPDATE

Further to the call for volunteer divers to assist the Alexandrina Council to maintain a recreational pontoon just off the beach at Port Elliot: The pontoon was in danger of being scrapped by the Council. According to <https://bit.ly/3P9EuYE>, however, “the Alexandrina Council approved the reinstallation of the (Port Elliot) swimming pontoon The pontoon was in danger of being beached due to the increasing cost of management, however due to donations, there will be no cost to council. Alexandrina mayor Keith Parkes said that to comply with liability insurance requirements, the council would have to conduct daily drone flights over the pontoon, weekly inspections and remove it twice a year for maintenance..... with the support from (a) Goowla jetty builder, and if required, offers of personal financial support from the state member for Finnis David Basham, (and others), there will be no net cost to the Council.”

The pontoon was reopened on 30th December and will remain until the surf lifesaving season is over.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

NEW STANDARD FOR LIFE JACKETS NOW IN FORCE

From 1 January 2025, all life jackets worn for boating in South Australia must meet Australian Standard (AS) 4758. Boaters could be fined if they wear a lifejacket that does not meet AS 4758. The standard should be displayed clearly on the label. South Australian life jacket laws help to keep you and your loved ones safe. This amendment to the Harbors and Navigation Regulations was made in February 2022 to further improve boating safety. Life jackets that meet AS 4758:

- have increased buoyancy
- incorporate new technology
- consider advances in lifejacket design and manufacture

- have increased reflectivity
- will display a level 50, 50S, 100, 150+.

Learn more about the new life jacket requirements at

<https://marinesafety.sa.gov.au/news?a=1443896>

BOTH EWENS PONDS & PICCANINNIE PONDS CONTINUE TO BE CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

SDFSA COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The next meeting of the Committee is Wednesday 22nd January, 7pm at the Arab Steed upstairs meeting room.

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

- SDFSA Life Member Christopher Deane on achieving 15 years as President of the Historical Diving Society: Australia-Pacific.
- SDFSA Life Member Con Penglis on winning a choice of books as 4th prize in the Historical Diving Society: Australia-Pacific raffle.
- Phil McGowen on being awarded the Ted Eldred Award by the Historical Diving Society: Australia-Pacific.
- Moss Anderson from Experiencing Marine Sanctuaries on receiving the 2024 Southern Suburbs Volunteer Service Award.
- Port Noarlunga Fish & Chips on reaching their 34th anniversary recently.
- The third Australian-made ferry for passenger service on the Parramatta River that is named after marine biologist and author the late Isobel Bennett.
- The Maritime Museum Tasmania on reaching its 50th anniversary recently.
- Reef Life Surveys Europe Coordinator José Antonio Sanabria Fernández on being presented with the Scoresby Shepherd Award (the Reef Life Surveys survey prize for the greatest number of surveys contributed) with a whopping 68 surveys throughout the year.
- Joe Shields on being presented with the Distinguished Contribution Award awarded to Reef Life Surveys volunteers for outstanding voluntary contributions by means other than surveys.
- Save Our Marine Life which helped to establish a brand-new marine park in state waters on Western Australia's south coast, which is vital for endangered Australian sea lions and southern right whales. (About 20% of the marine park, which stretches along 1,000 kilometres of coast, from just east of Bremer Bay to the South Australian border, will now be fully safeguarded within marine sanctuaries.)
- Ukrainian freediver Kateryna Sadurska who set a new women's World Record at the AIDA Deep Dominica competition when she dived down to 82m in the Constant Weight No Fins (CNF) discipline under AIDA rules. It was apparently her 6th World Record within a year.

NEWS FROM SHOPS, CLUBS and ORGANISATIONS

Sea Wolves Dive Club reports a great success for the first of its series of Dive Days, designed to re-engage divers who may have been out of the water for some time or those new divers who are looking for regular dive buddies. They report that they had 8 non-members call to join the dive. In addition, one stranger walked past the dive group and stopped for a chat. He is a diver recently relocated to Victor Harbor from Port Macquarie with no "Dive Home," and has decided to join Sea

Wolves. While the dive itself had only 3m visibility and some surge (typical of the Bluff) the real value was the camaraderie and new friends (and the sausages).

Sea Wolves is holding its second Dive Day on Sunday 9th February. Looking for a dive but have no buddy? Experienced divers from the Sea Wolves dive club will gather to buddy with certified non-member divers at Second Valley. Everyone should meet in the car park at Second Valley at 10:00am, diving at 10:30, return at 11:30 for a BBQ sausage for 12:00. If you would like to join in, jump on their FB events page and register so they can advise you if there is a last minute change in plans. <https://www.facebook.com/SeaWolvesDiveClubSA/events/?id=100068254717381&sk=events>
Or email secretary@seawolves.com.au

Green Adelaide (Department for Environment and Water) recently uploaded the webinar “Diving into Blue Carbon” Seminar Series talk with Dr Sophie Russell and Dr Emily Leyden. Steve Reynolds reports that “It is very much worth watching to learn more about the very important work happening to build blue carbon and protect our coastal ecosystems. (The sound isn’t great in some places though.)” The webinar is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tM5e1Obi0WM>.

Green Adelaide has provided further reading references and links to relevant community organisations:

- SA Blue carbon strategy <https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/environment/docs/blue-carbon-strategy-for-south-australia.pdf>
- Blog about Port River seagrass restoration <https://portriver.au/can-potato-starch-structures-assist-seagrass-recovery/>
- Salt to C Project on Goyder: From Salt to C: carbon sequestration through ecological restoration at the Dry Creek Salt Field | Goyder Institute. Research establishes proof of concept for blue carbon benefits from tidal reconnection of coastal wetlands | Goyder Institute (PDF) Proof of concept for tidal re-connection as a blue carbon offset project
- Federal grant program supporting the Gulf St Vincent restoration project <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/marine/coastal-blue-carbon-ecosystems/conservation/restoration-grants>
- Community Organisations: Port Adelaide Residents Environment Protection Group: Defending the local environment for over 30 years; Estuary Care Foundation SA; Friends of Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary - Friends of Parks and Nature South Australia; Port Environment Centre; Friends of Port River

Go2Dive: Steve Selbach, Director at Go2Dive is celebrating 25 years as a PADI Member. PADI gave Steve a Membership Achievement Award to mark the milestone.

STEVE’S SCIENCE STORIES for the month

By Steve Reynolds

TASSELLED ANGLERFISH FOUND WAY OUT OF RANGE

According to <https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/projects/9358/journal/102437> , “Leonie Rennie found a Tasselled Anglerfish, *Rhycherus filamentosus*, washed up onshore” at Hopetoun, WA. It was able to be identified by the shape of its esca (the structure at the end of the anglerfish's lure), and counting the fin rays confirmed it. According to iNaturalist, “This species was thought to occur as far west as Point Sinclair, South Australia, which is halfway across the Great Australian Bight. Leonie’s find at Hopetoun, WA, was over 750 km to the west, making it a significant range extension.”

The ID was eventually confirmed by world-renowned frogfish expert, Ted Pietsch. Leonie donated the fish to the WA Museum where it has been preserved and catalogued into the WAM fish collection.

There is an audio link at <https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/projects/9358/journal/102437> where you can listen to a discussion about this topic. I later found that there are two anglerfish sightings reported via Redmap, as follows:

- Verified *Rhycherus filamentosus* sighting in Western Australia by Leonie Rennie - Redmap
- Verified *Rhycherus gloveri* sighting in Western Australia by Leonie Rennie - Redmap.

It turns out that Leonie found two anglerfish at the same location, both a Tasselled Anglerfish, *Rhycherus filamentosus* & a Glover's Anglerfish, *Rhycherus gloveri*, on the same day of the year, but exactly one year apart.

NEWS FROM THE MARINE MEGAFUNA FOUNDATION

Jessica Pate and the team from the Marine Megafauna Foundation have been getting lots of manta rays tagging work done in the US and Mexico, despite having to dodge hurricanes. They identified up to 200 manta rays in south Florida.

Meanwhile, the MMF's Dr. Steph Venables from Mozambique has just published "a crucial study analysing 20 years of manta and mobula ray sightings off Tofo. Using data from the long-term monitoring program that Dr. Andrea Marshall began in 2003, the study has revealed dramatic declines in both reef and oceanic manta populations. This work demonstrates the value of sustained monitoring efforts, and the urgent need for continued conservation action in Mozambique and the Western Indian Ocean...Persistent declines in sightings of manta and devil rays (Mobulidae) at a global hotspot in southern Mozambique". Reference:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10641-024-01576-5> .

FOR YOUR CALENDAR: FORTHCOMING EVENTS

South Australia

18-19th January: The 18th National Shell Show 2025. Goodwood Community Centre, 32-34 Rosa Street. See <https://southaustralia.com/products/adelaide/event/18th-national-shell-show-2025> .

6 -9 Feb & 20- 23 Feb - Mount Gambier Deep Weekend, hosted by The Freediving Family (<https://freedivingfamily.com/>).

9 February 2025: Sea Wolves Dive Day. See <https://www.seawolves.org.au/> for details

2 March 2025: Sea Wolves Dive Day. See <https://www.seawolves.org.au/> for details

2nd March: Clean Up Australia Day

18-20th March 2025: Seagrass: 2nd International Seaweed Conference Asia Pacific, Adelaide. Event will be opened by renowned climate scientist Professor Tim Flannery. See <https://seagrass-asiapacific.com/>

21 March: Splash Inn at the Rob Roy, featuring the four winners of the 2025 SEA STAR Award.

Interstate/International

7-10th Feb: The Australian Wooden Boat Festival 2025 is being held in Hobart, Tasmania – see <https://awbf2025.org.au/> or <https://www.australianwoodenboatfestival.com.au/> .

18th-21st February: eDNA (Environmental DNA Conference) is being held in Wellington New Zealand. See <https://ednaconference.com.au/> .

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

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

7-17 August 2025: 2025 World Games in Chengdu, China to include dynamic freediving and para-freediving.

11-14 November 2025: DEMA show will be held in Orlando, USA.

2025 Deep Week organised by The FreeDiving Family (<https://freedivingfamily.com/deep-week>): 1-8 Feb - Deep Week Dominica; 24- 29 March - Finland Family Reunion; 5 -12 April - Deep Week Philippines; 26 April -3 May - Deep Week Bali; 17-24 May Deep Week Mexico.

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/>. And follow our FB group, SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions for current diving conditions shared by the group members.

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