

SDFSFA Newsletter – May/June 2025

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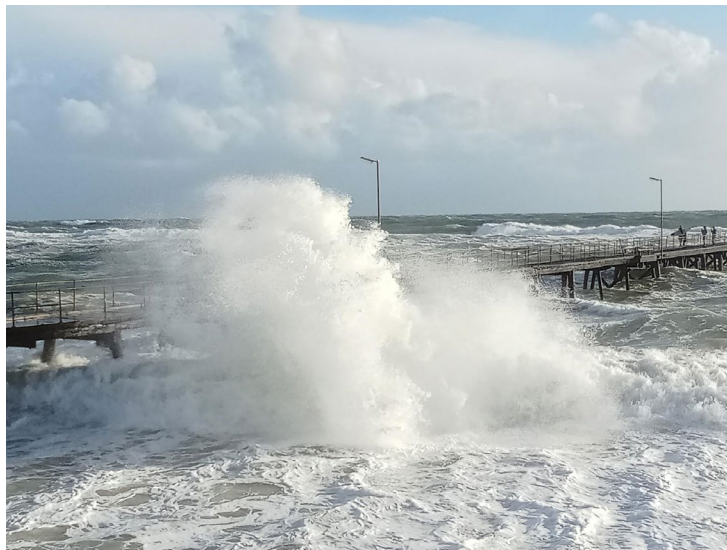
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/scubadivesa/>

SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/568109670769809>



SDFSFA Patron:
Dr. Richard Harris



Storm action at Port Noarlunga.

Photo by Iannella Kelly posted on SA Dive Sites by Christopher Deane

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JETTY CONDITIONS POST STORM

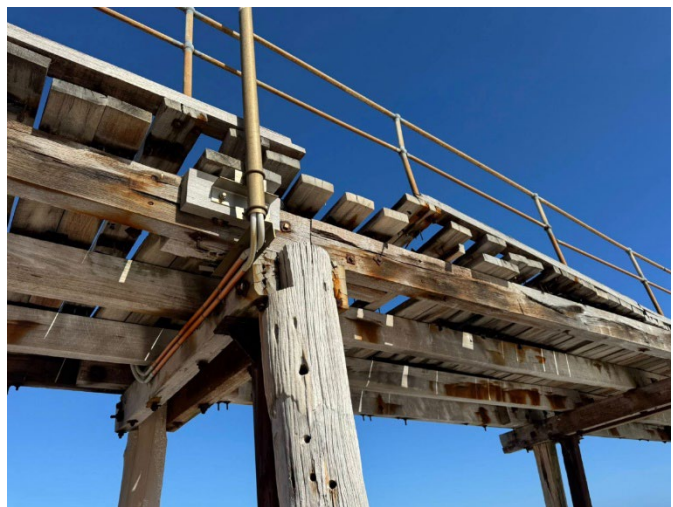
Many thanks to all those who have posted photos and reports of the impact of the recent storm on our jetties. Peter Corrigan has provided the following information to SA Dive Sites:

- Normanville - A council worker told us it's catastrophic and most probably will be condemned for a long time.
- Second Valley. No major problems, but with the zero viz we couldn't see the extension to the steps, hopefully it is still intact. The path around the cliffs hasn't been affected.
- Rapid Bay. The car park was covered in rocks but a grader arrived and tidied it up. The steps looked good but again we couldn't see the bottom dive platform due to bad viz. The exclusion zone part of the old jetty hasn't fallen in and the rest is still the same as before.

At **Port Noarlunga**, Babette Woodhouse suggests that “the middle and end stairs look OK” but “Lots of damaged planks and damage to the side railing”.



Drone shot from Port Noarlunga Facebook page provided by Christopher Deane to SA Dive Sites



Port Noarlunga Jetty Damage – image sourced from the Facebook page of Chris Picton MP

In a recent Facebook post from Chris Picton MP, Minister for Health and Wellbeing and the Member for Karna in the southern suburbs of Adelaide, he advised:

“Understandably our whole community is interested in updates on the Port Noarlunga Jetty following Monday’s storms. I have spoken to both the Onkaparinga Mayor and the Transport Minister.

Engineers have been engaged to undertake a full assessment for Onkaparinga Council and provide advice on what repairs need to occur. They are also in discussions with the Department for Infrastructure and Transport. An engineer was on site when I visited today. In the meantime it will remain closed to the public.

I will keep providing updates as there is more information to share. Thank you to everyone for your patience. Hopefully our beloved Jetty will be back up and open as soon as possible.”

Edithburgh has fared better: as Steve Simmons reports, “With the storm damage to jetties yesterday like Pt Noarlunga, Pt Germain and others I think we were very lucky the main storm surge was coming from the west, south west which protected our beautiful jetty. “

Port Noarlunga Jetty Pylon Upgrades 2025-2026

The City of Onkaparinga will be undertaking pylon upgrades on the Port Noarlunga Jetty during the 2025-26 financial year, subject to budget approval. Every effort will be made to avoid all peak usage seasons of the jetty and stakeholders will be informed of detailed construction time frames once they are confirmed. While sections of the jetty will have temporary access restrictions during construction, the council does not anticipate any partial or full closures of the jetty.

We suspect, though, that the recent damage to the planks along the jetty will no doubt influence how Council will proceed with the additional work that may be needed. Further information can be found here: <https://yoursay.onkaparinga.sa.gov.au/port-noarlunga-jetty-pylon-upgrades-2025-26>.

RAPID BAY UNDERWATER TRAIL UPDATE

A huge thanks to Sea Wolves Dive Club who have now installed 10 “test” replacement star droppers at Rapid Bay Jetty on Friday 23rd May. Six Seawolves Dive Club members installed the new 1.8m droppers, which have been marked with yellow caps cable tied on. The existing droppers, many of which have fallen over, were 1.3m in length. Being longer, this means these test droppers are embedded 1200mm into the ocean floor, rather than 600mm with the old ones. The test droppers are pretty much all together starting about 60m from the new jetty. They will be checked regularly to see if they withstand the conditions better than the shorter droppers.

WE ARE PARTICULARLY KEEN TO SEE HOW THEY MAY HAVE SURVIVED THE RECENT STORM SURGES. If you are diving down at Rapid Bay and see these **yellow topped** droppers, we would appreciate your feedback on their condition by emailing info@sdfsa.net. Lots of photos, please!



Photos courtesy of Marc Berry



SPLASH INN FRIDAY 20 JUNE: PROF. CHARLIE HUENEERS

Talk Title - Shark attacks: Is the number of shark bites increasing and how can we reduce risk?

The events over the last two summers have raised many questions about sharks and shark-bite risk. Professor Huveneers will use his 15-year experience studying sharks in South Australia to dispel myths and summarise scientific information about white sharks and mitigation measures that can reduce risk of shark bites.

About our speaker - Professor Charlie Huveneers is the Director of Flinders University Marine and Coastal Research Consortium and leads the Southern Shark Ecology Group (SSEG). The SSEG research focuses on the ecology and population status of sharks and rays, as well as assessments of their vulnerability, interactions with humans, and related public perception. After Charlie obtained his PhD in 2007, he started co-running the Animal Tracking Facility of the Integrated Marine Observing System program



(IMOS), during which he created a national network of receivers to track the movements of sharks and fishes. He moved to South Australia in 2009 to join MISA through a joint position between SARDI – Aquatic Sciences and Flinders University as a shark ecologist. He has been a full-time academic at Flinders University since 2014, with his current research focusing on positive and negative shark-human interactions, providing empirical information to minimise the effects of wildlife tourism and test the efficacy of shark bite mitigation measures.

The event is free but as usual, please register on Eventbrite: [Splash Inn Eventbrite](#)

HELP DOCUMENT IMPACTS OF ALGAL BLOOM

The ecological disaster which has unfolded along the South Australia coastline is cause for alarm. It has been stated that unusually warm seas and calm weather this autumn (up to 3°C above average) have triggered harmful algal blooms (HABs), leading to widespread marine die-offs. However the link between the warm water temperature and the toxic algal bloom is questioned by A/Prof Jochen Kaempf, College of Science & Engineering, Flinders University, as presented in the ***Science of the Algal Bloom*** webinar hosted by the Port Environment Centre on Wednesday 28th May. 2 hours of information was presented by 7 panellists – there is much food for thought. If you would like to learn more the full recording of this webinar can be found here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oL4Zk_0iHHg

These blooms, caused by toxic dinoflagellates like *Karenia* species, can harm marine life through toxicity, gill damage, and long-term ecosystem impacts. While the recent storm action may help to dissipate the current bloom, monitoring is still needed.

How to Help:

Citizen Science

In addition to notifying FishWatch, where safe to do so, waterway users coming across impacted marine life can photograph and share information to the citizen science platform [iNaturalist](#). iNaturalist has both a website and phone app, with user guides [here](#).

Independent marine ecologist Janine Baker and Brad Martin from OzFish are coordinating the [iNaturalist Statewide marine mortalities database](#). The database automatically gathers records of dead marine animals from South Australia uploaded to iNaturalist and helps to publicly track impacted species.

You can contribute by uploading a photo of each impacted species to iNaturalist, which are then identified and coded by other users.

The Great Southern Reef Foundation

The [Great Southern Reef Foundation](#) (GSRF) is a not-for-profit organisation that increases awareness and understanding of Southern Australia's network of kelp forest (The Great Southern Reef), and promotes stewardship and research of this coastal environment.

Janine Baker wrote an article for the GSRF on what we know about the algal bloom [here](#). There is also a [public submission form](#) to raise awareness and concerns with decision makers.

OzFish Unlimited

[OzFish Unlimited](#) is a national, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to restoring fish habitats and healthy waterways to ensure the future resilience of aquatic habitats and recreational fishing. OzFish Unlimited partners with fishers and the broader community to monitor, protect and restore fish habitats. In South Australia they lead programs like '[Seeds for Snapper](#)' [seagrass program](#), [Port River native oyster reef](#) restoration and [fish kill monitoring](#).

You can get involved with fish habitat work by volunteering on projects, supporting as an OzFish [member](#), making a [donation](#), or [contacting](#) OzFish about projects you would like to see in your area.

Government Information:

Updates on the algal bloom are available from the **Department of Primary Industries and regions (PIRSA)** [website](#).

Department of Environment and Water (DEW) have an update [here](#).

Please call the 24-hour hotline [FishWatch](#) at 1800 065 522 to report unusual marine mortalities or fish kills. This supports fisheries specimen and water sample collection efforts.

Visit the **SA Health** [water quality alerts](#) website for health advice. SA Health recommends avoiding discoloured water, consumption of dead fish or shellfish, and staying away from the coast if you develop health symptoms like coughing or irritation. If symptoms are more severe or do not resolve, then seek medical advice from a GP and call 000 if a medical emergency.

Anyone who discovers dead or sick **marine mammals** to contact their local [National Parks and Wildlife Service office](#).

The **Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)** also have inform on their [website](#).

Check your **Local council** for additional information concerning local service providers, beach closures, health alerts and updates for residents.

WHYALLA CUTTLEFEST IN FULL SWING

Whyalla Council has launched a comprehensive web page covering all the events, tours, exhibitions and many other activities underway throughout the winter cuttlefish aggregation (<https://www.whyalla.com/cuttlefest>). New this year is the appointment of the first **Cuttlefish Concierge, Carlo Possagno**. Carlo will be on hand at Stony Point throughout June and July to greet divers, snorkellers and boat tourers, answer questions and share information and experiences. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn from a seasoned observer and underwater photographer, who wants to hear your own stories as well. See <https://www.whyalla.com/cfconcierge> for details.

If you are planning a trip to Whyalla, you can search and book accommodation from the Cuttlefest webpage, <https://www.whyalla.com/cuttlefest>.

Manny Katz and the team at Whyalla Dive Shop are providing regular reports on their Facebook page as the cuttlefish begin to arrive. Dive and snorkel tours can be booked at www.whydive.com.au. They can also help you with hire scuba and snorkel gear and tank fills.

Experiencing Marine Sanctuaries will also be providing their annual guided snorkel tours over 12 days in July; bookings can be made at bookings@emsau.org.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

RAPID BAY STAIRS STEP 8 has been repaired. On the last set of steps above the platform, step 8 was very loose. We informed DIT and learned recently that the step has now been fixed.

EWENS & PICCANINNIE PONDS CONTINUE TO BE CLOSED: Both Ewens Ponds and Piccaninnie Ponds remain closed to the public for water-based activities.

SDFSA COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Advance notice of Annual General Meeting: Please be advised the AGM of the Federation will be held on Wednesday 23rd July. Further information will be distributed next month.

Like what we do? Then consider joining as a Committee member.

Don't like we do? Then consider joining as a Committee member and have your input!

SDFSA WINE FUND RAISER

SDFSA offers free membership to individuals, therefore we receive little income. In order to cover our annual operating expenses, which equate to approx. \$4,000, we raise funds via our Bunnings BBQs and Wine Fund Raiser efforts. We are pleased to announce this year's Wine Fund Raiser, offering you a choice of 2 wines:



- Bleasdale's 2022 Floodgate Shiraz - \$160 per dozen / \$85 per 1/2 dozen
- Cleanskin Riesling from Pikes Wines - \$125 per dozen / \$70 per 1/2 dozen

Due to liquor licensing laws, wine payment and collection can only occur on our nominated collection date of **Sunday 27 July** - if you are not able to attend on this date, please arrange for a proxy to pay and collect on your behalf. Payment can be made via cash or credit card on the day.

Orders can be placed via the following Eventbrite link: [Eventbrite SDFSA Wine Fund Raiser](#)

Please consider supporting our fundraising efforts.

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

- BSAC Adelaide who are celebrating the club's 50th Anniversary this month.
- Dr Shelley Paull on being awarded the Leadership in Conservation Award by the Rotary Club of Burnside in recognition of her years of dedicated work on South Australia's Marine Parks Program, and her unwavering commitment to connecting people with the ocean.
- Sammy Glenn of Sammy Glenn Dives on having filmed two blue ringed octopus mating at Rye in Victoria.
- Jennifer Jones, Calvin Mires, and Daniel Zwick on the publication of their book "Intertidal Shipwrecks – Management of a Historic Resource in an Unmanageable Environment".
- Jill Heinerth whose documentary "Diving Into The Darkness" begins streaming on Apple and Amazon in North America on 6th June.

IN MEMORIAM: Dr. SCORESBY SHEPHERD

By Steve Reynolds

Dr Scoresby Shepherd AO passed away in May at the age of 90. As his notice in the Advertiser reports, "he was a celebrated marine biologist, a legendary underwater researcher, a pioneer scuba diver, and a life-long natural historian." Scoresby received many honours in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the marine science of South Australian waters, including being made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2006. At the time, the press reported that 'SAS' had published more than 100 articles, chapters, books and handbooks. His authorship and co-editorship include the seminal works "Marine Invertebrates of Southern Australia", "Natural History of Spencer Gulf" and "Ecology of Australian Temperate Reefs". The latter received a Whitley Award for the best marine ecology book of 2013.

In 2008, the Royal Society of South Australia presented Scoresby with the Verco Medal for contributions to science (<http://seadragon.podzone.org/nletters/january2009.htm#1>).

His memoir "Paradise is Underwater" was published in 2016.

Scoresby either discovered or described many new marine species, or had new species named after him. "Scoresby's Many Discoveries" can be found in the 2011 MLSSA Journal.

Scoresby was Patron of the Marine Life Society of SA from 2003 to 2018. He was awarded Life Membership of the Society in 2016. Scoresby was a supporter of many marine groups, including Experiencing Marine Sanctuaries and the Reef Life Survey Foundation (RLS). He was said to be "instrumental in the establishment of the Reef Life Survey Foundation and served with great dedication on both the RLS Board and Advisory Committee for many years. His wisdom, guidance, generous donations, and unwavering support were invaluable to our mission." In recognition of Scoresby's work, RLS created the Scoresby Shepherd Awards – "an initiative that honours and recognises the exceptional efforts of (RLS) volunteer divers each year. we are honoured that his legacy will live on through these awards and the continued work of those he inspired."

When the news of his passing became public, some of the online comments included:

"a remarkable man whose life's work helped shape the future of marine science in Australia"

"a distinguished researcher and passionate advocate for our oceans"

"an enduring force for conservation in South Australia and sustainable fisheries management worldwide"

“His influence extended far beyond academic contributions”

“Scoresby’s lifelong dedication to marine science and his enduring support for citizen science will never be forgotten.”

“Scoresby is a legend and was a great supporter of Experiencing Marine Sanctuaries from the start.”

“A champion for the environment. Courageous to express the truth of disastrously damaging coastal developments .His research in many oceans will remain forever.”

A low-key private family funeral for Scoresby was held in May. A celebration of his life is being held in late June or July. Our condolences go to his wife Anna, his children Louise, Lincoln and Christopher and their spouses and children, and his many colleagues and friends.

STEVE’S SCIENCE STORIES for the month

By Steve Reynolds

THE FALLING AQUIFER IN THE SOUTH EAST

[The following story is based largely on reporting from Dr. Richard Harris.] According to Richard Harris, “There is increasing concern about the falling (unconfined) aquifer in the south east of South Australia. Every animal, plant and person in the region relies on the ground water. As the average annual rainfall continues to decline, signs of stress are being seen from Naracoorte in the north, to the karst rising springs like Piccaninnie Ponds in the south. Salt water from the ocean is pushing inland in the south due to the falling pressure of the freshwater which normally keeps it at bay. This is evident in some of the coastal springs and test wells.

Mosquito Creek, and Bool Lagoon are currently dry, with concerns about local species loss.

Low flows and high nutrient load in Piccaninnie Ponds have caused a devastating algal overgrowth in this unique Ramsar wetland. Another iconic spring with huge importance to local tourism is Ewen Ponds. Ewen is now at record low water levels and is also at very high risk. Minor insults to the system are having major impacts, and the ponds remain closed to the public.

The best government in the world can't make it rain. But adapting to the changing climate with altered agricultural practices can lower water use and diminish nutrient loads. The Water Allocation Plan is currently under review and no doubt some tough decisions will need to be made.”

These issues will be affecting more and more localities if our global community can't turn these climate trends around. For a shocking look at the state of Piccaninnie Ponds, check out this video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WwPHqFQUlw>. Richard Harris reports as follows:

“Piccaninnie Ponds Deterioration:

Piccaninnie Ponds is listed as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. It is located in the lower south east of South Australia. Over 110m deep, it is an extraordinary example of a coastal spring, marking the final outflow for the ancient water that flows from the north as part of the unconfined aquifer. Ron and Valerie Taylor filmed 'Pics' in their 1966 classic “The Cave Divers”. Famous underwater photographer David Doubilet captured its beauty for National Geographic in 1984. This video shows images and video taken between 2008 and late 2004.

But now Pics is in trouble. It might be considered the canary in the coal mine, one of the early signs of the trouble the wider South East is facing as the water table is dropping. Our drying climate alongside increasing human use of water in this area for agriculture, forestry and even drinking;

means that there is simply insufficient water flowing through this system to keep it healthy. Increasing water temperature and nutrient loads are both a symptom of the lack of groundwater flow, and a cause of the current algal overgrowth and poor water clarity. A vicious cycle. Like all complex systems there is no easy answer, and no single cause.

The caretakers, SA's National Parks and Wildlife Service, are in an impossible position. If they dam up the outlet the levels will rise but the transit time of water through the system will slow - worsening algal growth. If they speed up the water flow through the system, the levels will drop overall exposing more peat and plants to die off.

Short of a massive improvement in rainfall at the right time of year, it is hard to see the system recovering any time soon. I think it is time we invested in restoring the aquifer to save not only these natural resources, but the industry and tourism that the area relies on. Let's not wait until there's nothing to drink!"

More information on the Limestone Coast's famous sinkholes and other diving spots and their dropping water levels can be found at <https://bit.ly/3YvWemf>.

DIVING WITH ECHIDNAS & PLATYPUSES

Imagine diving with echidnas and platypuses! That could well have been the case if evolution had occurred differently. Scientists say that, even though it is unusual for mammals to do so, both of these (monotreme) creatures evolved from water-dwelling ancestors. Echidnas are said to have given up a semi-aquatic existence to become land dwellers. Platypuses are said to have given up their complete aquatic existence to become semi-aquatic creatures. We could well have been diving with both echidnas and platypuses if their ancestors had remained fully aquatic creatures. Of course, platypuses are still semi-aquatic, but they are only found in freshwater bodies not normally suitable for diving.

OCEAN CENSUS ANNOUNCES THE DISCOVERY OF 866 NEW MARINE SPECIES

According to https://www.deeperblue.com/over-800-new-species-found-in-ocean-census/?mc_cid=1424f58ef3&mc_eid=d4cc43123c, "It can take up to 13.5 years for a new species to be documented, which sadly means that in some cases, they are extinct before being formally classified."

It goes on to say, however, that the Nippon Foundation-Nekton Ocean Census aims to speed up the process so these species can be recognized quickly." The main thrust of the article is that the Nippon Foundation-Nekton Ocean Census has announced the discovery of 866 new marine species. They include a new octocoral found in the Maldives, a Guitar Shark found at a depth of nearly 200m off Mozambique and Tanzania and a gastropod given the scientific name *Turridrupa magnifica* that can be found at 200–500m depths off New Caledonia and Vanuatu.

Video footage about the new discoveries can be found at https://www.deeperblue.com/over-800-new-species-found-in-ocean-census/?mc_cid=1424f58ef3&mc_eid=d4cc43123c.

The Nippon Foundation-Nekton Ocean Census says that the Ocean Census "program aims to increase our understanding of the ocean and is a collaborative effort to document the world's marine species to help marine conservation."

FOR YOUR CALENDAR: FORTHCOMING EVENTS

South Australia

5th June: World Environment Day

8th June: World Oceans Day.

June-July: Cuttlefest, Whyalla. For info on all the activities, go to

<https://www.whyalla.com/cuttlefest>.

20 June, Adelaide: Splash Inn, with Dr. Charlie Huvneers presenting on shark attacks and mitigation of risk. 6:30pm at the Rob Roy. Details on [page 5](#) of this newsletter.

21 June, Victor Harbor: Ocean Film Festival at Victor Harbor's Victa Cinema, 37-41 Ocean St, Victor Harbor Saturday, 7:00pm - 10:00pm. Visit [Humanitix Ocean Film Festival](#) for bookings.

19 July: The [11th Annual Women's Dive Day](#). Ask your local dive shops and clubs what they have planned, or organise a women's dive!

1st to 3rd August: Science Alive! at the Adelaide Showgrounds

Interstate/International

16 – 19 June: Oceania Chondrichthyan Society Conference Mooloolaba, QLD

13 – 17 July: Australian Marine Sciences Association (AMSA) 2025 Conference Melbourne

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

20 September: The 2025 Scuba Diving Hall of Fame inductees, Michelle Cove, Rosemary Lunn and Anne Hasson, will be formally inducted into the hall of fame at a ceremony in the Cayman Islands.

Sept 26 - Oct 12 Nature Festival with the theme "Flow." See <https://www.naturefestival.org.au/>.

11-14 November 2025: DEMA show will be held in Orlando, USA. It is the largest trade-only event in the world for diving, travel, and action water sports professionals.

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

ABOUT THE SDFS...

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

JOIN US FOR FREE!

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.

You can read about the Federation's work in monthly issues of DiveLog Australasia and Scubadiver ANZ. 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 Vlz and Conditions for current diving conditions shared by the group members.



Disclaimer

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