

SDFSA Newsletter – January 2026

Editor: Heather Creech

SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA, Inc.

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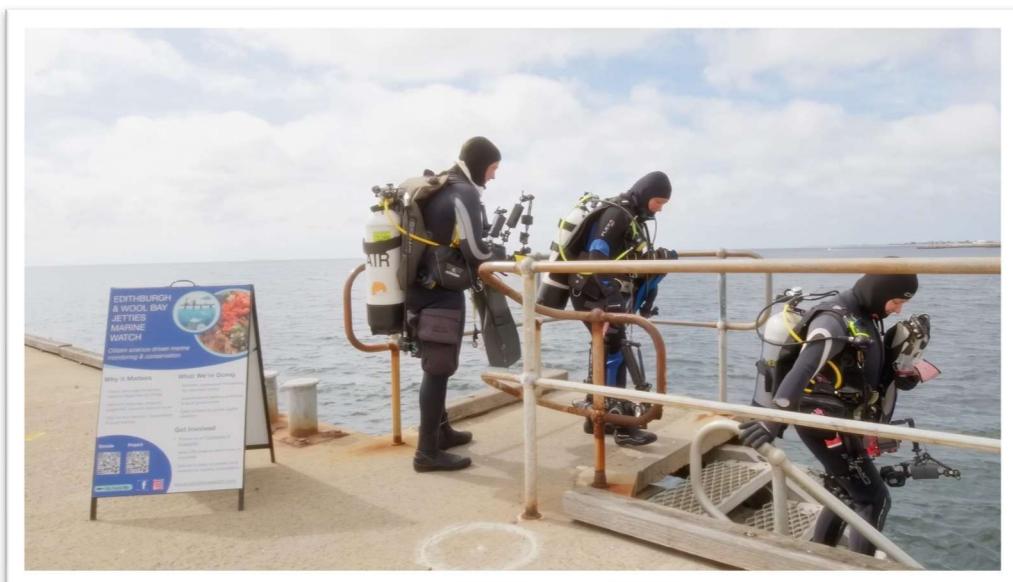
SA Dive Sites Viz and Conditions:

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SDFSA Patron:
Dr. Richard Harris



Edithburgh and Wool Bay Marine Watch Citizen Scientists in action. Photo courtesy of Paul Macdonald

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WANT TO HELP WITH THE ALGAL BLOOM RESPONSE? JOIN THE CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT AT EDITHBURGH AND WOOL BAY

Paul Macdonald and Elizabeth Solich are looking for more volunteers to participate in the successful Edithburgh and Wool Bay Jetties Marine Watch project. This underwater monitoring program has already attracted 14 passionate volunteers, including experienced divers, photographers, and local community members, with one participant travelling from interstate to take part. With monthly monitoring weekends now underway, additional volunteers are sought to strengthen the program and expand its impact.



Designed by divers, for divers, the initiative provides a structured yet rewarding way to contribute directly to marine conservation and post-disturbance recovery. The project is guided by marine scientists and supported by the District Council of Yorke Peninsula, ensuring that volunteer-collected data aligns with recognised scientific monitoring methods and contributes to broader conservation objectives.

The program was initially launched through strong community support, raising over \$5,000 via a GoFundMe campaign. Building on this momentum, the Wool Bay component of the project has more recently been awarded a \$10,000 Coastal Protection Board Community Participation Grant, enabling the continuation and expansion of monitoring activities. Project funding will be used to support costs associated with monitoring equipment purchases, public engagement materials, digital content production, data management, volunteer out of pocket expenses, training, and other incidentals.

Monitoring weekends begin with a Friday night briefing covering photographic monitoring techniques, site conditions, and safety protocols. Over the weekend, volunteers complete two monitoring dives at Edithburgh and two at Wool Bay, collecting observations that contribute to a long-term understanding of ecosystem health, recovery, and change.

On Saturday evening, volunteers come together for a relaxed barbecue, providing time to connect, exchange knowledge, and share insights and observations from the dives. These informal discussions support consistent data collection while creating valuable opportunities for learning and mentoring across experience levels.



To reduce barriers to participation, accommodation and breakfast are provided at Edithburgh Diving throughout the monitoring weekend. Partial reimbursements are also available to assist with petrol and air fill costs.



The program is currently seeking volunteer underwater photographers, support divers, and concierges (to assist with on-shore coordination and public engagement).

Scientific diving experience is welcomed but not required. Participants receive coaching and guidance in underwater photography techniques used for monitoring, making the program accessible to qualified divers and underwater photographers keen to contribute to

conservation focused outcomes. Volunteers are required to provide their own dive and camera equipment; suitable cameras include TG Series models, smartphones, mirrorless, and DSLRs. Video lights are required for participation and can be supplied for volunteers who do not have their own.

"This is a chance for divers to turn their passion into action," said Elizabeth Solich. "By combining local knowledge, volunteer effort, and scientific guidance, we can create a meaningful record of change and help support future restoration."

Divers and conservation-minded volunteers are encouraged to step up and get involved for one or more monitoring weekends. To register your interest or to learn more about upcoming monitoring weekends, contact Paul Macdonald at info@downunderpix.com or 0419 819 083 or Elizabeth Solich at e.solich@icloud.com or 0478 363 266.



All photos courtesy of Paul, Elizabeth and the participants.

ALGAL BLOOM REPORTS AND ACTIONS

Thanks to everyone posting their photos and videos on SA Dive Sites. While it is sobering to see the devastation on the Dredge and various reefs, it is encouraging to see signs of recovery in our metro waters — every single Blue Devil, Whiting, Boarfish and Cowfish is celebrated these days! Marine Life Society of SA blog is covering the bloom, including before and after photographs and the latest government actions to respond to future harmful algal bloom events.

- [The algal bloom monitoring buoys being installed in Gulf St Vincent](#)
- [Before and after photos at Brighton jetty](#)
- [Before and after photos for the Somerton area](#)

SUMMER PHOTO COMPETITION OPEN!

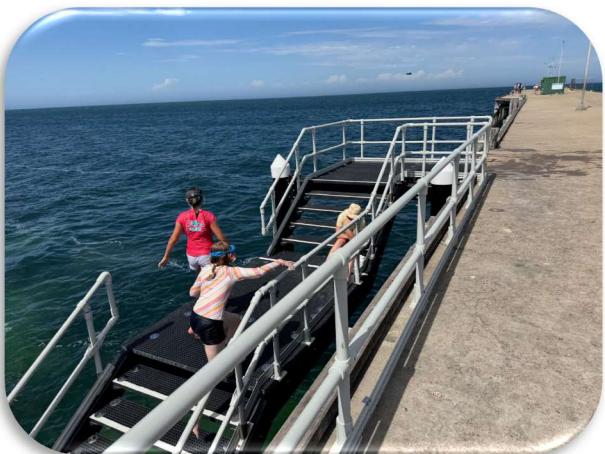
The Great Southern Reef Foundation has launched its South Australian photo, video and art competition: The Reef Resilience Photo & Art Showcase, Celebrating South Australia's coast through summer 2026. This is a wonderful event for SA divers, with excellent prizes already confirmed and more to follow in the coming weeks.

To be eligible, all photos, videos and related art must be taken between 1 Dec 2025 and 28 Feb 2026. Competition closes 28 February. From the website:

“From youth photographers to regional categories and aerial shots, video clips to mixed media, this showcase is about how you see South Australia’s reefs and coast. Finalists will feature in a public exhibition launching 24th March at the Port Noarlunga Arts Centre, with an opening night event with live music, guest speakers and prize announcements.” Learn more about prizes, categories and guidelines at <https://greatsouthernreef.com/reef-resilience-photo-art-showcase> .

EDITHBURGH JETTY STEPS IN PLACE

The new diving steps at Edithburgh jetty opened just in time for Christmas Day last month. Former SDFSA Committee Member Steve Simmons reports that “plenty of tourists are making the most of the new steps, certainly a big hit with the kids, the new stairs are very popular and definitely fit for purpose. The new stairs certainly help access and egress to the water and make it easier for those who want to dive here and support our beautiful village.”



As far as marine life conditions at Edithburgh go, Simmo notes that there are “some signs of small creatures migrating back but the pylons are still quite bare and it is a far cry from what it was before the bloom, interestingly if you move away from the jetty there is more life; for some reason the jetty got hit harder than the surrounding area. The contributing factors may have been water run off from heavy rain on 4th of April 2025 pushing lots of nutrients into the water around the shore end of the jetty and less tidal flow than the surrounding area. Whatever the contributing factors, it’s great to see some life returning.”

IMPORTANT NOTICES

PICCANINNIE PONDS CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

EWENS PONDS OPEN: Entry into Ewens Ponds for snorkelling and scuba is now permitted once more. Snorkelling permits will be open for booking until 31st January 2026. National Parks SA will “continue to monitor water levels with further dates to be released being dependent upon conditions being experienced... Diving is permitted when participating as part of a guided and accredited tour ONLY. Free Diving, body boards, blow-up floatation devices, or any form of boating are NOT permitted. <https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/parks/ewens-ponds-conservation-park/booking/91777>.

STATUS OF EWENS PONDS

One of our regular contributors to SA Dive Sites Viz & Conditions Facebook group has posted the following: "Meadows of greenery now barren, significantly thinned out plant life, blue green algae coating healthy plants, filamentous algae covering everything like The Blob due to the lower flow of water, temperatures up to 19 degrees C (likely due to the slow flow of water), and visibility dramatically dropped. Bookings are open but limited, with rangers on site to make sure only those with bookings get in. Remember how accidentally touching the silty bottom would lead to a shameful cloud? No longer the case -- the filamentous algae is thick enough across the bottom of all ponds that almost nothing gets stirred up. It probably looks pretty to people unfamiliar with the site... but it's utterly devastating."

SDFSA COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Participation in the Algal Bloom Reference Group: We are continuing to be proactive in the group and are in ongoing discussions with the State on several major projects that will help the diving community by either creating new dive sites or reopening sites that currently have exclusion zones restricting access to divers.

The next meeting of the Committee is Wednesday, 28 January, 7pm at the Arab Steed upstairs meeting room.

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

- **Lost and Found — SA Dive Gear** for once again helping SA divers to be reunited with their gear. Danusia Podgorski was thrilled to have her GoPro8 quickly retrieved and returned.
- **Edithburgh and Wool Bay Marine Watch** citizen science project: The Wool Bay component of the project has been awarded a \$10,000 Coastal Protection Board Community Participation Grant, enabling the continuation and expansion of monitoring activities. And congratulations too for the recent media coverage of the project.
- **Neil Pascoe** who became a Life Member of the Sea Wolves Dive Club at their Christmas Show.
- **The Living Seawalls project** on being awarded the 2025 Eureka Prize for Environmental Research by the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. This award recognizes the project's innovative approach to eco-engineering marine infrastructure, which has transformed the way we think about seawalls and other built structures.

NEWS FROM SHOPS AND CLUBS

Sea Wolves Dive Club

Sellicks Beach Dive Day - Change of Location: We have just been advised of a beach access restriction now in place on Sellicks Beach. Accordingly we are **relocating the Dive Day to Myponga Beach**, just a bit further south, and with no such encumbrances. On Sunday 18-Jan-2026, we will set up a Cabana in the car park adjacent the steps before your arrival at 1030, for an 1100 dive. We will have a sausage BBQ following.

Please feel welcome to email secretary@seawolves.org.au with any questions.

Honouring Neil Pascoe: The Sea Wolves Dive Club have awarded Neil Pascoe Life Membership in recognition of his ongoing contribution to the club, including being part of the Executive Committee

no less than 10 times. The club now has a Life Members (SCUBA) Tank which proudly displays the current 6 Life Members of the club. It will be mounted in the Sea Wolves' club rooms.

Marine Life Society of SA 50th Anniversary!

MLSSA are holding their 50th anniversary celebration on Sat 20 June, 1-5pm at Rodney Fox and Mark Tozer's Museum and Research Centre at 107 Henley Beach Road, Mile End. Past & present members are welcome to attend. There will be food and a licensed bar. Please RSVP to info@mlssa.org.au your intentions to attend.

STEVE'S SCIENCE READING

Marine Life Society of South Australia blogs by Steve Reynolds, SDFSA member 0001 and Inaugural Life Member

[Banded Seaperch, Hypoplectrodes nigroruber sighted with asymmetric head pigmentation](#)

[Living Seawalls project awarded 2025 Eureka Prize for Environmental Research](#)

[The Livid Fan Scallop, Scaeochlamys livida](#)

[Seagrass Research Around the World](#)

FOR YOUR CALENDAR: FORTHCOMING EVENTS

South Australia

Open to 1 February 2026. **Nature Photographer of the Year** exhibition is on display at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide.

Open to 5 February 2026: **Entries to the 2026 Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year** close 5pm ACDT on Thursday 5 February 2026.

Open to 28 Feb: **Great Southern Reef Foundation photo competition for South Australia**
<https://greatsouthernreef.com/reef-resilience-photo-art-showcase> .

TBC: January 2026 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm. **Introduction to Wikipedia**: increasing awareness of South Australia's unique coastal environments

18 January 2026 (Sunday), 10:30 am: **Sea Wolves Dive Day** – Myponga Beach. Meet at the Cabana in the car park at 10:30 for 11am dive. Sausage sizzle to follow. Contact contact Peter Fulton on 0430 638 988, or email secretary@seawolves.org.au

1 March 2026 (Sunday), 10:00 am: **Sea Wolves Dive Day** – Port Noarlunga South Reef – Meet at 1000 in the Southern Car Park for a 1030 dive. Contact contact Peter Fulton on 0430 638 988, or email secretary@seawolves.org.au

Sunday 1st March 2026: **Clean Up Australia Day**. Visit <https://register.cleanup.org.au/> to register for a clean-up.

14 March 2026 (Saturday), 7:00pm – 10:00pm: **Ocean Film Festival Australia**. The Capri Theatre, 141 Goodwood Rd, Goodwood, Adelaide.

24 March 2026, Port Noarlunga Arts Centre. **Reef Resilience Photo & Art Showcase** opening event.

1st to 31st May: The **2026 History Festival** is being presented by the [History Trust of South Australia](#).

20th June: **MLSSA's 50th anniversary celebration**, 1-5pm at Rodney Fox and Mark Tozer's Museum and Research Centre at 107 Henley Beach Road, Mile End. Past & present members are welcome to attend. There will be food and a licensed bar. Please RSVP to info@mlssa.org.au your intentions to attend.

27 June 2026 7:00-10:00pm: **Ocean Film Festival**. Victa Cinema, 37-41 Ocean St, Victor Harbor.

19 – 22 October 2026: **The Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia's SERA 2026 Conference**: Hilton Hotel, Adelaide

Interstate/International

Open to 3 May 2026: Ocean Photographer of the Year, at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney.

<https://sea.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=068dd7e7a243d9d1c1d267220&id=60eachcd9e&e=3e0893bfed>

20 to 27th June 2026: Mike Scotland from Dive Log Australasia is working on the resurrection of the **Heron Island Dive Festival** from 20 to 27th June 2026. June is Manta Ray season and the beginning of Whale season. Arrangements are well underway for a week of diving and free diving, expert talks daily on all aspects of diving, as well as a social event or two. More than half of the speaker slots have already been filled. Topics include U/W video and Tech diving.

ABOUT THE SDFSA...

The Scuba Divers Federation of South Australia is a non-profit, incorporated membership association dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of our unique underwater world. You can join us for free: <https://sdfsaa.net/membership-categories/>.

SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA Inc.

PO Box 287, Christies Beach SA 5165

Email: info@sdfsaa.net

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