

DIVING VICTORIA A WORLD CLASS EXPERIENCE



Mary Malloy and Alan Beckhurst

Sometimes you have to dive somewhere else in the world to appreciate just how good things are at home. We were recently on a tropical South Pacific island, renowned for its colourful reefs. I sat next to an American after the coral reef dive and he said "wow, have you ever seen reef that colourful?" I reflected on the pretty pinnacles we had just dived and also the

barren bottom between. I had to answer him by saying we actually have large areas of reef back home which easily rival the colours we had just seen, but with no barren gaps, just colour for kilometres.

I'm sure he thought I was suffering sun stroke, as I explained that Port Phillip is a very large bay with a small opening, causing the entrance area to be supercharged with nutrients. The result is kilometres of stunningly coloured sponge and invertebrate smothered reef systems. I went on to describe Lonsdale Wall, and my favourite part, North Wall Corner.

This section of the Wall is not a steep dropoff, but an irregular slope of gutters, pinnacles, caves, overhangs and swimthrus. Whilst still richly covered in colourful encrusting life, it is a divers playground. Even inside the darker sections there are colourful sea fans and whips. Large Southern Rock Lobster often hide back in the deep ledges, with



Port Jackson and Swell Sharks sometimes resting in front. Blue Throat Wrasse, Rosy Wrasse, Horseshoe Leatherjackets, and Blue Devilfish add to the colour of the reef while schools of pink and blue Barber Perch decorate the open water. I know this tropical paradise just can't match the visual delights of the reefs in my own backyard.

My American buddy was also surprised to hear how many quality dive boats

service the hundreds of dive sites in the Heads area. He was impressed at the level of professionalism practiced on the Dive Victoria boats as Dive Masters check the operation of main and octopus regs, and inflators of each diver as they step onto the swim platform to enter the water. The post dive hot drink and biscuits handed out as the DM's record each divers stats is a relaxed way to complete the formalities, and it is reassuring to know that there are

first aid kits, O2, and qualified providers onboard.

I knew his interest in diving Victoria had been piqued when he asked what were the chances of seeing a Weedy Sea Dragon. I explained that 85% of the marine animals in Victoria are endemic, and can't be seen anywhere else in the world, so most of what is seen is unusual on a world scale.

On the 4th October 2009 the ex HMAS Canberra slipped beneath the waves off Ocean Grove to begin a new era for diving in Victoria. Within a few weeks the whole wreck was covered in marine life, and since then, has been continually evolving. Thousands of divers have thoroughly enjoyed exploring the wreck, and it has been identified as a significant contributor to the increase in tourism in the region.

Next month will mark the first anniversary of the sinking of the Ex HMAS Canberra, and Dive Victoria will be celebrating with special trips to the wreck on the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd October, and a party at the Queenscliff Dive Centre on the Saturday night. Ring 035258 4188 to book your place on what will be a memorable weekend!

Don't forget to arrange your training before Summer is here. Bryon has the following courses coming up:

OCTOBER	22-24th open water	12th deco diving
1-3 stress and rescue	30-31 Navigation	12th night diving
2-3 photography	29-31 Advanced adventure	19h deep
8-10 ext range		19th open water
8-10 free diving	NOVEMBER	19th nitrox
8-10 open water	5th open water	22nd OW instructor
15-17 ext range	5th deco diving	27th navigation
15-17 wreck	12th free diving	28th open water

WHERE AM I COMPETITION

Again this month we have our competition to see who has been paying attention on the Canberra dives! Below is a detail image of part of the wreck, and what you need to do is identify where on or in the wreck it is. We will randomly select from the correct answers submitted via the "monthly competition" link on the Dive Victoria website <http://www.divevictoria.com.au> and that person will win a free dive for two people on the Ex HMAS Canberra!

Congratulations to Hollie Anderson for correctly identifying the July "Where am I?" as the Laundry. Hollie has won a free dive on the ex HMAS Canberra for herself and a buddy!



Liz Harper

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Liz Harper is one of Dive Victoria's very professional instructors. She has been with Dive Victoria and instructing for two years after learning to dive in 2006.

Liz has a special interest in wrecks. Despite this her favourite local dive is a site called The Mall, an area similar to Lonsdale Wall with a variety of life and varied terrain.

Her diving highlight was a Summer's day at Pope's Eye. Flood slack provided excellent visibility when a group of dolphins approached and interacted with the divers.

She believes Dive Victoria's strongest asset is the staff. "They're a good bunch who are all team players. When staff are happy it reflects in their service."

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