

NZ Dolphin Underwater & Adventure Club

Newsletter April 2023

Club Meeting 7:00pm Wednesday 12th April 2023

What's on : Pizza Night

www.dolphinunderwater.co.nz



**Club's Mail Address
14 Gails Place
Okura
RD3 Albany**



**Club Contacts Inside
Website As Above**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: 2022/2023

President/Editor	Denis Adams	0278 970 922	da.triden@gmail.com
Vice-President	Chris Nipper	021 991 732	akidna27@gmail.com
Past-President	Peter Howard	0225 194 046	pete.howard@xtra.co.nz
Secretary/Treasurer	Margaret Howard	0274 839 839	marg.howard@xtra.co.nz
Sec/Treasurer backup	Trish Mahon-Adams	0272 715 410	t.triden@gmail.com
All Trips Organiser	Margaret Howard	0274 839 839	marg.howard@xtra.co.nz
Committee	Dave Craig	021 557 588	dave.wave5@gmail.com
	Tom Butler	0278 931 936	trbutler@xtra.co.nz
Web Site	Matt Gouge	0210 777 282	mattgouge@gmail.com
Entertainment	Allan Dixon	021 994 593	allanandjilldixon@xtra.co.nz

Life & Honorary Members

Barry Barnes – Life	Peter & Margaret Howard – Life	Brian Horton – Life
Reg Lawson - Life	Roberto Tonei – Life	Dave Quinlan – Life
Graham Thumah – Honorary	Tony & Jenny Enderby - Honorary	Eileen Slark – Honorary

Cover Page Photo:– Trish ascending in Nuie’s very clear blue water by Martin Brett

12th April – Wednesday- 7:00pm Pizza Night & Club Meeting,

28th April – Ocean Film Festival – <https://www.iticket.co.nz/events/2023/apr/ocean-film-festival-2023>

27th May – 3rd June 2023 – Diving Fiji - Thomas will be hosting this trip – for further details of both the Fiji Trips please contact Jeni Tassell – Kiwi Divers – Silverdale 021 881 469 or 09 426 9834

17th July – 30th July 2023 – P&O Cruise – 13 days – Leaving from Auckland and back to Auckland visiting Fiji, Dravanui Island, Norfolk Island and four or five other islands through to Vava’u, Tonga. If anyone is interested in joining others on these cruise trips, **please contact Margaret, 0274 839839**. There is also another P&O Cruise that Club Members are on in November. This time 9 days around NZ leaving Ak and back to Ak. If you don’t like travelling on your own. Give me a call and I can give you further details.

12th Aug – 19th Aug 2023 – Diving Fiji - Volivoli Beach Resort | Dive into the heart of Fiji - Jeni and Brent Hassell are hosting this trip. **please contact Margaret, 0274 839839**

Dive trips, NZ & Overseas – Check out the dive shop’s web sites, there is plenty available, but you do need to contact the shops in person to confirm costs & booking availabilities.

Performance Dive NZ - Ph. 489 7782, or <https://www.performancediver.co.nz/Dive+Trips++Events>

Trips to Islands off Tauranga, Poor Knights Is, Alderman Is, Taupo Lake.

Global Dive - Ph. 920 5200, or <https://www.globaldive.net/page/trips> . Trips to the Poor Knights Is, Bay of Islands, Leigh Coast, Goat Is Marine Reserve, & O/seas – Fiji, Palau, Maldives, Mt. Gambier (Aus), etc.

Aucklandscubadive – Ph. 478 2814 or <https://www.aucklandscubadive.co.nz/dive-trips>

Trips to the Poor Knights Is, Tiritiri Matangi Is, HMNZS Canterbury Wreck, Great Barrier Is, HMNZS Waikato, Lake Taupo Drift Dive, Alderman Is, Hen & Chicken Is.

Other events & suggestions please contact a committee member or organise it yourself & get the club to make up your numbers. i.e. – Dives, trips NZ & O’Seas, Events, Outings, Tramps, Dinners, Movies, etc.

Our Club's Trip Rules (Organiser's rules apply for overseas trips)

- A. Bookings allowed on all trips. *Two trips & club membership is a must.*
- B. **A deposit or full payment to be made at time of booking.**
- C. Full payment **MUST** be paid at least two weeks before departure date.
- D. Trip Organiser to handle trip & bookings, & Treasurer to handle finances. Cancellations due to weather will be refunded in full, or transferred to another trip.
- E. Members cancelling for any reason will lose full monies unless they find a replacement for their position on the trip.
- F. The trips Organiser will determine if there are enough people to run a trip & if not will notify cancellation two weeks prior to departure. **Non - financial members will be charged an extra \$10 on trips.**

NB: All Memberships Now Due: Single – \$40 Family- \$50.00

For the club to continue we need paid up members see Margaret or Trish next meeting or do it online.

Club's Internet bank account is 06 0122 0074227 00 & don't forget to put in your name
Club Membership also includes Affiliation to the New Zealand Underwater Association

1st underwater pageant held in Panglao; Boholana crowned

January 23, 2023



The first-ever underwater pageant in the Philippines was held in the seawaters of Panglao.

The 1st edition of the search for Aqua Queen of the Universe crowned Debora Celedio Mariotti, a Boholana free diving champ.

Other beauty queens crowned were Aimie Rita of Iloilo as Asia Queen of the Ocean and Al Christian Adap from Laguna as Aqua Queen of Pearl.

The underwater pageant was in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The Founder of the AQUILI & NQULI Underwater Pageant is Miss Eren Noche, an ocean advocate beauty queen and banker.

Noche told the Chronicle that this underwater pageant is designed in order to promote the preservation of marine life, including our oceans and natural waters.

Present during the event last Friday were the ambassadors of Ocean 2022, Patricia Javier and actor Michael Yousef Agassi. ISP Clau Ongkiko of the Rotary Club of Roces D3780, Ferdinand Abejon and Atorni Ton of News Watch together with Aqua Princess Lara Summer Callanta & Erica Pazcoguin, Ambassador of the Ocean Marjorie Renner (Noble Queen of the Universe LTD 2022).

THE BOHOLANA FREEDIVE QUEEN

The crowned Boholana Mariotti who represented Bohol is a Freediving Instructor and the deepest-reaching Boholana Freediver who can dive 42 meters deep and hold her breath for 5 minutes.

Her Advocacy as a woman of this generation is to be the “agent of change by motivating aspiring ocean enthusiasts to be mindful of marine life conservation and restoration.”

Freediving is a sustainable activity, hence, she wants to encourage everyone — regardless of age, to conquer their fear of the water and create a mindset concerning marine conservation and restoration.

Despite being a non-swimmer, it has been a challenge for her to deal with bodies of water. Her husband, who is a water enthusiast, has influenced her to cope with her fear and learn freediving.

From swimming lessons to freediving lessons, she progressed and naturally became aware of her well-being. The connection between herself and the ocean water has been greatly developed and she appreciated sports further. Freediving became her lifestyle.

The sensation while she attains depths is stimulating that helps her reset her consciousness. Simple to say but freediving made her happy and fulfilled.

Through freediving, she became curious and explored beyond the sport itself. She became mindful of the environment and understand her responsibility as a freediver. Ms. Debora said she feels “more conscious in her day-to-day activities and self-expression” being a free diver.

Man was ‘diving blind’ – coroner sends message

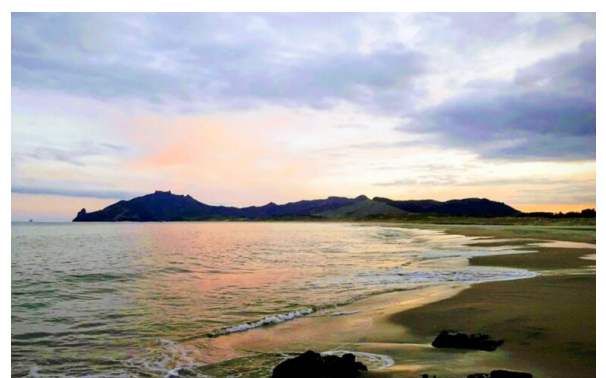
A New Zealand coroner has [used](#) the death of an unqualified scuba diver who had been using faulty equipment as an opportunity to send a message to other divers tempted to cut corners.

Lee Victor Tohu, 52, from Whangarei, died in the sea off Kauri Mountain Beach two years ago, on the morning of 27 January, 2020. He had been on a diving trip with friends Ben Waldron and Terry Fricker, using the latter’s boat to reach the dive-site in the north of New Zealand’s North Island.

The three had launched the boat from Tutukaka, and Tohu and Waldron had dived as a pair in calm, sunny conditions, according to reports of the inquest in local press. From the boat Fricker saw Tohu surface and wave, but by the time he had turned the boat he could no longer see the diver and assumed that he had redescended.

Waldron then surfaced, told Fricker that Tohu had become separated from him and was missing, and began a search while Fricker raised the alarm. Waldron found Tohu floating lifeless at the surface, about 60m from where they had started their dive.

Kauri Mountain Beach (Hayden Parr)



‘Very poor condition’

At the inquest the Police National Dive Squad (PNDS) described the [regulator](#) Tohu had been using as being in “very poor condition”, causing over-exertion in his breathing. It also said that faulty pressure and depth [gauges](#) would have led him to believe that he had more air than was the case.

He had no dive-computer, so could have had only a vague idea of how deep he had dived and whether he was within safe limits in terms of decompression illness.

Tohu was thought to have run out of air but to have failed to ditch his weight-belt to facilitate an emergency ascent to the surface.

Coroner Debra Bell said that Tohu had no formal diving qualifications, and had been using cannabis before his dive. Lacking accurate information from his [gauges](#) or a computer, she said he had effectively been “diving blind”, and had subsequently drowned.

Panic and fatigue

Reconstructing Tohu’s last moments, she said that he had panicked on suddenly losing his air supply, but his response had been affected by fatigue caused by the excessive inhalation effort required by his [regulator](#).

“This would have been compounded by his [fins](#), which would have been less effective at elevating him to the surface and, because he had limited or no air, he could not inflate his BC to assist in his ascent.”

Bell endorsed PNDS recommendations that people should scuba dive only if they had an appropriate qualification, should take a refresher course if they had not been diving regularly, and ensure that they were medically fit.

Divers should stay with their buddy, use a computer and ensure that their equipment was in working order and serviced regularly, at least annually in the case of regulators. They should also know how to dump their weights if in difficulties – and not use illegal drugs before diving. By Steve Weinman

Divers dig deep to retrieve detritus from Nelson's harbour



Frances Chin and Warren Gamble 10:54, Nov 29 2022

Martin De Ruyter/Stuff

Diver Richard Suttie with a bicycle he recovered during a dive at Port Nelson.

A children’s bicycle and a shopping trolley were some of the strange objects pulled from the harbour by a local diving club.

[The Nelson Underwater Club](#) dived into the murky waters of the port on Saturday, to raise awareness for their club and clean up the area.

Among the various underwater “junk” the divers managed to find, the strangest finds were a supermarket trolley and a children’s bicycle, as well as various bottles and ropes.

Despite the warm weather, the water was cold and murky, said diver Richard Suttie, who had managed to find the bicycle in the water near the dock beside Styx restaurant.

ED: Great to see another great club - Nelson UWC - doing their stuff to keep the underwater environment clean.

Nation's first Girl Scout Scuba Troop holds underwater cookie sale in Austin

By [Tierra Neubaum](#)

Girl Scout Cookie Season starts Wednesday, and this year Austin troops are creating some one-of-a-kind experiences.

AUSTIN, Texas - [Girl Scout Cookie Season](#) kicks off today and one local troop is submerging its cookie booth.

If diving is not your thing, you can stop by Barton Creek Mall from February 4 though 19 Girl Scouts will be building unique [structures](#) using Girl Scout Cookie boxes.

Girl Scouts will also be set up in booths across the city.

Girl Scout cookie season kicks off tomorrow and a local troop is submerging its cookie booth. The nation's first Girl Scout scuba troop is hosting an underwater cookie stand at Dive World Austin on Saturday.

New to the 2023 cookie season, the online exclusive Raspberry Rally cookie joins the classics like Thin Mints, Caramel deLites, Peanut Butter Patties, and more.

Raspberry Rally is a thin crispy cookie infused with raspberry flavor and dipped in the same delicious chocolaty coating as Thin Mints.

Every Girl Scout Cookie purchase stays local with the troops and the Central Texas council to fuel local Girl Scouts' adventures throughout the year: exploring what interests them, discovering their passions, and taking action on issues they care about.

Only in America, what will they come up 'er down' with next? Ed.

Shore Thing

November 1, 2021 Allison Vitsky Sallmon

A how-to guide for aspiring beach divers

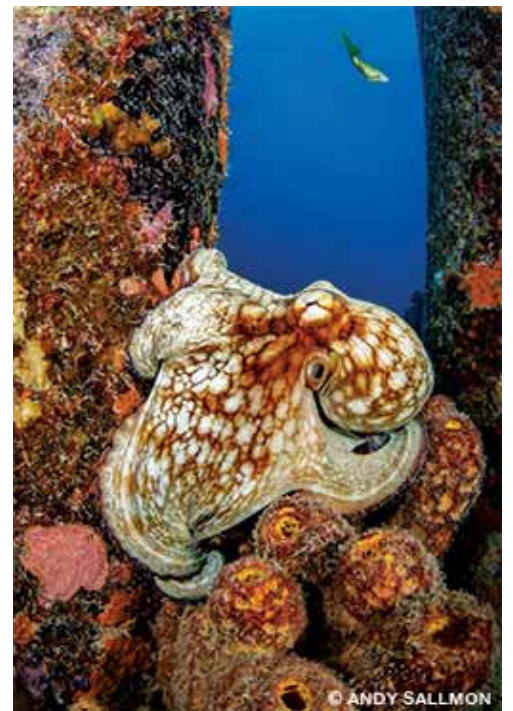
Here's a scenario that may resonate with some of you: I'm on a dive trip, and it's early in the morning. My alarm blares, ripping me from a deep sleep — the dive boat boards in an hour, so there's no time to hit snooze or lollygag in the pillows. I pry open my eyes as I give myself a mini-lecture: "Morning's here, I'm on vacation, I'm going diving, and it's going to be fun!"

Photo by Andy Sallmon

An octopus hunts on the pilings of Bonaire's Salt Pier, a renowned shore-accessible dive site.

Don't get me wrong; I'm always excited to dive. But if I'm 100 percent honest, sometimes I prefer to do so without an alarm going off at oh-dark-thirty.

That's where shore diving comes in, and it's why I'm a devotee of beach-accessible dives. Aside from allowing me to avoid that sunrise alarm, shore diving offers other freedoms as well: the last-minute choice of a dive site, the ability to do a two-hour dive without worrying a boat crew and the liberty to add a dive to my day if conditions allow. As an added benefit, beach diving can be quite economical compared with boat diving. Of course, let's not forget that some of the most incredible sites in the world are most easily dived from the beach — think Bonaire's Salt Pier, Florida's Blue Heron Bridge or Bali's *Liberty* wreck.



There's a lot more to shore diving than just beach entries; specific considerations exist for shore entries, including sand, rocks, surf, and more. However, although this particular type of diving may seem a little daunting to the uninitiated, a considered approach and a few simple steps can provide a new set of world-class opportunities for almost any diver.

Do Your Homework

Read articles and books about the areas you're considering, and then speak with local dive shops to understand the best sites and general approaches to diving in the region. Local regulations (such as whether you'll need a dive float), parking, locations for entry and exit, tides, surf and current, seasonality, topography and marine life are all good to know.

Tapping into social media groups for divers who live near or frequent the areas where you're planning to dive is a great way to remain informed about recent sightings, conditions and forecasts and to connect with other divers who are familiar with local sites. Hiring a local guide for an introductory dive can be a game-changer for safety and overall enjoyment.

Be prepared for the increased physical exertion that comes with shore diving. Pretrip fitness training can help when you need to carry gear to and from the water's edge, walk up and down stairs or through surf and also help you endure long surface swims.

Gearing up on a truck tailgate keeps items away from sand and rocks before a dive.

Gearing Up

A few simple additions to your kit will enable you to gear up for a beach dive like a pro. A tarp or thick mat will provide a great dressing area, allowing you to minimize contact with sand and rocks before and after your dive.

Portable rinse systems are another good way to keep your gear clean. Have a first aid kit, oxygen unit and emergency phone numbers available in your vehicle in case of an emergency.



Your entry and exit may involve traversing sand and rocks, so make sure your gear is rugged enough to comfortably handle the task at hand. Wetsuit booties or drysuit boots with thick soles will provide traction and protect your feet. Using soled footwear will mean you need open-heeled fins, in which case I recommend adding spring straps — being able to smoothly slip your fins on and off will help you minimize your time in the surf zone. Many experienced beach divers use a “fin-keeper” strap to secure their fins during exits.

Keeping gear and cameras clipped off during a surf exit keeps divers' hands free.

Gear and gadget stowage is another consideration; you'll want to enter and exit the water with your hands free, and you'll especially want to ensure backup and safety gear is secured but easily accessible. You can achieve this by clipping items to D-rings on your buoyancy compensator or by adding pockets (which may contain protected interior D-rings) to exposure gear with tech shorts or glue-on pockets. Safety gear is also crucial; a signaling device, line cutter and compass are good to have.

Finally, decide how you'll store your car keys — such as in a waterproof key fob container — during your dive, and have a backup plan in case your key is “misplaced” in the water. For divers bringing a camera, I recommend

keeping it clipped to your BCD — making sure it's easy to release in an emergency — though it's best to leave it behind for your first dive or if conditions are challenging.

Before Your Dive

Allow time to scout the location. There are usually preferred routes to access the water, especially in rocky regions or those prone to surf or current. Watching divers successfully start and end their dives can show you how to follow suit. Look for signs detailing specific local issues, such as rip currents, marine life hazards or poor water quality. Examine the shoreline for areas that will allow easy entry — sandy patches in the middle of an otherwise uneven beach, for example — as well as features to avoid, such as sharp rocks or urchins.

If lifeguards are on duty or if divers have recently emerged from the water, you may be able to get a real-time idea of conditions and marine life sightings. Finally, ensure a nondiving third party knows your dive plan and when to expect your return.

Entry and Exit

A buddy team carefully enters the water together in Bonaire.



Gear up, perform a careful buddy check, and approach the water. Your hands should be free to carry your fins and help steady your buddy if needed. Have your mask on and your regulator in your mouth as you enter the water. Big waves can occur without warning, so keep a frequent eye on the surf. You should be able to simply hop over most waves; if you encounter larger waves, place one foot in front of the other to stabilize yourself and duck under them. If they are at or over your head, you may wish to reconsider the dive.

Either don your fins at the water's edge and walk sideways into the ocean, or if conditions are calm, slip on your fins once you're in water that is between hip and chest deep. Next, either begin your dive or inflate your BCD and flip onto your back to kick out to your descent point, taking note of features on the shore to use as visual references.

Carefully monitor your gas supply during the dive, ensuring you have enough breathing gas in the event of an emergency. Don't forget to retain adequate breathing

gas for your return to shore and a reserve in case an emergency arises, keeping in mind the specific variables and characteristics of your dive.

If you encounter a rip current — a strong current running perpendicular to shore — calmly swim parallel to the current to escape it before continuing or aborting your dive. Many divers prefer to swim underwater as long as possible on the exit to minimize surface swims and time in the surf zone.

When you can stand up, slip off your fins and walk sideways or backward out of the water, keeping an eye on the waves. If the surf has increased during your dive, it's best to navigate to an area where the waves are small enough to manage. In a worst-case scenario, crawling out of the water geared up with a regulator in your mouth and your fins on is possible, but only do so if necessary.



Know When To Say No

Point Lobos Marine Reserve in Carmel, California, offers shore divers beautiful reef scenes without the boat charter. The best aspect of shore diving is the freedom to decide when to dive. Knowing when to call a dive, however, is the most crucial part of shore diving. The typical dealbreakers in beach diving — large surf, a badly missed tidal window, a ripping current or a critical gear issue — are generally easy for veteran shore divers to recognize. Often this knowledge has been gained the hard way, such as through the loss of gear or a minor loss of footing during entry or exit.

It's imperative to understand that genuinely dangerous scenarios can and do occur. Some of these situations may not be so obvious for new beach divers; when in doubt, consult and heed the recommendations of lifeguards or a local dive shop. This decision must also extend to your dive buddy, whose comfort or experience levels may be different than yours. A taller diver, for example, might not be as concerned as a shorter buddy about higher-than-expected wave heights.

There is no prize for the diver who enters the water in the iffiest conditions, and there is no winner when divers dive just because they can. Be brave enough to speak up if you feel uncomfortable with your dive plan, and be accepting enough to recalibrate or cancel the dive if your buddy is reluctant. In the end, avoiding a stressful, unpleasant or even dangerous situation is far preferable to losing a day of diving.

© *Alert Diver* — Q3/Q4 2021

Hazards in Wreck Diving

Shipwrecks lure divers as much as they attract the sea life surrounding them. A haven for spawning and small fish, they are both nursery and feeding grounds for all types of underwater creatures. In temperate waters, layers of soft and hard corals cover wrecks, providing a mantle of marine growth that alters their features over time until nearly indistinguishable. The spectacle of life on a wreck, an ecosystem unto itself, is often the main attraction for divers.

Whether the ship foundered in a storm or was purposefully sunk as an artificial reef, a shipwreck materializing as you descend is a fascinating sight. There is something inherently spooky and exhilarating about a human-made structure that nature has taken over, and it's one-stop shopping for both adventure and photo opportunities.

Safely entering a shipwreck requires specialized equipment and training.

No two shipwrecks are the same. Knowing the wreck's history lends perspective to the drama, and often tragedy, behind the loss. Not all shipwrecks are in warm water teeming with fish. In the U.S. Great Lakes, wooden sailing ships are still incredibly intact after decades underwater. The cold, fresh water has preserved them, and with little or no marine growth, many look the same as the day they sank.

Nearly every ocean, sea and lake holds a world of shipwreck exploration for advanced open-water divers. Each lost ship, submarine, airplane and even the odd locomotive is a time capsule waiting for an underwater explorer to visit and photograph. As tempting as it may be, never venture inside a shipwreck until you have advanced wreck-dive training from a certified, qualified dive training professional. This additional training as well as requisite equipment are necessary if you want to explore inside a wreck. Once inside, the risks multiply exponentially. Trained wreck divers use specialized equipment and well-practiced techniques to mitigate the dangers and safely explore the sometimes dark and often silt-filled compartments.

The following are a few hazards of wreck diving and penetration.



Overhead Environment

The darkened corridors and hatches on a ship can be very inviting. What lies around that next dark corner? Like a cave or ice dive, however, you can no longer ascend directly to the surface once you enter a wreck. Even with a ship's multiple entry or exit points, swimming into an overhead environment requires specialized equipment and training to safely make the dive.

Before beginning the dive, you must calculate your air consumption at depth, taking tank pressure and volume into account. An alternate air source, such as a pony bottle or double tanks, with an extra-long hose on your regulator is necessary for shipwreck explorers. In the tight confines of a passageway, traditional buddy breathing or air-sharing methods may not be possible. A wreck-penetration certification class will specifically prepare and train you for an out-of-air emergency exit.

Proper dive planning includes having more than enough air for the dive team to exit the wreck, ascend, make a safety stop or complete any obligatory decompression and then return to the surface with air to spare.

Lost or Disoriented

Wrecks can rest on the seafloor on their sides, completely upside-down and at every possible angle in between. Navigating inside a wreck with the floor, walls and doorways at crazy angles can be disorienting.

A shipwreck will deteriorate over time, compromising its integrity and potentially making navigation even more challenging. Equipment and the interior walls can break loose, blocking passageways or entire compartments. Doors might be rusted shut or stuck halfway open, limiting a diver's ability to get through.

It can be easy to unknowingly change deck levels or get turned around and not remember the way out. Using a wreck reel provides a clear path out of the wreck. Some shipwrecks are indistinguishable pieces of wreckage randomly strewn about the seafloor. In limited visibility or on a vast site, proper deployment of a wreck reel can get you back to your starting point or anchor line.

Silt Out

Deep inside a wreck, there is often no ambient light and very little water flow. In these conditions, fine, dustlike silt lines the floor and builds up on all surfaces. Safe navigation inside a shipwreck requires a strong primary light, backup lights and a large primary wreck reel. Divers can use special swimming and finning techniques and maintain excellent buoyancy control to help prevent churning the silt.



It's important not to touch anything inside a wreck to help avoid a silt out.

In the tight confines of a silt-filled wreck, a diver's exhaust bubbles hitting the ceiling can disturb the visibility. Even when divers use good techniques, dive lights can fail, or accidental missteps can happen. A properly laid line from your wreck reel is your direct path to getting out safely in any of these situations.

Entanglement



Wreck training and practice with your equipment will help prevent situations like this.

Wrecks are often favorite fishing spots, and fishing line may be caught on the exterior or even inside a wreck. Monofilament fishing line can be almost impossible to see in certain conditions. Fishing nets might be caught on the structure of older shipwrecks. Although nets are usually easy to see and avoid, they can still be a hazard if you're not paying attention.

As a wreck rusts and deteriorates, pipes, cables and wires once hidden in ceilings and walls can come loose and snare divers' equipment. Divers or their bubbles might accidentally dislodge objects, disturbing the visibility or even trapping them inside the wreck. Proper training helps you to recognize entrapment hazards and teaches you how to remove a snag on your equipment or safely use a cutting device without panicking. Training and experience using a wreck reel will help protect you from another significant entanglement hazard: your own line.

Environmental Hazards

The reward for the wreck diver is to witness incredible artifacts and frozen moments in history.

As steel wrecks rust away, broken, sharp edges can form. Divers may also encounter sharp encrustation, such as barnacles or oysters, or irritants such as fire coral. Gloves and exposure suits combined with good form to avoid touching the wreck will help prevent cuts and abrasions. Even in warm waters where thermal consideration isn't necessary, a dive skin or 3 mm wetsuit can protect divers from scrapes and cuts caused by inadvertently bumping the wreck. It's always a good idea to have a properly equipped first aid kit.

Crews clean and prep artificial reefs or purposely placed shipwrecks before sinking them, removing loose objects and creating many extra access points into the ship. They remove any oil, gasoline or other dangerous lubricants and clean the vessel to prevent damage to the environment and visiting divers. Accidental wrecks can still be carrying fuel or lubrication oils. The remains of dangerous chemicals, including solvents and lead-based paints, could be hidden in the silt and mud of a wreck. Sunken warships and wartime cargo vessels may still have the remains of unexploded ordnance. All of these items generally are not a danger to divers unless disturbed. Divers should also be careful not to disturb sailors' remains, which are considered war graves.



Dangerous Marine Life

As a shipwreck explorer for more than 40 years, I often get asked about “dangerous” sea creatures. People want to know about sharks, which I always enjoy seeing on a dive and have never caused me any problems. The most hazardous marine life encounters I have had are the sharp edges of oyster shells I always seem to clumsily bump against, the sting of a jellyfish that drifted against my face (my fault for not looking) and the pinch of an irate lobster that I tried to grab for dinner.

Although the hazards discussed are very real and potentially dangerous, divers with the proper training, equipment and planning can safely explore shipwrecks. It's an opportunity for underwater explorers to go on an incredible adventure and dive into history.

Low-Visibility Diving

March 21, 2022 Frauke Tillmans, Ph.D.

WEATHER, SILTY SEDIMENT, time of day, or water movement are just a few natural factors among the range of possible causes that can influence the visibility at your dive site. Low-visibility diving can be quite enjoyable, but it depends on the circumstances and your comfort level.



Lights can help in low visibility and are obligatory for night divers.

Photo by Stephen Frink

Exhalation bubbles and even careful movements through a small tunnel can create clouds of silt.

Photo by Stephen Frink

Why do people dive in low-visibility environments?

Some divers, such as public safety divers, might have to venture into low-visibility situations. Recreational divers may have no clear water nearby but want to dive regardless. Searching for great treasures, such as blackwater diving for megalodon teeth, is adventurous, even for experienced divers. Some creatures only come out for the critter hunters to see when it is dark or when the sea is a bit more disturbed than is comfortable.

Most of these scenarios are predictable, but low visibility becomes especially tricky when a diver is unprepared. Touching down on a muddy bottom upon entry or one wrong fin stroke or hand movement in a silty, easily disturbed environment can put an end to what visibility you have.

What is the worst thing that could happen?

It can be a fun experience to dive without seeing anything. When you need to rely totally on your ears and hands, you will be surprised by how quickly your body can adjust to the new situation.

A complete loss of orientation, however, can be alarming. If you have little or no experience in poor visibility but must suddenly deal with it, it would not be surprising for panic to set in. Panic is among a diver's worst enemies and can ultimately lead to death in a rare worst case, but it is something you can overcome through preparation and training.



The most important thing to remember is that if you see that you cannot control the dive conditions and don't know if you are up for the challenge, call the dive. You can do so before or at any time during the dive.

Kenny Broad and Brian Kakuk explore Dan's Cave in the Bahamas. Cave divers run a continuous guideline to open water so that if they experience bad visibility or a loss of lights, they can use the line as a tactile reference to reach safety.

Photo by Jill Heinerth

How can we deal with bad visibility?

Tools: If you know that visibility will be poor when planning a dive, make sure you have the right gear with you and the confidence to use it. This equipment may include underwater lights, a strobe light, a surface marker buoy (SMB), spools, a reel, and a compass.

Lights can help in low visibility, but they can also make it worse in some conditions. If particles and disturbed sediment are abundant in the water, a light will illuminate those particles, which can be bright and make it harder to see where you are going. You might need to angle your light downward rather than straight in front of you and reduce the light intensity. A strobe light is a good option for marking an entry or exit point in low visibility. It might also be a way to mark yourself by illuminating your tank so your buddy can more easily spot you if you get separated.

After a separation incident, buddies are less likely to find a diver dressed in a black suit, hood, mask, gloves, and fins. Bright colors are a safety asset in low visibility. If you lose visual contact with your dive partner, follow your agency's recommendations. These procedures usually include carefully searching — in this case with all your available senses — for one minute before surfacing to reunite the team. While you search, remember that you are in a 3D environment and cover all directions.

A spool or reel can be useful for safely finding your way back to where you came from if you know how to deploy



it and reel it in without making a mess. Cavern or wreck diving classes will teach you how to use a reel or finger spool. You do not have to start cave diving to benefit from the skills an entry-level overhead-environment class can give you.

When you expect limited visibility, go over some additional communication signals with your buddy. Signals using light or touch may be the only way to communicate.

Lines: Public safety dive teams combat low or no visibility with a tended line, but that is not a valid option for a sport diver without the necessary training. Using lines, however, is a strategy that all divers can employ. A buddy line is an option for two teammates who do not want to get separated. Buddy lines are relatively short ropes — short enough to limit entanglement but not too short to prevent movement — connected to your gear with carabiners or preferably by slipping a loop around your wrist.

Disorientation: If you get disoriented — whether it's being unable to remember the way back to the boat's downline or trying to use your bubbles to orient yourself to the surface in a silt-out — you should be able to rely on your pre-dive preparation. Research everything about the dive site before getting in the water. Learn where there are points you can reference during your dive; if you are wreck diving, for example, memorize how deep the wreck lies and at what depth the anchor line is attached. Know that you are on the way back when the wall is on your left shoulder and not your right, remember which direction you went from the entry, or use a compass to navigate back.

If you become disoriented during an open-water dive and can't safely determine which direction is home, make sure you have the means to signal your location to the surface crew. Separation, signaling, and retrieval procedures should be part of every safety briefing. You should be able to safely deploy an SMB for an unplanned ascent. If current is present and you have the opportunity and know how to, you might want to attach the SMB to the wreck or dive site and follow that line up to ensure you do not drift farther away.

Whatever happens, make a safe ascent, and do not violate your ascent or decompression obligations. You can deal with most problems at the surface. In a true emergency that requires a rapid ascent, do it as safely as possible.

Don't ever worry about ditching nonvital equipment if you have to — losing a spool, a double ender, or weights is much less of a problem than being lost at sea.

Mental preparation: The most important tool you have in your kit is your brain. Do your homework ahead of time, and mentally go through the dive before getting into the low-visibility situation. Review the safety procedures in detail with your teammates, and make sure everyone knows how to react. If your vision gets restricted, take a couple of sanity breaths, and start thinking about your options and strategy. Knowing that you can safely make it out of a challenging situation will calm you, help prevent panic, and potentially lessen your risk of injuries that could occur with an uncontrolled ascent.

Your comfort zone is entirely about you. Are you comfortable in zero visibility? Will you ever be? What is it about this experience that some people love and want to do again and again? If you have not already dived in low visibility, it's worth trying at least once with someone who has experience. It's almost meditative for some divers. If you are still not convinced after trying it, nothing is lost. It will make you appreciate crystal-clear waters even more.

You can prepare for many of these situations by taking specialty courses. You can acquire some skills during the course, while the rest will come with practice and exposure. A limited-visibility or night diving course, a cavern class, or an advanced wreck diving course will prepare you for some scenarios you might not have considered. The skills you learn will work for you in murky water and make you a better overall diver.

Report an Incident

Report To Research

DAN has maintained a diving incident database since 1989 and relies on divers to voluntarily report cases and near misses. Our goal is to create a safe environment for divers to learn from others' experiences and mistakes.

Each submission is reviewed by the DAN Research Department, and the results of this data collection and analysis are anonymized and may be made public for the benefit of the diving community in DAN's Annual Diving Report and in published [case summaries](#). Originally limited to scuba diving incidents, our reports now include open-circuit scuba, breath-hold, and rebreather incidents.

No individual will be identified in any case report published or presented verbally. If you have experienced a near-miss or injury or witnessed an accident while diving, please share your experience with our research team.

Do not use the research form to file an insurance claim or if you are currently experiencing a medical emergency.

[ED. This may also help someone else avoid making the same mistake, error or getting into an avoidable situation.](#)

Some Unusual quips

Cecily's tea leaves told her she'd just had cup of tea.

I saw this documentary on how ships are put together. It was riveting.

A good scare is worth more to most people than a good advice.

Golfer 'Do you think I can get there with a 5 iron?'. Caddy 'Eventually.'

The more you know – The better your luck! (Burmese proverb)

It's okay if you disagree with me. I can't force you to be right.

If after 70, you don't wake up aching in every joint ... you're probably dead.

Sign in a tyre shop: 'We skid you not!'

AND from Chris Mardon

Diveplanit Exclusive:

Minke whales & exciting shark action on the Ribbon Reefs & Osprey's North Horn



Hi Chris

Have you ever had an encounter with a dwarf minke whale? An encounter with one of these gentle giants is a life-changing moment, a moment you'll remember for years to come, each time you recall it, feeling the same raw excitement and emotion you felt the first time.

"If there's a more humbling experience than staring into the eye of a five-tonne mammal on the world's most famous reef, I've yet to find it."

Diveplanit has organised a very special 4-night charter on luxury liveaboard Spirit Of Freedom, **11-15 June 2023**, that includes multiple encounters with dwarf minke whales on the Ribbon Reefs, as well as diving on Osprey Reef's North Horn - the Great Barrier Reef's most exciting shark dive. Dive sites visited include the Reef's most exciting night dive: Challenger Bay and dives on stunning pinnacles including Crackajack, Steve's Bommie and Pixie Pinnacle - check out the videos [linked here!](#)

3 cabins left: contact us now to secure your space on this special trip

If you want more info contact Chris for details – jcmardon@slingshot.co.nz

The MAF regulations vary in particular when it comes to your catch size/limits & locations.

Especially in the Hauraki Gulf area, things have changed. Please familiarise yourself with them.

Practice being safe & staying safe for you & your buddies & we will see you all at the club meeting

