

# Nautilus SCUBA Club Newsletter

Cairns QLD Australia

August 2019

Editor: Phil Woodhead



**Dive Trips**  
**Club Meetings**  
**Guest Speakers**  
**Trip Reports**



## Local dive trips and get together information

August 2019						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	



**Junior Eisteddfod Association at  
67 Greenslopes Street, Edge Hill.  
Starting with a Sausage sizzle at 7pm**

**For upcoming dive trip information keep  
an eye on your emails or visit the Nautilus  
website**



**Next club dive will be on Aqua Quest  
departing from Port Douglas on Sunday 8th  
September, please visit the website for more  
information.**

**Guest Speaker: Kevin Coombs.**

**Kevin will be airing a video about some of the wreck that lie off the coast in our local area.**



Special dives will be organised in addition to the regular monthly day trips and could be day trips or weekend trips to the reef or the Yongala. Better watch your emails for future announcements.

## UP COMING TRIP



WHERE



GUESTS



LEAVE



AS



FRIENDS

NAUTILUS SCUBA CLUB NORTH SULAWESI

THU 14 - TUE 26 NOVEMBER 2019



**Diveplanit**

Your *new* personal dive travel agent

trading as

DIVERSION



DIVE TRAVEL

Stay / Dive Package includes:

- 5 nights in Thalassa Manado
- 5 nights in Thalassa Lembeh
- Full board meal plan
- All airport & resort transfers
- 18 dives
- Unlimited house reef diving

Flights with Singapore Airlines

# Holding the Minke line and timing the swing

By Libby Sterling

Welcome OceanQuesters booms over the intercom welcoming the 36 intrepid nautilus club members to Deep Sea Divers Den's vessel OceanQuest after a fast, furious and efficient transfer from the day boat (ReefQuest) to our home for the next 4 days.

We spend day 1 at Norman reef for the checkout dives and getting ourselves sorted out on our floating hotel. We've had safety talks and minke presentation on the code of practice and the do's and don'ts when you are holding the minke line. We are all briefed on the basics, hold the line, stay flat in the water, don't chase, touch or do anything else that might upset the minke's, nowhere on the line is better than anywhere else. Requests for us to synchronise our camera dates and times to assist with the minke research were made and completed. We happily agree to handover any minke photos we take to assist with their id etc.

After an overnight steam we wake up to a spectacular sunrise, relatively calm seas and a fabulous morning on Steve's Bommie where the minke action starts. We are divided into buddy teams (or trio in our case), guides are offered for those that would like one and the real adventure begins.

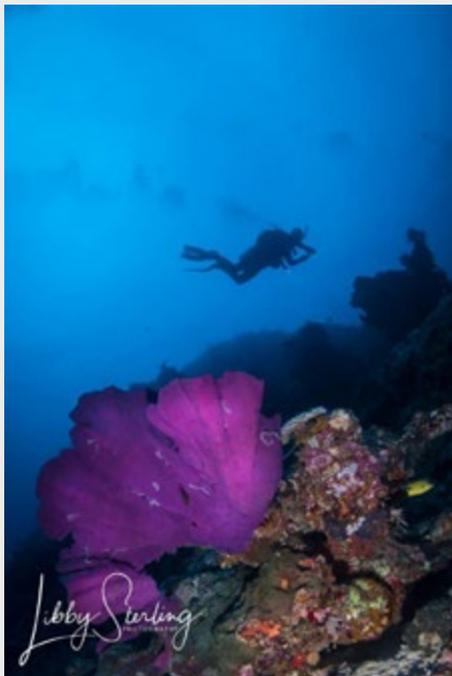
We have a choice though, holding the minke line or diving (I

went diving) and saw minke's anyway! Swimming back to the boat underwater (whilst doing safety stop to save time) and sure enough a minke comes past to have a look (not too close and the camera was off, rookie error). Did I mention this is my first minke trip?

Steve's bommie never fails to put on a fabulous show, turtles, large schools of fish, coral cod, sweet lip, fusiliers, colourful coral, anemone-fish, scorpion fish, parrot fish and minke whales on the way to and from the dive site. Viz was pretty good (15 - 20 m), water temp 23 degrees (brrrr) and wind under 15 knots.

You could tell the people that had been on the minke line, they all seemed to have this wild glint of extreme excitement in their eyes.

The afternoon saw us move off to Gorgonia Bay for a couple of dives (including the night dive (which I skipped).



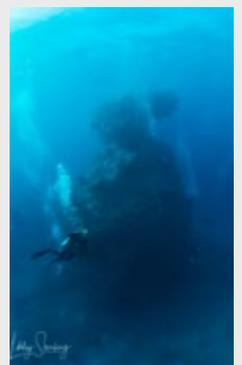
Day 2 and we've moved to Lighthouse Bommie, another personal favourite. Also a favourite of the minke's and we saw lots of them (I think the largest count was 12 at one time). Now this is where Levi (trip director) briefs us on 'timing the swing'. OceanQuest is moored by a single point resulting in it swinging in an arch. So it's all about waiting to jump into the water when the boat is closest to the dive site and timing your return the same way. This was a little confounded on our first dive by some surface current, so a drag back behind the tender was the order of the day. Spectacular dive on Lighthouse Bommie, I've never seen the viz so good there! Again minke central!

It's my turn to hold the minke line and sure enough it was everything I'd been told, they come in and swim along the line checking everyone out. While one keeps you focused on 'hey look at me' another one sneaks up behind or under you even closer. The experience was fabulous! I too have that wild glint in my eyes after those 2.5 hours holding the minke line. For me to miss a dive on Lighthouse Bommie pretty much sums it up, the minke line won. Every time I'd think, OK I'll go back to the boat now; another wave of curious whales comes gliding past. The afternoon we move to Challenger Bay for the afternoon and night dives and whale watching from the upper deck.

Day 3 and we've moved again and to another personal favourite Crack a Jack and some more timing the swing practice. Totally got this nailed now (taking a compass bearing on the way over and back takes a lot of the visual illusion out of it.)

Crack a Jack is a cracka of a dive, no doubt about it and the viz! Never have I seen it so clear here, simply spectacular. It's another pinnacle so the fish life is pretty amazing. Pygmy sea horse (I didn't actually see it), I do however have a photo of the fan it lives on, spectacular fans, mantis shrimp, leafy scorpion fishes and a minke on the way back to the boat (whilst timing the swing underwater).

The minke line was also a popular destination for many of our fellow travelers and again with intense minke action experienced. The total of individual minke whales seen is now thought to be in excess of 35!



# Holding the Minke line and timing the swing

By Libby Sterling

Were told this is actually very good! The minke researchers were very pleased. Another boat is waiting to dive on Crack a Jack so we move off and head over to Clam Gardens for the final dives.

The Minke trip was first class, Tom Tom (skipper), Levi (trip director) and the OceanQuest crew were wonderful and worked hard to ensure our experience was safe and memorable. We were also privileged to have Dr Alistair Birtles and two of his minke researchers from the Minke Whale Project on board. We were treated to presentations every evening. If you'd like more information you can go to their website [www.minkewhaleproject.org](http://www.minkewhaleproject.org)

Thank you to the Nautilus Club for arranging another wonderful club trip! Thanks also to my intrepid dive buddies Jim and Cathie (forever known as BB1 and BB2). You'll have to ask Jim for more info on that one.

I highly recommend this memorable adventure with the club! Well organised and a great way to meet the many new or illusive members.



# Diving off a swinging boat

By Alison Smith

Swinging boats can be a challenge for any diver, but you can make it much easier if you follow these tips.

Before entering the water spend a moment observing the swing of the vessel to see how close and far it is swinging from the dive site.

Once kitted up, wait for the boat to swing to its nearest point and then jump in. This will minimise the effort of any surface swim required.

On completion of the dive, surface at the dive site to see where the boat is.

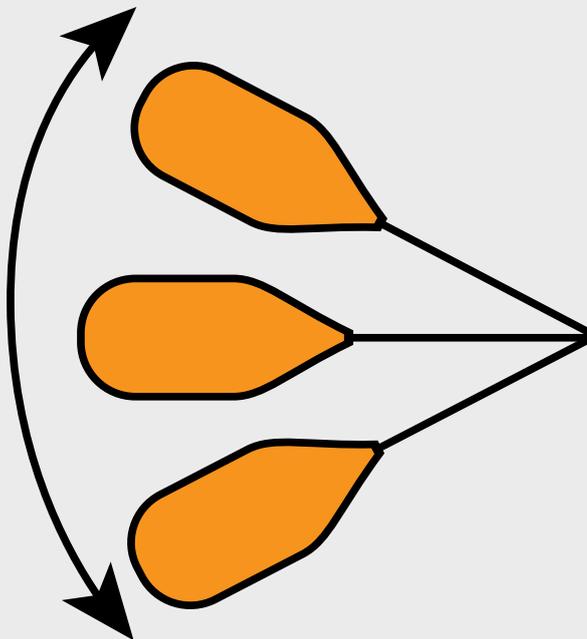
Note the approximate distance and location of the vessel at its nearest swing.

Time your swim back to the vessel so coincide with its nearest swing. If surface conditions are rough you can swim back under the surface if you have sufficient air and are comfortable using your compass or natural navigation.

If you don't quite make it, and the boat starts swinging away from you, relax, don't chase it. Simply wait for it to return.

As it swings back towards you line yourself up with the ladder and be ready to grab it as it comes your way.

Be prepared to get out of the water as quickly as you can in order to avoid being towed through the water by the boat whilst hanging on to the ladder.



# 2019 Photo Competition Prize-winner's trip report and Small Critter Alert !

By Ross Thomas

This year's club photo competition was full of winners. So many great pics. I had a lot of trouble choosing my favourite for the peoples choice award. After two full laps of the exhibits, I had a short list of 9 worthy pics, and I knew if I walked around any more, the list would just become longer.

I was happy that many of the pics I had on my short list earned the nod of the judges or the people.

So lucky me, the people on the night took a liking to my Lacey Scorpionfish pic and I picked up the runner up prize, which was a day trip for two on Tusa Dive's T6.



The kind folk at Tusa Dive were happy to split the prize into 2 trips for 1 person, so off I went.

Over the two days, skipper Jason took us to all the northern reefs, Norman, Saxon and Hastings.

Sandra's on Norman reef has some fantastic corals and fish life. It is a cleaning station for many large fish including the resident Maori Wrasse, large potato cod and many batfish.

Pederson's transparent shrimps are also doing good business servicing coral trout at the anemone drive thru's.

But of most interest from the two days of diving were the tiny critters that are becoming more apparent on Saxon reef. Pygmy seahorses....yes plural...are being found in the seagrasses, and some

tiny winged pipefish are also hanging around the small bommies out on the sand.

To further add to the "small critter alert" those eagle eyed lads aboard T6 have recently found a juvenile frogfish and the regular photographers are posting pics on the usual social media platforms.

Not to be forgotten, Hastings reef is always a happy hunting ground for flatworms, the weird and wonderful always showing up there.

So thanks TusaDive for continuing to sponsor the photo competition, and thanks to the crew on T6 for a couple of great days diving on the GBR. ■



# Clean Water: Yes, Oysters do have Hearts and Gills!

By Sam Aird

For us, decent visibility is key to a good dive. Usually the first two questions before planning a trip is 'what's the wind doing? What about the vis?'

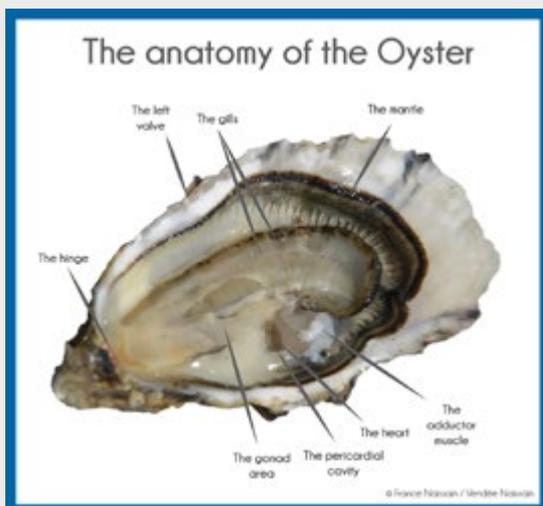
Despite seasonal currents and monsoonal downpours contributing to poor visibility, they are essential for delivering food and nutrients to marine animals, and keeping the water temperature down (precipitation and cloud cover lessens the possibility of bleaching events). On the other hand, severe sediment and pollution run-off from the mainland coast has different and more lasting effects to water quality. In some waterways such as in creeks or rivers, murky water might be expected. But for the reef, not so much.

The most intensely impacted area along the length of the GBR includes intertidal shorelines. Deforestation, farming, and agriculture owing to poor water quality for example, is talked about in everyday media. Although, less talked about, is the way nature itself contributes to water quality. Mangroves forests are an extremely important buffer between intertidal zones and the ocean. This might not come as a surprise, but our less mentioned oyster reefs, might.



Rocky oyster species are important biomarkers. They grow at certain tidal heights and can be used to identify change in ancient and modern sea-levels. Photograph, rocky shore oyster reef at North Keppel Island by Sam Aird

As a kid, tip-toeing between clusters of oysters along the rocks to get to our holiday swim spot at the Mon Repos lagoon wasn't complete without our parents reminding us, 'keep your thongs on' and 'watch out for the sharp bits ... don't cut yourself'! Past the spikey oyster path of doom bordering our swim spot my brother and I would jump in without any further thought. I never ate oysters until about 2 years ago and still prefer them cooked. Unless they're super fresh, I cringe at the thought of downing those slimy morsels. But little did I know, that spikey oyster reef bordering our swim spot made the water clean, and those slimy morsels - that people call delicacies, are full of waste residues the environment rejects.



Known as ecosystem engineers for their water filtering qualities, oysters, play a crucial role in keeping water visibility good and keeping other animals alive. For instance, some animals easily cope with high sediment rates, especially those with sediment burrowing behaviours (e.g. pipis). However, others like corals and some fish find it difficult to 'breathe' with high levels of sedimentation and pollutants. Oysters filter sediments and micro-pollutants before they reach far intertidal or subtidal zones making them ideal candidates to inhabit intertidal zones.

While it's true mangrove forests and oyster reefs are two of the main constituents keeping our GBR water clean, they are diminishing. Existing mangrove forests and oyster reefs including rocky shore oysters, oysters that cling to mangrove roots, and even pearl oysters that live in sandy or muddy substrates cannot cope with intense sedimentation and pollution caused by humans. Toxicology research and trace element data has also shown this for other species at a variety of locations.

# Clean Water: Yes, Oysters do have Hearts and Gills!

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Oysters and mangroves help keep the water quality good in inner shelf and outer shelf reefs. Photograph, Hastings Reef by Andrew Watson.

As well as planting corals to encourage the growth of reefs (e.g. Fitzroy Island), some projects have encouraged the maintenance of, and new growth of oyster reefs too (e.g. some estuaries in Townsville). Maintaining these oyster reefs, among keeping human sedimentation and pollution to a minimum, and regulating catch limits of wild oyster populations, we can contribute to long-term GBR water quality.

Hope you have enjoyed another mollusc fact!

# Supporting the Nautilus Scuba Club



# PARTING SHOT

