



# Nautilus SCUBA Club Newsletter

JULY 2018 Cairns QLD Australia



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

Editor: Phil Woodhead

Cover photo: Phil Woodhead

# Local dive trips and get together information

JULY						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
30	31					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

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



Club meeting **Junior Eisteddfod Association at 67 Greenslopes Street, Edge Hill. Starting with PIZZA at 7pm**



This months club meeting is the AGM, your old committee steps down and a new one is elected.

Luckily for us Nautilus Club Members much of the old committee will probably commit to do their good work for the club for another year, but I do know that there are positions that will be vacated, so Nautilus Club Members if you want a say in the way your club is run time to step up and become a committee member.

**Its not all about the AGM, Rigo and Andrew will be giving a brief presentation on the recent club trip to Fiji, (full article in the following pages)**

Special dives will be organised in addition to the regular monthly day trips, these could be with Reel Cray-Zee, Rumrunner, and could be day trips or weekend trips to the reef or the Yongala. Better watch your emails for future announcements.

UP COMING TRIP

## Nautilus Club Tufi, PNG Trip

**NEW DATES: Fri 19<sup>th</sup> – Sat 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018\***

7(+1) nights, 15 boat dives + 6 wharf dives

(Max 12 pax)

Staying at Tufi Resort and overnight at Stanley Hotel, POM

Flying with Air Niugini (international) and Air PNG (domestic)

*Libby Sterling*

\*NEW DATES (dates shifted forward by 2 days) due to changes in Air Niugini flight schedule.

Spaces are allocated on a first come first served basis.

**\$400 deposit** (via transfer to the Club account) will secure your spot!

This is a dive trip independently organised by the Club and is open only to Club members.

For more info re: Tufi Resort and dives, visit

[www.tufidive.com](http://www.tufidive.com).

For more info or to book: please contact Akiko (Overseas Trip Coordinator) on [overseastrips@nautilus-scuba.net](mailto:overseastrips@nautilus-scuba.net).

*Libby Sterling*  
PHOTOGRAPHY

‘Bula! Bula! Bula!’ (hello and welcome!) the locals enthusiastically greeted us. ‘Bula!’, we all replied.

To complement our warm welcome at the Nadi International Airport, the locals gifted each of us a necklace of tiny speckled shells in exchange for some friendly chatter. We all realised then and there we were in for a real treat. Our 12-day dive adventure in VoliVoli (north eastern Viti Levu) and Pacific Harbour (southern Viti Levu) with Jannemieke, Rigo, Akiko, Judy, Lyn, Mal, Rebecca, Alannah, Amelia, Cathy, Victoria, Jim, Ian, Albert, David, Andrew and Sam had begun!

Fiji is celebrated as the soft coral capital of the world and coupled with its stunning tropical landscapes, rich culture and friendly people, it is no surprise this destination is sought after by dive enthusiasts like us all over the world. Situated between Vanuatu, Tonga, and Samoa, Fiji boasts an archipelago of ~300 islands with turquoise tropical reefs gracefully connecting white sandy beaches, mangrove forests and fascinating rocky shore platforms. Our 3-hour bus journey from Nadi International Airport to VoliVoli Resort,



View of VoliVoli Beach Resort and its home reef



Views to the mountainous interior of Fiji's north



Sunset views at Suva harbour



Views across the bay from VoliVoli

Rakiraki, that afternoon teased us with previews of tropical bliss to this description. To the right, towering mountain peaks and jagged outcrops looked spectacular contrasted alongside estuary veins leaching into toward the foothills. To the left, mangrove trees stood high on their roots protecting the immediate coast from the seascape. Nearing our arrival at VoliVoli Resort, the sun set over the horizon with a few drizzles of rain. We all looked forward to some good diving the next day.

## Soft Corals off VoliVoli Resort

Next morning, sunrise was beautiful with uninterrupted views across rolling grassy hills, distant village smoke and miniature rooftops, palm trees, mangroves, traditional Fijian stone walled intertidal fish traps (perhaps a few hundred years old (!)) and neighbouring islands – a sanctuary with few visitors. Our first dive was at the VoliVoli Resort house reef, a muck dive off the beach. Big eyed and wide smiled, it didn't take long for our group to meet the water's edge. ‘Set?’ (ready?) our guides asked. ‘Set!’.

‘Look down, check. Look up, check. Look side-to-side, check. Uummm ... I know, mask? Mask, check. Hhm. Computer, check. Buddy ... can't see buddy. If can't find buddy after 1 minute, surface. Buddy? ... oh good, check. Buddy lines up mask a few centimetres from my mask. Buddy's eyes widening. Buddy's shoulders shrugging. Buddy moving head to look around and shrugs again. Buddy looks happy nonetheless and seems hopeful for what we might find. Good, that's the spirit!’

Visibility wasn't great at the VoliVoli Resort house reef (~1-2m); nonetheless, we managed to get comfortable in our gear and were ‘set’ for a dive packed week exploring some of the best dive sites Fiji had to offer. Just before our arrival Cyclone Josie, a category 3 storm, hit Fiji in April causing destruction to the reefs and communities. Consequently, many families were displaced and are making efforts to re-establish their homes and gardens. Although some damage could be identified on the reefs we visited, particularly those on the inner shore, the soft corals and fans were nothing short of impressive.

Our commute each day to sites off the immediate coast was via the new VoliVoli resort dive boat that catered for our group and 4 crew. Dive sites were custom chosen to suit weather conditions with the flexibility of doing second dives at the same site (see Table 1 for comprehensive list). Dive briefs by the Ra Diver crew not only focused on safety and navigation but included detailed Fijian local knowledge on currents, the daily timing of blooming soft corals, and species identifications.

# Trip Report: Diving on Fiji Time(2nd-13th May 2018)

Authored by: Sam Aird  
Photography: Andrew Watson



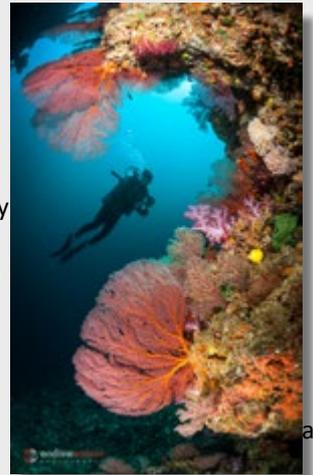
Ra Divers boat at Volivoli

Mellow Yellow was by far the prettiest dive offering a picturesque garden of colourful soft corals that teamed with an impressive population of glittering anthias. The Greek meaning of anthia is 'lady of flowers' and after experiencing their elegance over the sunlit corals in Fiji, so aptly named they are. A few easy swim throughs lined with giant Gorgonian fans and graceful sea feathers made Mellow Yellow a photographer's paradise!

At Black Magic Mountain, we surfaced doing the happy dance! Wow – now we are happy. Black Magic Mountain showed us

terraced collection of soft corals and giant Gorgonian fans on the towering reef wall. Looking below was a reef-scape of patch-worked coral and out into the open blue, past the thousands of schooling and shoaling Yellowtails, we had the pelagics: grey reef sharks, mackerel, skipjack tuna, chevron barracuda, yellowtail barracuda, and giant trevallies. At the safety stop, another meadow of soft corals and as still as still could be, a frilly pink and white scorpion fish nestled neatly into the reef.

Soft coral plumes identified at Mellow Yellow, Black Mountain and other sites included but wasn't limited to yellow leather corals (*Sarcophyton* spp.), carnation tree corals (*Dendronephthya* spp.), bubble corals (*Plerogyra* spp.), the colour changing cauliflower colt corals (*Cladiella* spp.) and finger leather corals (*Sinularia* spp.).



Diving the reefs from Volivoli Resort



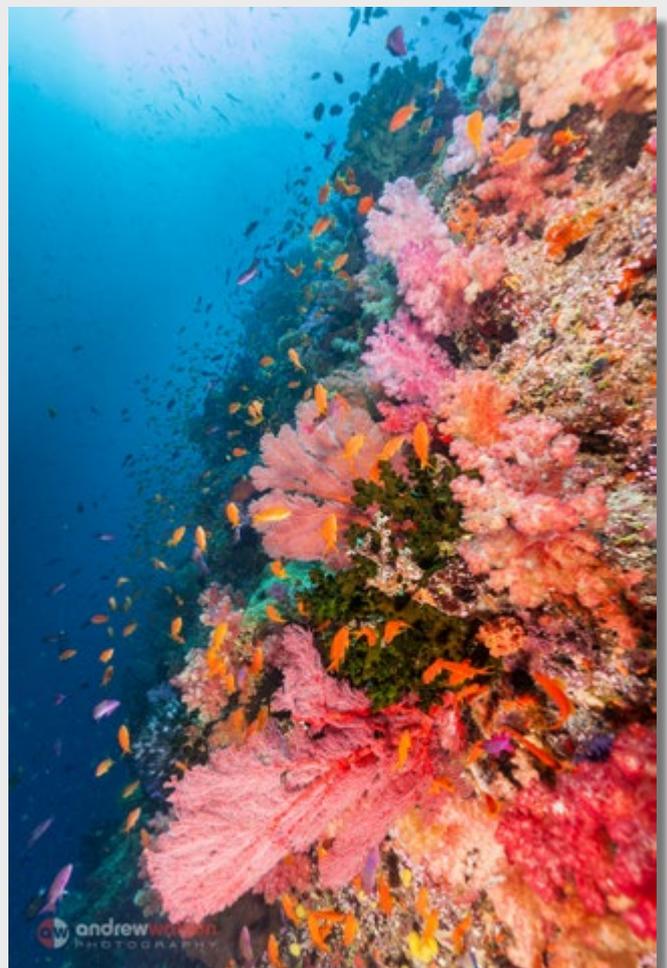
Colourful schools of Anthias at Mellow Yellow dive site



Fan and soft corals at Mellow Yellow in the Blight Waters



Colourful soft corals of the Bligh Waters, northern Viti Levu



Fan and soft corals at Mellow Yellow in the Blight Waters

Table 1: Dive sites, depths, and approximate visibility. Averaged 2-3 dives per day (dive log, Aird 2018).

Site Name	Depth (m)	Visibility (m)
Disneyland	18.5	10
Amazing Maze	15	10
Heartbreak Ridge	25.1	10
Mellow Yellow	21.6	10
Pot Luck	19.5	10
Chile	19.7	15
Any Time	15.4	10
Black Magic Mountain	23.2	20
Black Magic Mountain	26.8	20
Mellow Yellow	19.6	20
Neptune's Rhapsody	20.4	20
Redemption	20.2	20



Unloading from a day's diving in the Bligh Waters



Nautilus divers with the crew from Ra Divers

Before our final two dives, a few of us took to sitting at the bow of the boat. Swinging our legs over the side, feeling the sea breeze and appreciating the views, it didn't take long for a pod of bottle nose dolphins to join us! What a treat and a nice way to complete our final dive day together.

## Food, Culture, and Other Adventures

Evenings were shared with lively conversations about dolphins, corals, fish, keen reviews of bubble head bloopers, and of course the food. One evening, the locals showed us a traditional Fijian kava ceremony, dancing, music and cultural stories around a bonfire at the beach. We tried the national dish of Fiji, lovo which was a real feast. Lovo translates to lava and defines cooking meat, fish and vegetables wrapped in banana leaves for ~6 hours in an underground earth oven. The result is soft textured food with subtle smoky flavours. Other evenings were shared in the resort's restaurant tasting other Fijian delicacies including kokoda (fish cured in citrus and coconut milk, like ceviche) and ota (fiddlehead fern, similar use to spinach). The crowd favourite however, was The Reef – VoliVoli Resort's decadent signature dessert. Excited 'ooohs' and 'aaahs' filled the restaurant every time one left the kitchen to arrive at our table. Its construction was carefully crafted to represent Fijian reefs: powdered toffee, vanilla biscuit, marshmallow, vanilla ice-cream rolled in nut and ginger praline and a balancing brandy snap wafer. Delicious!



"The Reef" VoliVoli's decadent dessert



Local stallholder at the markets in Suva

Our non-dive days gave us a chance to experience more of regional cultural Fiji. Over half of Fiji's islands are uninhabited by people with most coastal and hinterland communities situated on the main island, Viti Levu (total est. human pop. ~840,000). The Indo-Fijian population comprises Indigenous Fijians and Indians who were first bought to Fiji by the British in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Regional communities engage in traditional lifeways and participate in both food and cash crop agriculture. Ginger, taro, coconut, kava and poultry make the most marketable produce. As we travelled through the hinterland we waved to locals passing on horseback and saw farmers eagerly working bullock carts on their farms.



Walking through Nabalesere village from the waterfall visit



Visitor dwarfed by the towering Nabalesere Waterfall, northern Viti Levu

Indeed, horseback seemed the most sensible mode of transportation after witnessing the boggy roads with school kids, teachers and drivers all working together to release almost immovable vehicles from the grips of the slippery mud banks. Our journey with Jannemeike and Rigo to Nabalesere Waterfall however, was well worth the adventure. After arriving at a quaint mountain village and receiving a blessing from the chief, we experienced the most captivating waterfall.



Fijian cultural night at Volivoli Beach Resort



The Nautilus crews with dancers at Fijian cultural night



The Nautilus crew on our last night at Volivoli

our tour company AquaTrek did a great job accommodating us. Their efforts to restore the reef through promotion of coral growth and shark feeding was explained on board by Brandon, who has been working in the region for several years.



On the boat to visit the sharks of Beqa Lagoon

This remote sanctuary sprayed an enormous amount of waterfall mist that created a natural spa paradise. High glossy rock walls lined with green moss and ferns bordered the towering waterfall curtain, perhaps as big as our local Wallaman falls in north Queensland, Australia. Other Nautili decided to spend their free day indulging in spa treatments, reading books in beach hammocks at mercy of the balmy sea breeze, fishing off VoliVoli Resort or, more diving! Akiko and Jim decided to squeeze in two more dives, and perhaps we wish we went with them – they saw lots of sharks and rays at Breathtaker and Tequila Sunrise.

As we reconvened on our last evening together, we shared a tasty BBQ dinner and relaxed around the beach bonfire. Sadly, this is

where we farewelled some of our fellow nautili: Cathy, Albert, Lyn, Malcom, Rebecca, Alannah and Amelia who would not be joining us at our next destination, Pacific Harbour.



Sunset drinks at Volivoli



Sunset views at Volivoli Beach

## Shark Diving from Pacific Harbour

Uprising Resort at Pacific Harbour rewarded us with beautiful beach bungalows and views across to Beqa Island and Yanuka Island. The shark diving at Pacific Harbour is quite popular and our



Accommodation at Uprising Beach Resort, Pacific Harbour



Dawn at Uprising Beach Resort with views to Beqa Lagoon

A short 20min boat ride off Pacific Harbour got us to our adequately named dive site, 'The Bistro'.

The guides suited up in chainmail and gave us the more technical details of how to ensure our dives went smoothly. Following the line down, we could see a stone wall separating a wreck off to our left and the feeding station ahead. We descended to ~18m and positioned ourselves behind the stone wall in a neat line. The sharks were already there: bull sharks, lemon sharks, tawny nurse sharks, grey reef sharks, silver tips and white tips. Wow, most of us had never seen bull



Divers behind the rock wall for the start of the feeding action

sharks on a dive that large before (~3m) and so many! The bait came down from a bin in the upper centre section of the station and with no hesitation BAM! What a frenzy! Instant action ... sharks going in for the big stuff, hundreds of smaller fish cleaning up the smaller stuff, oozing fish oil, it was hard to keep up. Which way should I look first?!

The guides were calm but wary. They held large silver batons to prod the sharks if they went in for one of us or indeed, one of them. And, just when we thought we saw it all, out came the tuna heads to hand feed the bulls. Gone in one mouthful. Easy as that, didn't even blink an eye. Wow, wow, wow. One shark got so close to the guide, it snagged his arm with a tooth. So, what does the guide do? Casually picks it out of his chain-mailed arm and with a bit of flesh still attached to the tooth from the shark's jaw, hands it to our Ian. Lucky guy! Next, it was Andrew's turn. Only this time, he was going over the wall into the feeding frenzy. No chainmail, just a big camera to throw into the jaw of a shark if they decided he was the bait. And they did.

'Bulls are bump and bite, bump and bite yeah', Brandon repeatedly said in the briefs.

BUMP! 'Whooooaa, Andrew!'

Lucky for Andrew the guides were astutely on guard hovering over his back.

BANG! (shark gets baton warned).

SLAP! (Andrew gets tail whipped).

And then, 'ho ho ho' chuckles through the guides regulator ...



Bull shark getting curious with a diver at Beqa Lagoon



Bull shark warded off the photographer by dive crew



Lemon shark with a mouthful of fish at Beqa



Bull sharks at the Beqa Lagoon shark feed



3 metre bull shark at The Bistro shark feed

# Trip Report: Diving on Fiji Time(2nd-13th May 2018)

Authored by: Sam Aird  
Photography: Andrew Watson



Up close and personal with a bull shark at Beqa

The sharks are fed 3 times a week by the guides and it is clear they know what they are doing. All in all, we sure felt the adrenalin pumping but came out unscathed. The guides were very professional and we all knew we were being looked after. What a great experience.

Fiji is a great place to encounter some of the most extraordinary adventures like the one we had in May. Easy to travel - welcoming people, great food, awesome diving, lush tropical beaches. Its all there. Vinaka (thank you) to our new friends in Fiji who made our trip a real pleasure and one that we will all have fond memories of. Special thank you to Diversion Dive Travel and our overseas trip coordinator Akiko for dedicating time, effort and organisation to make our holiday truly amazing!

Links:

Fiji Cyclone Relief Donations  
<https://www.care.org.au/country/fiji/>

Nabalasere Waterfall Ecotourism  
<http://www.fao.org/asiapacific/news/detail-events/en/c/333760/>

AquaTrek Shark Conservation and Sustainable Tourism  
[http://www.aquatrek.com/ecotourism/shark\\_conservation\\_program.cfm](http://www.aquatrek.com/ecotourism/shark_conservation_program.cfm)



A lemon shark at the shark feed



Diving an upturned wreck in Beqa Lagoon

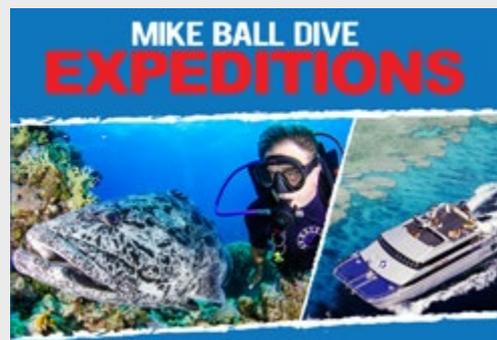


Happy shark divers at Beqa

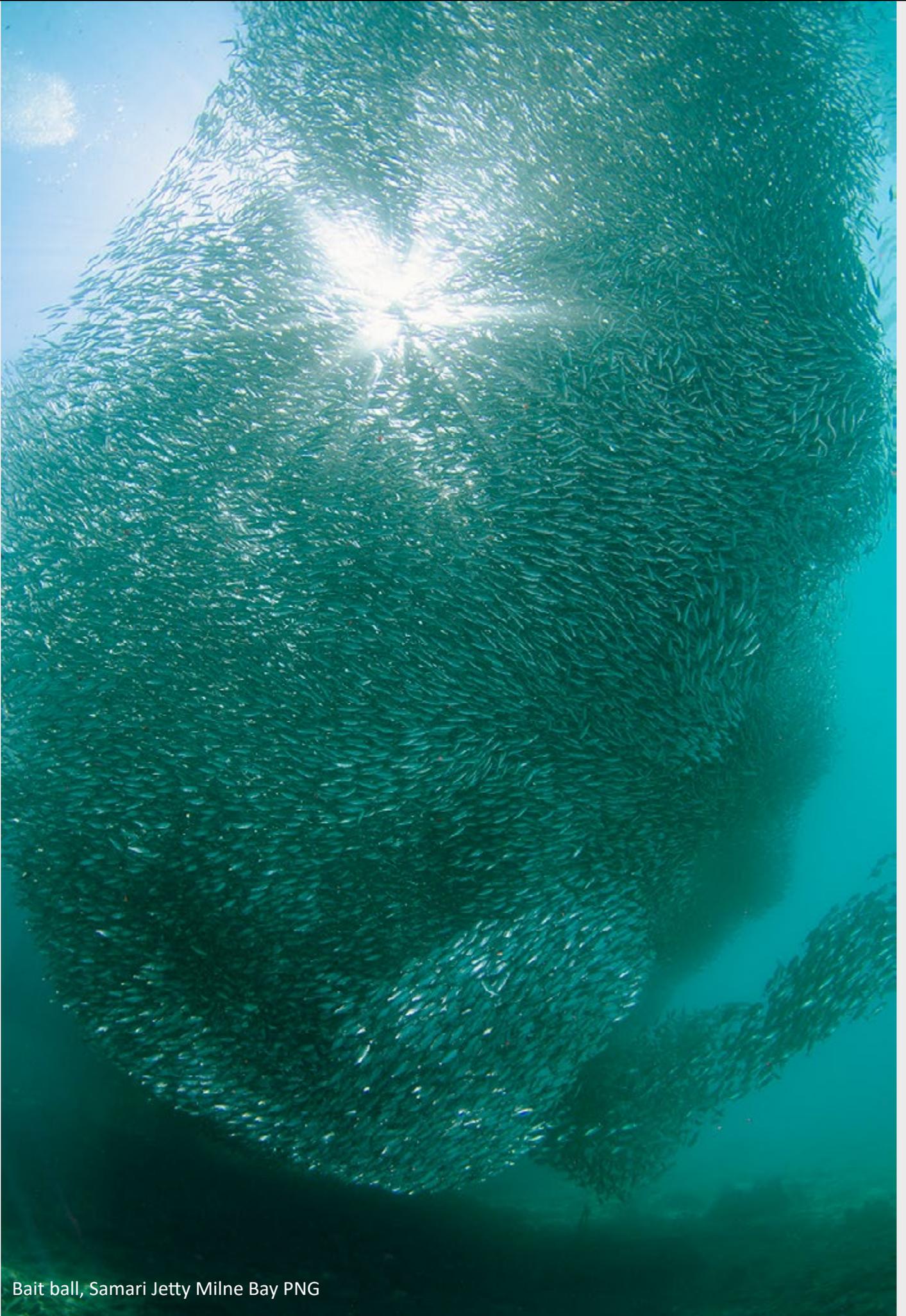


Coral reefs in the Bliq Waters, northern Viti Levu

# Supporting the Nautilus Scuba Club



# PARTING SHOT



Bait ball, Samari Jetty Milne Bay PNG