

Marine Life Society of South Australia Inc.

Newsletter

February 2014 No. 408

“understanding, enjoying & caring for our oceans”

Our Next Meeting

Our next General Meeting is being held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 19th February at the Holdfast Bay Community Centre, 51 King George Ave, Hove. A draft Code of Conduct (see <http://www.mlssa.asn.au/aims.html>) needs the approval of members. A new membership application that has been drawn up will be considered. Constitution changes are needed to accommodate the new membership application.

2013 Journal

Our 2013 Journal was published last December. It was a whopping 54-page issue, with lots of articles written by a variety of authors. The Journal was initially sent to our members in 9 instalments between 4th and 24th December. The complete version of the Journal was posted to our website just in time for Christmas. Visit <http://www.mlssa.asn.au/journals/2013journal.pdf> if you wish to see the complete Journal. It is, however, a large 15mb file. The Journal can also be accessed as a zip file from my Dropbox at <https://db.tt/zA6zKbkn>.

The contents of the Journal are as follows: - “Sea Pigs”, “Increased Staff & Protection For Dolphins Needed”, “Lungfish’s 80TH Anniversary”, “Lichens on trees”, “Osedax Worms Update”, “Screwpile Jetty update”, “Climate Commission becomes Australian Climate Council”, “Ecology of Australian Temperate Reefs”, “Lake Hillier”, “South Australia's Marine Mortality Mystery”, “Oztren Industries were semi-finalists in the Renewable Energy category of the Australian Cleantech Competition 2013”, “Donation of books to our library”, “Adaptations of some Coastal Species”, “*Pittosporum crassifolium* Revisited”, “The Continuing Search for the *Vivid*”, “HMCS *Protector*”, “Jetty Piles Removed from Edithburgh Jetty”, “Early Research at Edithburgh Jetty”, “South Australian Conservation Research Divers Summary of Educational Activities in 2013”, “1980s Blue-ringed Octopus Study at Edithburgh”, “South Australian Conservation Research Divers Summary of Field Work in 2013”, “Two Endangered Fish Species Removed From National Spearfishing Competition’s Target List”, “Reef Watch survey of Western Blue Groper”.

Many thanks go to Dan Monceaux, Scoresby Shepherd, Janine Baker and Brian Brock for their input to our Journal.

Beaked Salmon, *Gonorynchus greyi*

Dan Monceaux recorded some HD video footage of a fish whilst he was snorkelling off Haycock Point on the Fleurieu Peninsula at night in November 2013.



A still frame taken from Dan's video footage, showing the fish foraging

When Dan showed the above still photo to David Muirhead, David's response was, "Unmistakeably a Beaked Salmon aka 'shark whiting', etc.. etc., *Gonorynchus greyi* and great shot too.

"I've never managed to image these fish even once, as they always seem to swim by me in a hurry and never slow down enough for quick snaps nor do even one circuit of me e.g. they seem fairly common near and in the Onkaparinga Estuary mouth on the changes of tide and I've seen them only a few times in Yankalilla Bay e.g. in Bungala lagoon right where it meets sea but only if the river mouth is open at the time

i.e. outflowing brackish water meets clean seawater.

"I saw two (possibly three of these) inshore at Haycock Point, foraging very swiftly over rocky reef and sandy bottom."

David had mentioned this species briefly in the introduction to his article "A Footbridge Too Far" which was published in our December 2000 Journal – see <http://www.mlssa.asn.au/cgi-bin/Publications.cgi?journal=2000Journal.htm> .

Eric Kotz's shared fishermens' perspectives on them via Facebook: -

"Always called a "Night Shark" over here. They are relatively common in S.A. waters but for some reason are usually only caught at NIGHT by line fishermen. They bite like a whiting, and feel like a whiting coming up, hence the other name of shark whiting sometimes. When they come over the side at night and are put on the hip to remove the hook, they quickly curl tightly around a fisherman's' arm like a small python and with their scaly snake like texture feel for all the world like a snake. It never ceases to cause a BIG fright to the fisherman. Other than that they're nice little suckers."

You can also see the animal's extensive distribution on the ALA and Australian Museum websites.

Dan's still photo was sent to the Australian Museum, which replied, "Your image is now online at

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/image/Beaked-Salmon-Gonorynchus-greyi/> . Thank you

very much for allowing me to use it. The photo is also visible on the factsheet at

<http://australianmuseum.net.au/Beaked-Salmon-Gonorynchus-greyi-Richardson-1845> .

Some more video footage of a Beaked Salmon at Edithburgh jetty at night time can be seen on YouTube at <http://youtu.be/qV-h-MRjitA>. It can also be seen about halfway through

the short video to be found at <http://youtu.be/aFtQdLhUHM> . It was posted there by

Adam Newton of A&K Diving. According to Adam, “It was very curious about us and not shy either.”

There is also this photo of the same beaked salmon at

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=253239814838876&set=a.253239754838882.1073741834.214382268724631&type=1&theater> : -



**A Beaked Salmon at Edithburgh jetty at night time
(Courtesy of Adam Newton of A&K Diving)**

(Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=253239814838876&set=a.253239754838882.1073741834.214382268724631&type=1&theater>)

According to Adam Newton of A&K Diving, it “Was a very curious fish, stayed with us for about five minutes investigating the three of us. (You can see more of our photos at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/A-K-Diving-Underwater-Photography/214382268724631?ref=hl>)”

LOCAL SEA MYSTERIES ~ Part 7 “The Body on the Beach and Mutiny at Bolingbroke” by Eric Kotz

Long before Rob and Sue Lawrie started their inspired campaign to keep our beaches clean of marine debris, two young boys of the same surname and even then living at the same homestead, set out on a similar mission. But theirs was more a quest for personal gain than a community service..... They were hoping to score a washed up dinghy.

As they beach-combed their way south along the coastline one hot February day way back in 1901, George and Gavin Lawrie already knew that debris from the recently wrecked three masted barque the *Glen Park* was beginning to wash up on the eastern shores of Point Bolingbroke. A local man, Herbert Hill, had already found the ship’s bell attached to a broken panel and it was obvious that the steel barque breaking up near Wedge Island to the South was starting to disgorge her “treasures”. If they could just find a dinghy or ships’ boat, the boys knew they could really get into the plentiful fish stocks in nearby Massena Bay or Thuruna as we call it now.

Full of anticipation, they walked on and on, past broken wreckage, to what is now known as the “Hawks’ Nest Point” to the vantage point of a low cliff, from where, to their joy; they saw something fairly large and solid bobbing in the shallows at the other end of the beach.

But that joy soon turned to horror as they raced up to it. The object appeared to be a red-headed lady in a green jacket and she appeared to be lifeless and lashed to a timber spar with one arm across her ample breast. They recoiled in fright; they had surely come across a drowned shipwreck victim!!!

Not quite sure what to do after their abrupt halt, they eventually plucked up courage and edged cautiously forward for a closer look. It was only when they got really close, and to their profound relief; that they realised the “drowned lady” was the ship’s figurehead!

They excitedly dragged the figurehead to the water's edge, but then it was just too big and cumbersome for two young boys to shift any further. This caused another dilemma. They were not supposed to go this far from home at any time (they were only eight and ten years old) and they would get in trouble, but they decided their "prize" was worth the risk and headed for home as quickly as they could to report it. On the way back and not far from the figurehead, they came across a broken board in the shallows with the ships' name GLEN PARK on it in big brass letters.

This, they could at least lift and carry, but not all the way back; so they hauled it up above high water mark and hid it under a bush in the overlooking sand-hills. Then they raced the six or seven miles back along the beaches to the homestead, where, to their relief, they were greeted as heroes for their "finds".

Their father, Nicol, quickly harnessed up the horses to a wagon with some supplies and they set off, cutting a track along the coast through the thick mallee and coastal scrub that covered the complete area then. By the time they were all able to look down on the lady from the nearby sand-hills it was getting very dark, so a camp for the party was made overnight behind the sand-hills.

The next morning the strongest horse was selected and led down to the beach where a yoke was placed around the figurehead and it was dragged unceremoniously up through the sand-hills and then loaded onto the wagon for the slow trip back to the farm. The Lady from the wreck, who was carved from a solid trunk of a tree in Scotland in 1897 by a Mr Roberts, then held pride of place at the Bolingbroke property for quite a while and had many curious visitors including Caleb Provis, one of the district's pioneers.

Every time Nicol Lawrie visited Tumby Bay for stores after that, Caleb pestered him and pestered him for the figurehead which he believed deserved a more prominent position back in town. Eventually, Nicol relented and the figurehead changed hands. We don't know how much was paid for it but we do know the deal also included "a dressed sheep". We know this because of a story recounted by the late Roy Lawrie who as a young boy waited around for the exchange to take place so he could see how they were going to "dress-up" the sheep. The figurehead then became a feature in Tumby Bay for many, many years with its two distinctive matching curved whale- ribs framing it in an arch.

Then it was Calebs' turn to come under pressure for the Lady, from the wealthy and prosperous local Mortlock family who badly wanted it. He resisted this pressure until his death, and then, to everybody's' surprise, they found he had mischievously bequeathed it to Jackie Mortlock as a last surprise.

Sadly then, the unexpected happened and Mortlock took the figurehead out of the district to everyone's' dismay and displayed it at the front of his homestead at the sweeping entrance into Coffin Bay. There it stood again as a prominent landmark for many years, even after Mortlock died. It seems The Lady has always had the ability to catch the eye, wherever she is!

Little is known of how she came to be moved from there to pride of place in the magnificent figurehead collection at the S.A. Maritime Museum down at Port Adelaide but, suffice to say, her last move has been good for her. She has had a restoration that any ageing Lady would be proud of, and carries her age (116 years) exceptionally well. She is still an impressive sight with her flame red hair and ample bosom and enjoys the comfort of special air conditioning and de-humidification to ensure her preservation as befitting a lady of her status.

And what happened to the name-plate?

Well 50 years ago, when I was a Boy Scout (this can be verified), the local Scout leader, Bob "Scoop" Hopping, organised the Tumby and Cummins troops to camp at the "neck" of Bolingbroke to conduct a search for it. "Scoop" was, at the time, a very enthusiastic correspondent in the Tumby district for the Port Lincoln Times.

He had been told that when the retrieval party went down to Secret Bay to pick up the figurehead the boys could not remember which bush the name-plate was under ("they all looked the same") - and they had reluctantly returned that day without it. Sixty years

later we were back there to find the lost name plate on a summer long week-end Scout-camp. Should be nothing to it, we thought.

With planning like a military campaign we set out line abreast and full of enthusiasm to comb the sand-hills and bushes in the nominated area. We poked and probed and peered under mallee bushes and scrub, ever mindful of the black snakes and death-adders that love that country. But it was a hot day, so very HOT; and every-time we looked up to wipe our sweating brows we could see the gleaming white beach and a blue shimmering sea just below us.

Finally; a scare from two very angry sleepy lizards was enough for a couple of us.

“Stuff this! we said and, stripping off our khaki uniforms, we went skinny-dipping in the safety of that beautiful cool sea that was so close. This turned into a mass revolt as somebody yelled out “One in All in” and soon the beach was being littered with uniforms, socks, shoes and pointy hats as twenty other “Good Deed Dailys” joined us, splashing and swimming about like a pod of white porpoises.

No amount of whistle-blowing, red-faced commands or threats of discipline from our esteemed Leaders could get us out of that water and we spent the rest of the day there swimming. As an exercise in Occupational Health and Safety it was a triumph for the “mutineers” as nobody perished from heat-stroke, and nobody got bitten by a reptile while conducting a fruitless search, although there was some bad sun-burn in some unusual places.

Imagine my surprise then, when researching this article to discover that the name-plate HAD been found and recovered by the Lawries when they returned several weeks after retrieving the figure-head. “Scoop” had obviously received some bad (or probably mischievous) information from some-one. Our aborted search would have always been in vain it seems, and after fifty years our “mutiny” to the Boy Scout organisation can now finally be vindicated.

Then; to rub salt into the wounds I came across a “letter to the Editor” written by a Mrs Pearson of Kimba on the 25th June 1932 where she advised of the other name-plate (there was one on either side) adorning her brothers’ homestead veranda 15 miles from Fowlers Bay! It had also come from the *Glen Park* near Wedge Island and was found on a beach miles round from Fowlers toward the Bight.

The actual location of the *Glen Park* wreck remains a mystery. Although there was no loss of life – the Captain and crew were rescued by the Barque the “Elda”- its final resting place was never recorded. Over the years many people have claimed to know its location, but none have been able to actually prove it, or are unwilling to disclose it. No doubt the 1800-ton, three-masted steel barque would be a good snapper spot, worth keeping secret? It would be great, and cause no harm, if it could be found, dived on, and video-graphed.

I would like to thank all the people who provided information to me for this piece, and particularly those supporting me in trying to get at least a full size replica or even a large photograph of the *Glen Park* figurehead back on our beautiful fore-shore at Tumby where she belongs.

(This is Part 7 of a series of articles written by Eric Kotz. Parts 1-6 were published in our newsletter from November 2011 to July 2012. Part 3, however, was overlooked when our April 2012 newsletter was mostly taken up by Annual Committee Reports. Our apologies to Eric for that. Part 3 will now have to be published in a later newsletter issue, but it will probably be designated ‘Part 8’ to avoid any confusion.)

Mystery Surrounds Missing Leafy Sea Dragons (As told to Steve Reynolds by David Muirhead)

According to the web page found at

<http://www.portlincolntimes.com.au/story/1975923/mystery-surrounds-missing-leafy-sea-dragons/?cs=1500> , “A colony of leafy seadragons regularly spotted near the Tumby Bay jetty has disappeared. The leafy sea dragons are known to gather near the jetty and are regularly photographed. Port Lincoln man Leo Stewart regularly dives near the Tumby Bay jetty and said it was strange the colony had disappeared. He said he made the trip to Tumby Bay after he heard that the seadragons had disappeared to dive and see for himself. "I went up there to have a look and they weren't there," he said. "It's very unusual, I've always seen them." Mr Stewart said he regularly took professional photographers to the spot to photograph the animals. "It's very unusual and strange that they have disappeared," he said. "I've been here for nine years and I've always seen them." Mr Stewart said when he travelled to Tumby Bay to see if he could find any of the seadragons; the water quality was less than it usually was. He said he was unsure if the quality of the water had caused the seadragons to leave or if it was possible they had been taken from the water.”

David Muirhead says that he has dived at Tumby Bay jetty on 3-4 occasions but not for quite some years now. “I saw one adult Leafy on a solo dive; I almost landed on it unawares after entering via the easiest stepped platform part-way out on the southern side of jetty. I think circa 2002-ish, but there's my newsletter article about that dive somewhere in an old MLSSA newsletter if you want more detail. (See both

www.mlssa.asn.au/nletters/MLSSA_NL_291_August_2002.htm and www.mlssa.asn.au/nletters/MLSSA_NL_292_September_2002.htm .) I saw a courting pair of *Hippocampus.breviceps* within metres of the leafy on that dive also. Vaguely think I saw 1-2 leafies there on another solo dive, perhaps even a mating pair but with crap shots in poor viz., but best not accept that I've seen more than one there, ever, as factual, i.e. I'd need to search dive logs to confirm that (or try DragonSearch's database??).

“Last two times I went past Tumby Bay en route to Port Lincoln and Coffin Bay as main destinations (both within past 2 years or so), I had a dive buddy with me. We wanted to dive there to check our gear and cameras were in order, plus I remembered what a surprisingly nice dive site it was with very good viz and very dense healthy seagrasses, mainly *Posidonia* sp., and heaps of weedy whittings (several species, including blue weed whiting and long-ray weed whiting) and plenty of grass-associated leatheries (bridleds, spinytails, etc..) and even herring cale and rainbow cale, despite quite minimal brown canopy algal patches i.e. mostly dense seagrass benthos.

“But on both occasions, the viz looked too poor to warrant the effort (2-3m approx.,4m max, even at the outer end, so we kept going, and this was despite weather being reasonable in the bay there i.e. I was surprised that the viz was so bad, as the sea was only a bit choppy and the swells were smallish.

“I'd think the leafies have left due to reduced water quality, and while I of course agree that it is impossible to exclude illegal removal, I think that's much less likely as cause. (Also, even if the few leafies known to be resident there were indeed removed illegally it would likely be as a one-off type event, and I'd expect 'new' leafies to colonise the jetty quite quickly, since we know how much they seem to like many of our gulfs jetties (Rapid Bay, Kingscote, Tumby Bay & Wool Bay quickly spring to mind).”

Staurozoa

Audrey Falconer published a small 20-page booklet about Stauromedusae in December 2013. Janine Baker gave me a copy of “Stauromedusae of Victoria – A preliminary guide” by Audrey Falconer, ‘hot off of the presses’. I had no idea what Stauromedusae were, but both Janine Baker & Scoresby Shepherd were able to explain them to me at the time. It's all explained in the booklet though.

(The guide is described as “very preliminary and exists primarily to prompt people to look for these extraordinary animals which are rarely seen!”)

Staurozoa (Family Stauromedusae) are Cnidarians, and are commonly referred to as “stalked jellyfish”. According to the guide, “Approximately 50 species are known worldwide, 40 (from) the Northern Hemisphere and 12 in the Southern Hemisphere.”

It goes on to say that “A recently published paper . . . listed 4 species known from Australia” but then adds that five species, including three new species, have been seen in Victoria.

I soon discovered that the Cnidarian chapter in “Ecology of Australian Temperate Reefs: The Unique South” edited by Scoresby Shepherd and Graham Edgar describes Stauromedusae as being “small, goblet-shaped jellyfish that spend their entire life attached to the substratum” and “Adult stauromedusae are typically small, ~1-4 cm in umbrella height”. (The ‘umbrella’ is their “main body part”. The gelatinous umbrella “typically draws out into eight simple arms, or four arms each divided into two, and tipped with a bunch of short tentacles”.

I hope that I’ve described Staurozoa sufficiently enough to arouse your interest in them. According to the guide, there is a web page about them at <http://staurozoa.lifedesks.org/> if you want to learn more about them.

Nearshore Reports webpage

The Nearshore Reports webpage on our website was recently updated. About 10 reports were added to the web page and the new title of “Survey reports on SA nearshore fishes and invertebrates of conservation interest, by South Australian Conservation Research Divers (SACReD)”. The web page can be found at <http://www.mlssa.asn.au/cgi-bin/Publications.cgi?id=Reports> . More reports will be added to the web page as they come to hand. Some updates to existing reports are also expected during 2014.

Protection of the Blue Devil

Our Patron, Scoresby Shepherd has suggested that we should press for the protection of both the blue devil and harlequin fish (see below): -



Harlequin fish
(Taken from
MLSSA website)

Blue devils are apparently protected in the eastern States.

According to the web page found at

http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/77396/Eastern-blue-devil-fish-Primefact-165---final.pdf, Eastern blue devil fish, *Paraplesiops bleekeri*, are a protected species in NSW.

And “Why are Eastern blue devil fish protected?”

- Eastern blue devil fish are protected due to their natural rarity and low abundance.
- The predominant threat to Eastern blue devil fish is collection and trade for marine aquariums.

What conservation actions are underway?

- Protecting benthic estuarine and rocky offshore reef habitats to protect breeding populations of Eastern blue devil fish.
- Eastern blue devil fish habitat is located in a number of protected areas in NSW including the Solitary Islands Marine Park, Port Stephens – Great Lakes Marine Park, Jervis Bay Marine Park, Long Reef Aquatic Reserve and Bushrangers Bay Aquatic Reserve.
- Maintaining bans on taking Eastern blue devil fish in NSW and protecting them from illegal removal.
- Educating fishers on the best ways to return any incidentally caught Eastern blue devil fish to the water.
- Implementing the Commercial Fisheries Threatened and Protected Species Interaction Reporting arrangements.
- Implementing the Protected, Threatened and Pest Species Sighting Program. Report any sightings of the species on the NSW Department of Primary Industries 24 hour automated message-taking service by calling (02) 4916 3877.”

But that is the Eastern blue devil. The Conservation Council of SA issued a Fact Sheet (#4) on the Western Blue Devil, *Paraplesiops meleagris*

(http://www.ccsa.asn.au/files/FSR/4_Blue_Devil.pdf) which states, “The western blue devil is not currently protected in South Australian waters. It is noted that the related eastern blue devil, is a protected species in NSW. There are no size, bag, boat or catch limits set for the capture of this fish by recreational or commercial fishers.”

And “Western blue devils are solitary (or form pair bonds), territorial, slow-moving, inquisitive, strongly site-associated with reefs in shallow near shore waters, and have site-specific reproduction. These characteristics make populations particularly vulnerable to localised impacts. Habitat degradation impacting on reef habitat and other near shore areas arises from activities such as dredging and channel development, from excess sediment and nutrient inputs, stormwater and other land-based discharges. Protection of these ecosystems through the establishment of Marine Park sanctuary zones will be of significant benefit to western blue devils. The species is sometimes taken as a food fish by recreational anglers and spearfishers across its range and blue devils are sought after for the aquarium trade. Implementation of bag and boat and/or size limits for this species will assist in its conservation. It is noted that protection from spear-fishing in SA was suggested as early as 1967 (by Dr. S. A. Shepherd).”

And “Western blue devil are currently one of the ‘in peril’ species monitored by the Reef Watch ‘Feral or in Peril’ program.”



A blue devil (Taken by Steve Reynolds)

Both Harlequin fish and blue devils (as Southern Blue Devil) are discussed in “Ecology of Australian Temperate Reefs: The Unique South” edited by Scoresby Shepherd and Graham Edgar. According to chapter 17, “Planktivores and large reef-associated carnivores”, in the book, “The harlequin fish is a slow-growing species . . . with a longevity of at least 42 years. Both features render it vulnerable to depletion from fishing.” And “The growth rate of the southern blue devil is even slower than that of the harlequin fish, and the species may be even longer lived, with a maximum known age of 59 years (meaning that it may be vulnerable to depletion from fishing?).”

As suggested by the CCSA, “The species is sometimes taken as a food fish by recreational anglers and spearfishers across its range and blue devils are sought after for the aquarium trade.”



A blue devil alongside some bullseyes
(Taken by Steve Reynolds)

Western Blue Groper

Oz DiverDown (<https://www.facebook.com/oz.diverdown>) recently stated, “Good visual presence of the western blue (groper) in the (Port) Lincoln and Sir Joseph Banks Group area and as well on the north face of KI. Definite behavioural difference between the KI and Spencer (Gulf) group though. Much more skittish in the Spencer (Gulf).”



Blue Groper
(Taken from MLSSA website)