



Points of Interest

- *Marine Census*
- *Recent activities*
- *Old Wives*
- *Snorkeling*

Contents

<i><u>From the President and Marine Census</u></i>	1
<i><u>News/ Recent Activities</u></i>	2/3
<i><u>Feature/ Recent Activi- ties/ Coming Activities</u></i>	4/6
<i><u>What to do this summer</u></i>	7/8
<i><u>Pest Alert</u></i>	8
<i><u>Photos / News</u></i>	10/11

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PRESIDENT'S PIECE.....

Summer is coming and we look forward to getting together in lots of different places to snorkel, explore rock platforms, kayak, and much more. The extent of the program depends on you.

Early January will see the start of the next round of snorkel surveys. Hopefully those people who haven't had much opportunity to take part so far will be able to join us for some of these.

We will also be applying for a grant to help subsidise the scuba surveys being done by some of our members.

The weather gurus are predicting a wet spring which may keep the estuaries open and put more nutrients into the ocean. The wet spell earlier this year boosted local marine life so hopefully this may happen again.

Jenny Edwards, President

Marine Census and New Species

Earlier this month the national media reported on the release of the first world-wide Census of Marine Life

Over 2,700 scientists from 80 countries including Australia, made over 540 sea expeditions and increased the number of known marine species to about 250,000. However, one fifth of the ocean has not been explored at all and scientists estimate that at least three times as many species are yet to be discovered.

From The Sydney Morning Herald article on 5 October

Ian Poiner, chief executive officer of the Australian Institute of Marine Science and chairman of the census steering committee, said that in Australian waters, the 33,000 known species are thought to represent only 10-20 per cent of the total number present. "The age of discovery continues," he said.

It was hard to overstate the importance to humanity of life in the oceans, where commerce is increasing, Dr Poiner said. "Sea life provides half of our oxygen and a lot of our food and regulates climate. We are all citizens of the sea."

The census information is available in a series of books, maps, journal articles, websites and databases.

RED HERMITS

A couple of our members informed us that the crab, photographed by Cristina and Karl Stoffers at Narooma, is the rasping hermit crab a deep sea species that has found its way into the inlet.

It did not come alone as there are quite a few enjoying their new habitat.



WHALE PHOTO COMPETITION

Save any good photos of whales that you took in our area this year. We will be running a competition next year to find the best images for our website. It was a bit late to start asking for entries this year as the whale season is almost over. However, we will send more details in a future newsletter and advertise in the local papers as well.

Meanwhile anyone wanting to find out more about whales can visit the website www.wildaboutwhales.com.au

JELLYFISH

It has certainly been a great year for jellyfish. The last snorkel survey at the end of July was done at Bermagui in a soup of small jellies. Since then swarms of what looked to be the same types were photographed in Wagonga Inlet by Robyn Miller.

Over the past few months Robyn has seen larger jellyfish and more and more different species (see photos next page). We have yet to identify most of them so if you can help please get in touch.

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

We really appreciate members who send photos and/or words for our newsletter. The topics can be ordinary or bizarre, everything is interesting. If you are not already a contributor please have a go.

NCMG just needs to be a bit careful that what we publish in the newspaper or on our website is as accurate as we can make it so our editors will have the final say.

Send your photos or words to Jenny via info@ncmg.org.au

PAGE 2



Photo by Dianne Perkins: 8-armed Sea Stars crowd together as the tide goes out.

Working with Kids

August and September were busy months for the NCMG team who help with school excursions. Primary school fifth graders from Batemans Bay spent two perfect mornings at Cullendulla Beach learning about the marine life and seeing how the beach has changed over the years. Bodalla school explored the rocks at Potato Point and Year 11 from Carroll College visited the rock platform at Broulee.

NCMG members also took part in a Threatened Species Day event at Bodalla Primary. Selected children representing most of the primary schools in the shire had workshops at the school. We focused on marine pests that are in our waters or nearly here and how to identify them.

We are expecting more school activities at the end of the term. However, as one teacher asked, “where are the men?” Any blokes wanting to help please contact Jenny via info@ncmg.org.au



Photos by Robyn Miller:

Jellyfish soup (left)

Mystery jelly (bottom right)

At Bodalla school (bottom left)



Stars with Stripes

By Robyn Miller

Along our Nature Coast we see fish with vividly contrasting stripes. Are they just mug lairs or do they have secret survival strategies?

The tiny Stripey (or Footballer) is very common on Australia's eastern reefs. So, although he is coloured the same as a traffic sign he must be doing something right. And the Mado is almost as obvious. Judging by the size of these two species, they have to be near the bottom of the food chain yet they not only survive, they flourish and can be seen in numbers if we look carefully enough.

Quite often creatures are bright and colourful when they are toxic and use their colour as a warning of their toxicity – “eat me and you die”.

The Old Wife fish sports black and white vertical stripes, and is more than twice the size of the Stripey and Mado and even more obvious. However their dorsal fins are said to be venomous and capable of inflicting a painful wound. So they can stick up for themselves to some extent. Perhaps their lairy outfit is warning predators of their poisonous spike?

“...Eat me and you die!”

*Photo by
Bill Barker*

Old Wives



RECENT ACTIVITIES

Rock Ramble

A large group of adults and children explored the Broulee rock platform earlier this month. There was no lack of enthusiasm and we managed to have close looks at many of the usual inhabitants. One young fellow was horrified to learn that the sticky feel of anemone tentacles is because they are firing stinging cells into the intruding finger. Although brittle stars were hard to find, we did see some baby ones towards the end of the ramble.

WANTED—VOLUNTEERS

To have a full program of activities over the coming months we need more members to offer to organize them. It is not difficult. You just need to be the contact person. No expertise is necessary. Choose somewhere you know well (swimming spot, place to canoe/kayak, somewhere to snorkel, etc) set a date, time and meeting place and we will let all the members know. They can then contact you direct so you know who is coming. Send your offers to Jenny via info@ncmg.org.au

COMING ACTIVITIES—MARK YOUR DIARY

Fishy Fun and Quiz, Friday November 12, 6.30pm

Carroll College Resource Room, George Bass Drive, Broulee. 6.30pm for 7pm start. We'll start with some BYO (fishy?) nibbles then use *Beneath Southern Seas* DVD to help identify some of the common fish we see when snorkeling. This will be interspersed with some fun quizzes where absolutely no expertise is needed.

Canoeing, Friday November 19

Suzanne Gray invites members to take part in a canoe survey of part of the Deua/Moruya River. The survey will look at fish habitat and riverside vegetation. If you would like to go please contact Suzanne. Suz-zanne@sulisit.com.au Please let her know if you have extra room in your canoe (or an extra canoe you can bring) it may save hiring them.

Snorkel at Potato Point, Saturday November 27, 10am

We've never managed to snorkel at Potato Point as a group, even though it is one of the most interesting and exciting spots in the area. We need a good day, with either no wind or just light southerlies. Any nor'easterly is likely to blow us out of the water, as will a sizeable swell. Expect to see lots of fish, stingrays galore and kelp and sea squirt habitats. We will send out a reminder with details closer to the time. Contact Bill Barker.

Narooma Rock Platform Walk, Saturday December 4, 1.15pm

We haven't visited this site before as a group, so it might be interesting to see what we can find. We will access the rock shelf just by the 'Australia Rock' and those who wish could gather earlier, say around noon, for a picnic lunch at the park near the Narooma town wharf. Further details will be provided closer to the time. Contact Bill Barker.

Art on the Path, December 5 and January 9

NCMG will once again have an information stall at these events but it would be great to have some people to assist even if only to help set up (around 7.30am) or pack up (around noon). Contact Jenny. via info@ncmg.org.au

COMING ACTIVITIES—MARK YOUR DIARY

Snorkel at Bermagui, Wednesday December 8, 10am

We will head south to see what we can find there.

One or two people have particularly suggested we do this and we would like to make sure this date suits our deep south members - so if it doesn't please get in touch.

Once again, a reminder will go out closer to the time. Contact Bill Barker.

Snorkel and Survey Training, Sunday December 19, 10am

Pretty Point Bay

This will be a training session for those interested in participating in snorkel marine life surveys. The training will focus on the use of equipment, methodology and species ID. The program of surveys continues to generate useful data on the marine life of the Batemans Marine Park. Once again, we know there are several people interested in taking part in this program so we would be interested to hear from you as to the suitability of the date (to participate in the marine life surveys you MUST complete a training session).

Anyone who may have done a previous training session and who would like a refresher would be welcome. Also those who would just like to come along and have a pleasure snorkel and not join in the training session are welcome, though we might have to leave you pretty much to your own devices while the actual training is going on. Contact Bill for more details.

Rock Ramble at Broulee, Monday Jan 3, 2.30pm

Meet at Harbour Drive carpark at 2.30pm. Priority to members and their families who have not been able to come before. Contact Jenny.

Snorkel at Mystery Bay, Wednesday Jan 5, 9.30am

Mystery Bay is a beautiful spot and deserves a good look. Contact Bill.

Snorkel With the Seals At Montague, Sunday Jan 16, 9.15am

With the amazing experience of close encounters with the playful and acrobatic fur seals, it is not surprising that this is always a very popular trip. If you are interested, please get in early so we can make sure we have the whole boat to ourselves. The cost last year was \$77 for adults and \$55 for children under 15. Contact Bill.

Explore the Rock Platform At Congo, Saturday Feb 19, 3pm

Meet at the far end of the camp ground at 3pm to make the most of the very low tide. Contact Jenny.

WHAT TO DO THIS SUMMER?

Snorkeling

By Bill Barker

“Snorkeling is a great way to enjoy our local waters and learn about the marine environment as well.”

Snorkeling is a great way to enjoy our local waters and to learn about the marine environment as well. All you need is some simple equipment, some basic skills and a reasonable level of confidence in the water. As usual we will be running a variety of snorkeling activities over the summer to give members an opportunity to make the most of the beautiful surroundings and rich marine life through snorkeling activities.

Already there is a bit of warmth in the air now and we have started scheduling snorkeling outings. On Wednesday 20 October a small group took to the waters of Guerilla Bay on a beautiful spring day. It was fairly cold in the water but it was great to be out there again, even though, to be honest, there wasn't all that much to see. We are scheduling several snorkel outings over the next few months, which will include general outings, the occasional mid-week snorkel, a refresher for those interested in participating in our snorkel marine life surveys and our very popular snorkel with the seals. (see PLANNED ACTIVIES) Our snorkeling outings will contribute to a guide we are working on to snorkeling in the Eurobodalla.

In addition to the scheduled outings, we may also propose some general outings at short notice if we get particularly good conditions. Suggestions from members as to places, times and activities are always welcome. One-day snorkel training sessions (\$50 fee) can be organised ad hoc depending on demand - if anyone is interested it would probably be better to arrange it sooner rather than later, so that you can take advantage of the summer opportunities. More detailed emails about each of the scheduled activities will be sent out a week or so in advance with all the necessary details. All snorkeling activities are weather dependent, of course, and we will no doubt have to make adjustments to dates and sites when the weather forecasts are available.

Any enquiries about outings I am organising, about snorkeling training programs or equipment purchase or hire should go to Bill Barker, info@ncmg.org.au

Photo by Bill Barker

Richard Eberhard enjoyed the snorkel at Guerilla Bay



WHAT TO DO THIS SUMMER?

Scuba Diving

By Bill Barker

“If you want to just give it a try, it is possible to do a ‘discover scuba’ dive .”

Unfortunately we haven't been able to do much diving locally for quite a while, mainly because a couple of key people have been away for months diving!

However, we are looking at setting up a dive with one of the local operators in January, probably the weekend of the 8th-9th. At this stage we are thinking of going across to Montague Island but suggestions would be welcome.

Boat dives are around \$100 per person and need to be arranged some time in advance in summer so if you think you might be interested it would be good to hear from you soon so we can get an idea of how many people we need to book for. Later we might also look at organising one or two shore dives.

If you are not already a diver but think you might want to take it up, get in touch with us and we can put you in contact with local dive instructors. For those who think they might just want to give it a try to see whether they might like it, it is possible to do a 'discover scuba' dive, which involves some basic information followed by a dive in shallow water closely supervised by an instructor. All gear is supplied.

Contact Bill Barker, email info@ncmg.org.au

PEST ALERT!

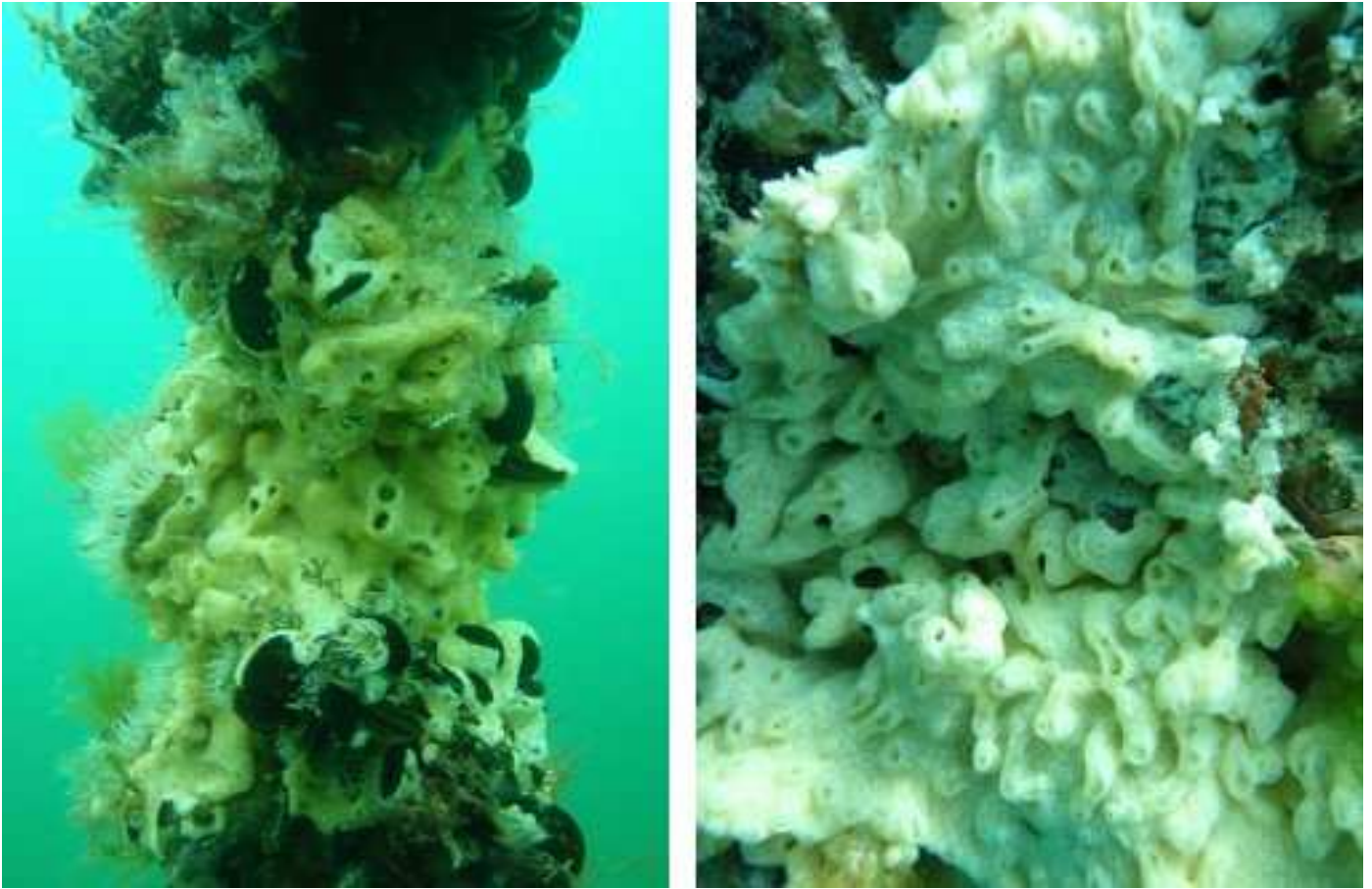
In March 2010 a suspected incursion of the invasive colonial sea squirt *Didemnum vexillum* was reported in Two-fold Bay by divers undertaking an annual marine biota monitoring program survey for the Department of Defence. Since then one of our members thinks they may have seen the pest at Merimbula.

Invasive exotic colonial sea squirts are found in many places around the world but they have not been known to occur in Australia. These invasive pests can significantly impact marine infrastructure, natural habitats, biodiversity and aquaculture farms. One species of colonial sea squirt, *D. vexillum*, has caused significant impacts in New Zealand and the USA. This species can be easily spread, and can attach to infrastructure such as wharves, pilings and boat ramps, as well as ropes and boats. It is known to overgrow and smother marine animals such as mussels and oysters.

Description: *D. vexillum* is a spongy-textured colonial sea squirt and can be either orange/yellow or cream in colour. It can feel leathery but is not slimy. It can form 'tendrils' that hang vertically and look like dripping wax. Its surface has dark veins (like those on a leaf) with small pores. This sea squirt is extremely difficult to identify in the field, requiring taxonomic and genetic expertise to confirm its identity. *D. vexillum* may easily be confused with the many native species of colonial sea squirt that occur in NSW.

More information and a video at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/pests-diseases/marine-pests/species/seasquirt> You can help by reporting any animal or plant you think is unusual and may be a pest! Note its location (take GPS points if possible), take a photo if you can and immediately phone the I&I NSW aquatic pests 24 hour recorded hotline on 4916 3877 or email aquatic.pests@industry.nsw.gov.au.

PEST ALERT



*Sea squirts observed in Twofold Bay which were suspected to be the invasive *Didemnum vexillum* (Photos: Aquenal Pty Ltd)*

PHOTOS

Crabeater Seal

This rare visitor came all the way from the Antarctic to see the sights of the Batemans Marine Park. It is only the third Crabeater Seal to have been recorded on the NSW coast. When spotted the male was relaxing in (or enduring) the unaccustomed heat of our winter sun.

Crabeater seals are mostly dark grey in appearance, but in summer the coat can bleach to almost white. Their faces are dog-like and they have characteristic chocolate brown markings and fleckings on the shoulders, sides and flanks.

Crabeater seals are misnamed, since they actually eat krill, not crabs, occasionally supplementing their diet with small fish and squid. Crabeater seals are now the single biggest consumers of krill, accounting for about 80 million tons a year.



Photo by Sandra Betts

Crabeater Seal

Photos Please!

If you have a favourite photo from an excursion, or of something you saw while exploring the shore or while in the water please send a copy to info@ncmg.org.au

You can also send a photo if you find some interesting thing but do not know what it is.

We will have a go at identifying it for you.

Want to know more about NCMG activities? Contact us:

info@ncmg.org.au or (02) 4473 5304

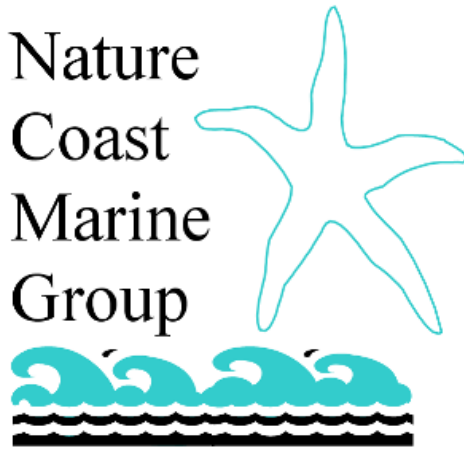
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What's News

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The AGM was well attended and you now have two new faces on NCMG's executive. Adrienne Waterman is our new Treasurer and Suzzanne Gray joins the committee.

Many thanks to Melanie White who has done a great job as Treasurer over the past few years including the difficult task of keeping track of the Natural Heritage Trust grant which has just finished. Melanie has kindly agreed to continue producing our newsletter.

People at the meeting were very interested in the film SEA CHANGE, about ocean acidification. It presented the facts clearly and in a non-technical manner yet visited many of the northern hemisphere research sites and talked to the scientists studying the problem. The focus was on pteropods, tiny shell-forming organisms which are at the base of many marine food webs.

Although Australia was not one of the places visited you have no doubt heard our marine scientists expressing the same concerns, especially about the ability of the corals of the Great Barrier Reef to keep up the rate of reef building and repair as the sea becomes more acidic.

YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2010—2011

PRESIDENT	Jenny Edwards (& Public Officer)
VICE PRESIDENT	Bill Barker
SECRETARY	Nick Blackman
TREASURER	Adrienne Waterman
COMMITTEE	Andrew Green, Suzzanne Gray, Rachel McInnes (Memberships), Jock Howe (Webmaster), Melanie White (Newsletters)