

Dive trip to South Africa

Overview.

Journey

The planning of the trip took place in Costa Coffee, Pwllheli, with 3 confirmed participants Melanie, Lowri and Dewi. Some coordination had to take place with Lowri opting to go out a week earlier to Cape town to dive the kelp forests before meeting with Melanie and Dewi in Durban to dive Aliwal Shoal.

Flying time to Durban was 16 hours plus layover in Dubai, we commenced at 8pm from Stansted airport before landing 5.30pm the following day, with Lowri landing at 5.10pm from Cape town. A transfer of about an hour saw us reach the Blue Ocean dive Centre and resort in Umkomaas where we were met by Rae the Dive master, she gave us a quick brief and tour of the facilities. The Dive Centre was large and we all had our own stations, restaurant next door and bedrooms above which were large and comfortable.

Following a tiring journey it was straight to the restaurant for a meal and drink and an early night before the 7am meet the following morning.

Diving

Aliwal shoal is a 4km hard coral reef system running from North to South in the Indian Ocean and was selected as a destination for shark encounters. The diving was challenging at times with under water currents constantly shifting. Rib based diving with launching on the river before negotiating the surf. The staff at the dive centre were awesome, assembling and carrying our kit to and from the boat, swapping bottles over between dives, and on return, cleaning, your kit, drying and then assembling ready for the next day.

The diving was mainly reef based but included two baited shark dives and one wreck dive.

Visibility varied from 8-15m with a sea temperature of about 23 degrees. We completed a total of 17 dives with shark sightings on all but 2 dives. All dives were guided with a group of not more than 8 persons and depths varying from between 15 - 27m.

There was an abundance of life on the reefs, always a large Potato Bass / Grouper guarding their territory and sometimes clashing with the neighbouring Grouper, the usual reef fish that you would spot in the Red Sea, Nudibranch, Crayfish, Moray eels, plenty of Scorpion fish , Rays, Turtles , Dolphins, Barracuda, Ragged Tooth sharks and Black tipped oceanic sharks.

A Note on Cape Town

In contrast to Durban, Cape Town's seafloor has an overwhelming amount of colour. Imagine pick'n'mix coloured anemones and nudibranches, with something small and wonderful to spot in every square inch of the Bat Sata dive site. Shore sites such as A-frame and Windmill showcase some of the Great South African Kelp Forest, an underwater jungle with thick branches that sway in the swell, and is particularly beautiful when beams of sunlight shine through.

Cape Town also has a few parallels to home. Partridge is their (slightly larger) equivalent to St. Tuds island, with dozens of playful Cape Fur Sea-Lions that will dance around you for the majority of the dive. Also the slightly chilly water temperatures which ranged between 10°C-15°C and was dived by everyone in wetsuits varying from 5mm (shore dives) to 10mm (boat dives), but was rewarded with hot chocolate.

If you can look beyond the water temperature (which does get warmer in their summer), Cape Town has diving to suit a range of interests (wrecks/ kelp/ seals/ macro, etc) and the DiveTeam would be happy to accommodate the club at some time in the future, possibly with incorporated trips to vineyards (*cough* Mike Duke) and tabletop mountain etc if that would be of interest - I definitely intend on returning to dive some of the sites I missed out on.

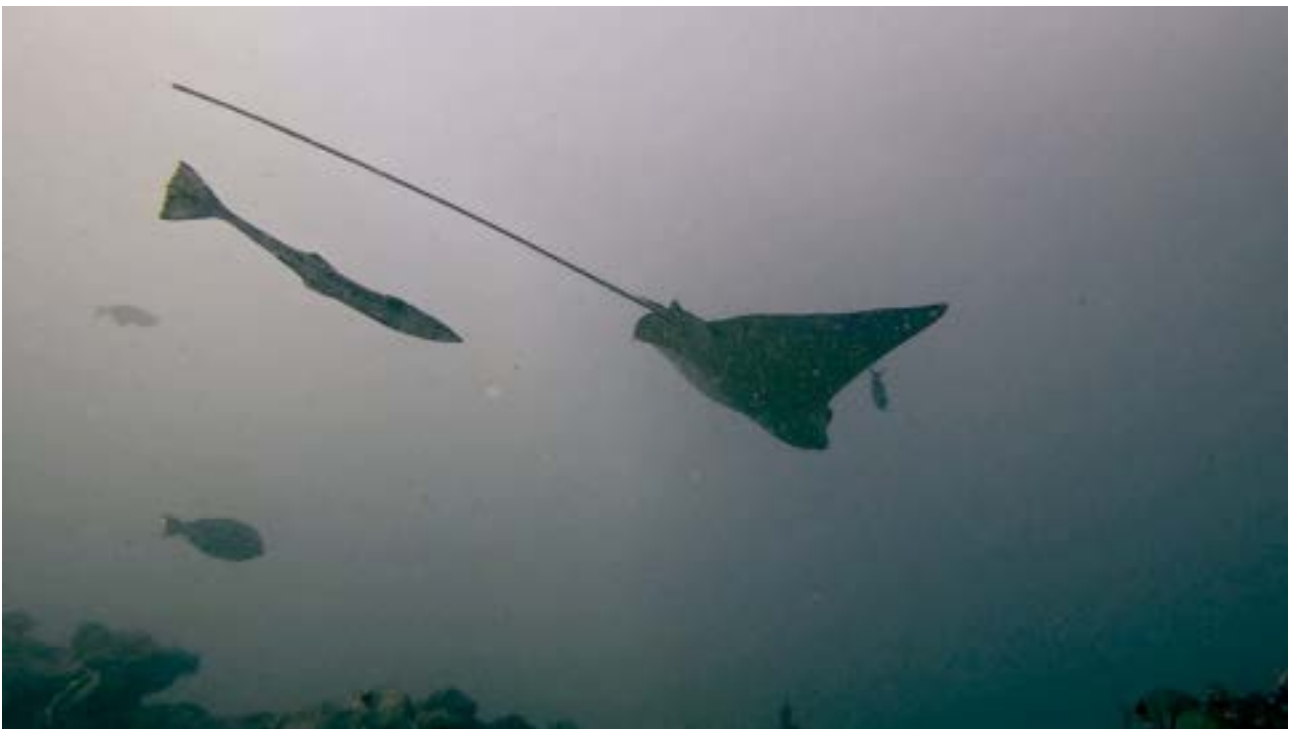
Cape Town Sea Life

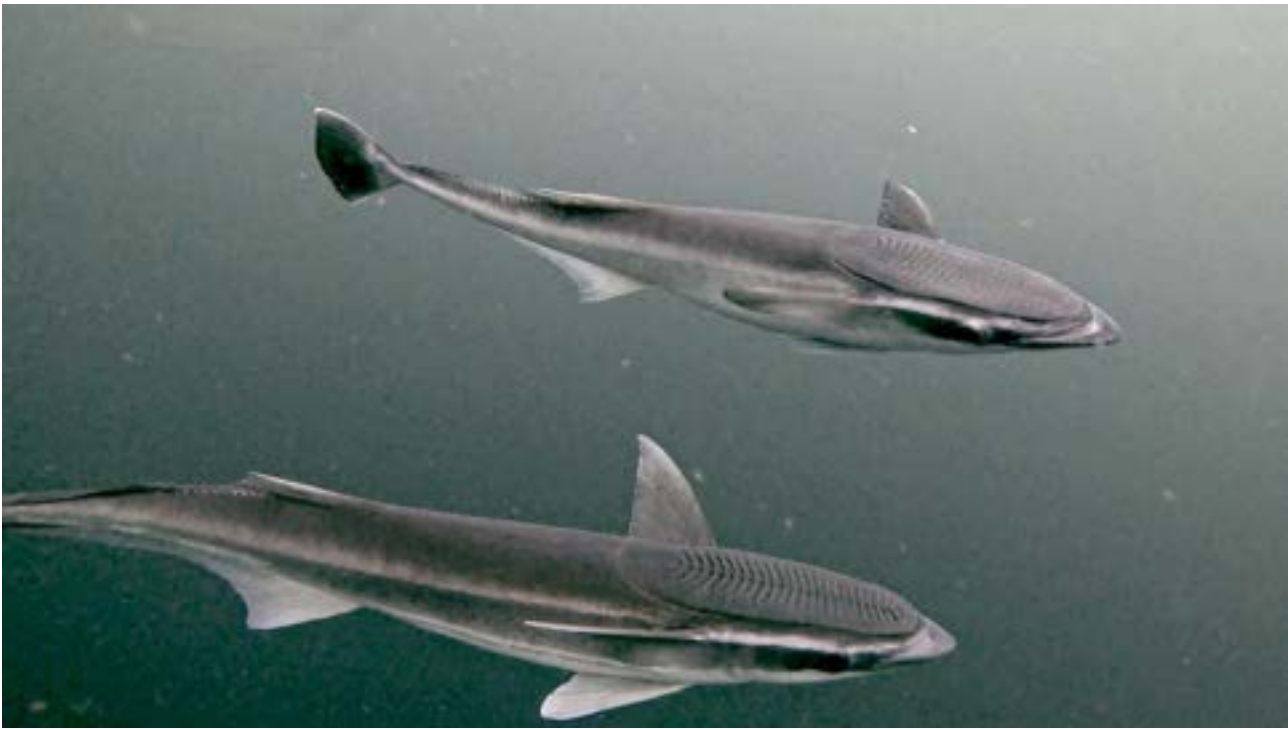
Pyjama sharks, white spotted bamboo shark, puffer shy shark, sea lions, blue rays, longtail rays, common octopus, sea slugs, anemones and nudibranchs I can't pronounce the names of,

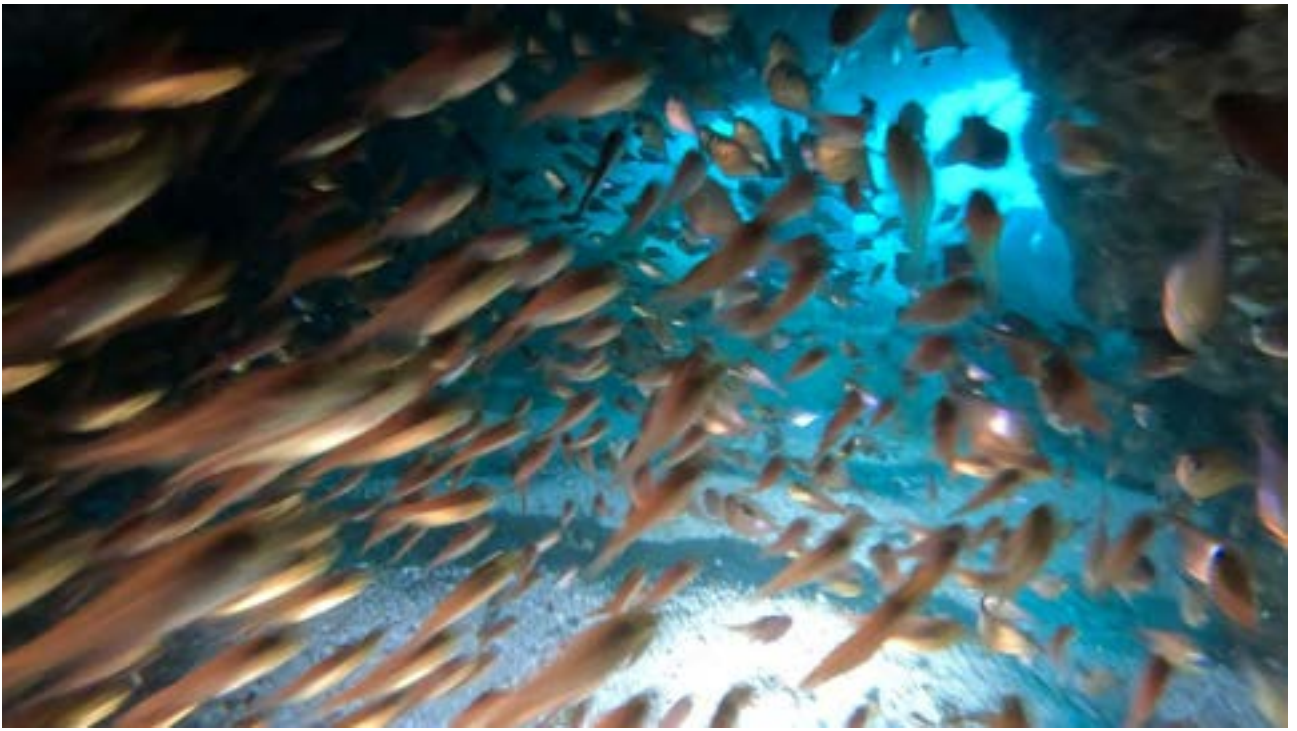
blue starfish and brittle stars, pipefish, cape gurnards, etc (they saw orcas, otters and a mola mola in the week after I left)







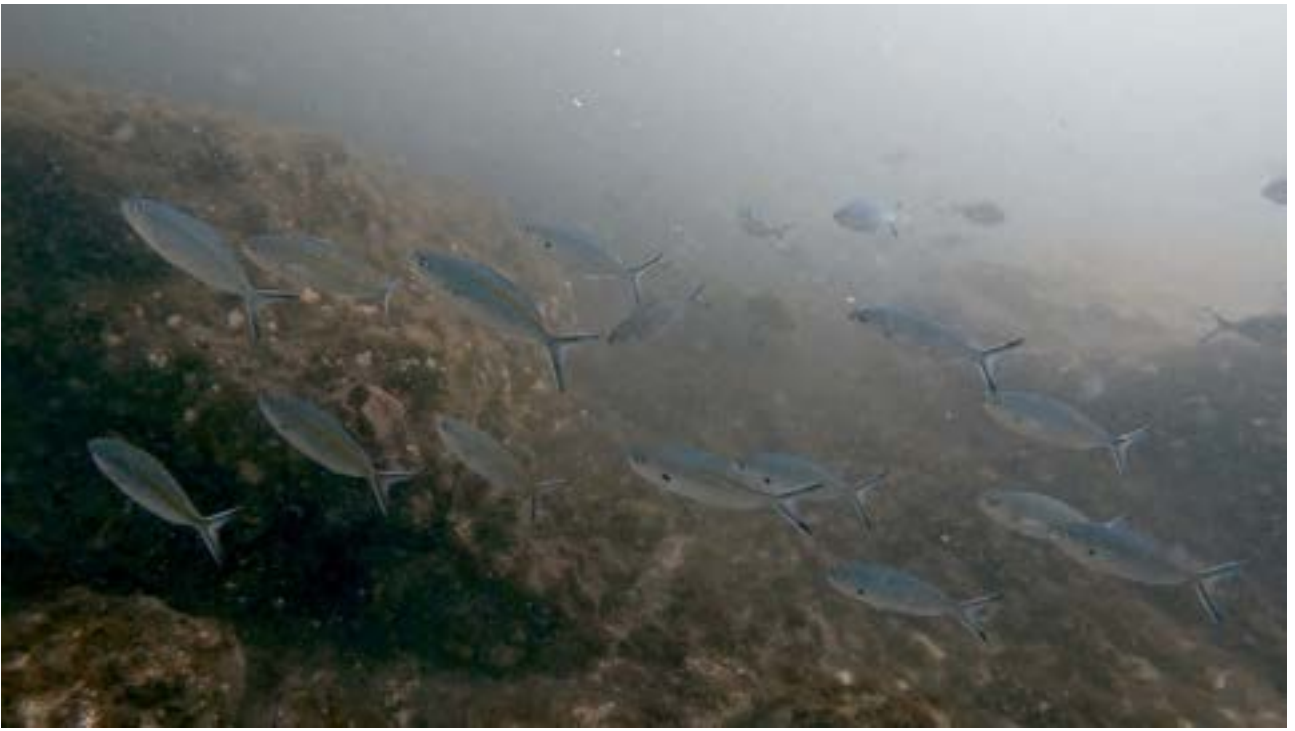








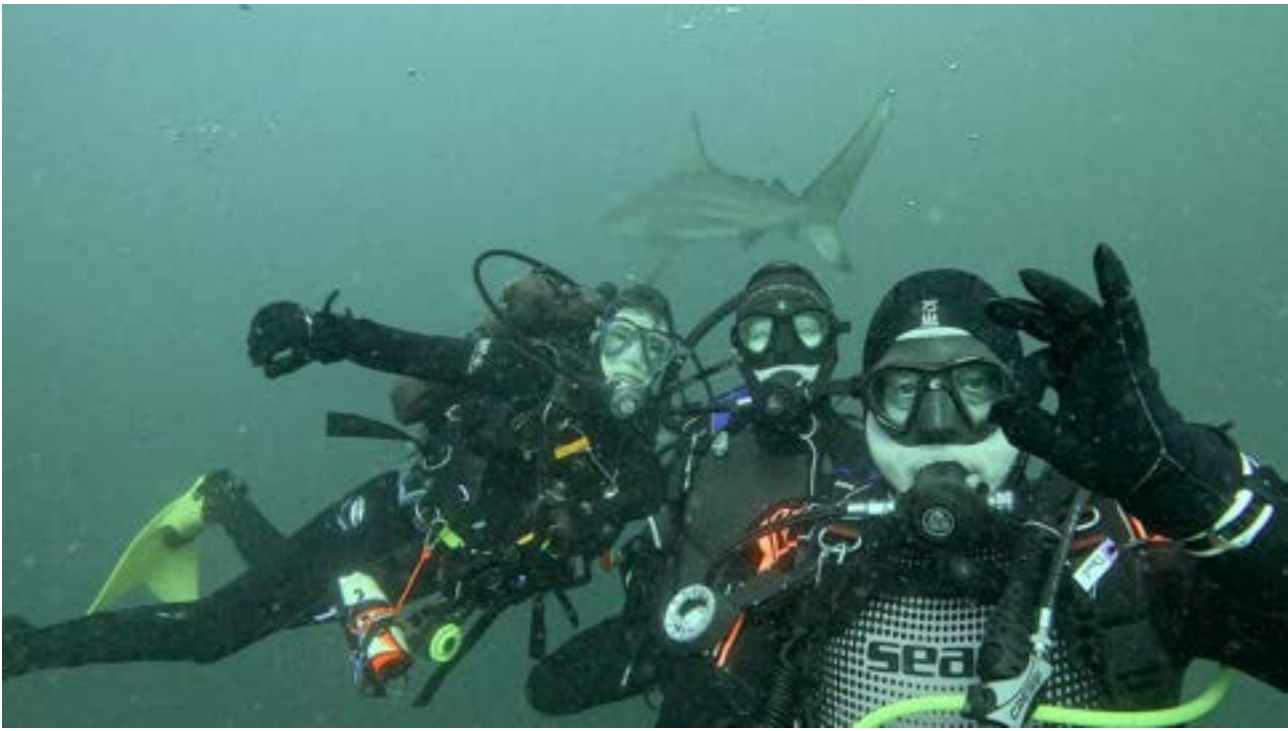
















Cape Town ~







Good Neighbours · Home









🎵 The Disneylanders - Just Keep Swimming



🎵 The Disneylanders · Just Keep Swimming





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