

Newsletter – April 2005

SHARK DIVING

Protea Banks: Once again shark diving has been great on Protea Banks. Our Associates have accommodated us well with great accommodation and diving.

The bull sharks have been very evident on our dives. My small new teaser is working well, but the large not yet proved. My last dive I was able to call back a bull female six times.

The tiger sharks are back and occasionally you will see them give a normal lateral scan. However the greater hammer head and bulls have been giving hyped frontal checkouts. The hyped behaviour caused by fishermen chumming nearby.

We have had spinner shark in shoals of yellow tail come past and the skipper also was able to enjoy them as he had a great display of them jumping with a spin, hence their name.

Sodwana: The pregnant raggies at ¼-mile Sodwana started showing in December Christmas there was very cold water and green with exceptional currents at the time of the tsunami and no more sharks seen along the KZN North Coast. Likewise no turtles came out to lay eggs 2-days either side of 26/12/04

We had a great stay with the Coventry BSAC club at Sodwana, great hospitality and great diving.

Aliwal Shoal: The Aliwal Shoal in June was finally declared a Marine Protected Area. Marine Coastal Management consultants have come out with a permit structure that is not economically viable for the Charter boat Operators. Likewise they have not understood the new tourism amendment act requiring generic accredited guides and want to charge an exorbitant price for the dive leading guide.

The Umkomaas launch site is being re registered to Durban Metro (eThekweni Metro) and Durban Metro will pay a fee and charge a launch fee per boat to recover permit fee.

The user pay principle is acceptable, all divers in Mozambique pay diver tax when they go there, and it is only the method and amount, that is being dictated by MCM without understanding the diving economics, which is not acceptable.

Wildlife safaris: The Coventry BSAC club really enjoyed Plan “B” when we were blown out from a dive and went to the new wildlife park called Eland Park close to Shelly Beach. The animals are still a bit wild but very visible. Plan “B” for Aliwal is the Tala wildlife park and has just introduced horse riding and what better way to see buffalo, rhinos, giraffe, blue wildebeest, eland, ostrich, various antelope and hippos etc. Tala is only an hour away from Aliwal Shoal.

We have had a drought in KZN and the St Lucia Estuary mouth has been closed for 2-years. The hardest hit was Mkuzi. We stayed at Mkuzi over Christmas and the pan was dried out with a few hippos in a muddy channel. That night we had a real rainstorm and the next day the Pan was full!



I won two nights in the Drakensburgs with the family for the above photo. It was a great break. Subsequently the same photo won the Final prize, so we have another 2-nights in the Drakensburgs.

Guiding: My Provider is Wildways Adventures, who has registered me as a Trainer and Assessor against Unit Standards TG 38 to conduct an Underwater Guide Marine Environmental Experience, level 4. This application has been approved and I am awaiting KZN Tourism to give me a certificate in black and white on my registered status. Once a black and white certificate is received, then I will then be able to start training and assess Underwater Marine and Shark-Diving guides. One of the summative assessments is an exam. Records of Prior Learning (RPL) will be reviewed for those applicants that are applying to be assessed. Portfolios will need verified copies of all RPL, certificates, references etc.

SHARKPROJECT

SharkProject: I was at the BOOT in Dusseldorf from the 15th to 21st of January on the Sharkproject-stand to promote Sharkschool in English, for 2005. The BOOT was a great experience and the Sharkproject stand had a great impact. What was also great was the feeling of being with friends on the Sharkproject stand.



At the BOOT after the first day of the show I was persuaded to go to a Press conference.

Spain was awarded the Shark Enemy for 2005, as it kills more sharks and sells more shark fin to Asia than any other country in the World, with their 3 x representatives on the EU all shark issues are removed for the EU Government Agenda and all attempts to protect sharks at CITES, Spain vetoes.



There was a lull and I heard South Africa and I had been awarded the Shark Guardian of 2005, for all my efforts in shark and marine conservation. For me a very emotional moment!



Since getting back I have finished getting the Sharkschool presentation completed, thanks to Wolf Snykers of Boleng Adventures who has been very patient with German translation that has not featured in my German dictionary. The Sharkproject this year is "Stop Sales" and more can be gleaned from www.sharkproject.co.za.



SHARK COURSES



- **Sharkschool:** The course is on PowerPoint and format with input from Dr. Erich Ritter and covers shark the animal and behaviour with excellent photo's and film clips. Plus the endangerment of shark its consequences and how to get involved with the Sharkproject.

Dates: Protea 10/04-16/04 and 14/5 – 20/5
Aliwal 11/9-17/9

- **Advanced Shark Certificated Diving Course:** (NAUI and SSI) covers shark behaviour, shark attack, shark conservation and the understanding why the oceans are threatened with the demise of Shark the Regulator. Further an understanding of shark the animal to enjoy them mid water.

The course diving is done on the Protea Banks and divers need to be qualified for 30-metre depths. This course is essential for any would be "Shark Diving Guides" for generic knowledge. Part of the assessment of a Shark Diving Guide is a summative assessment on shark generic knowledge accrued from my Shark Diving course and Advanced Shark Diving course.

Dates: June 3-5 Sept 5-7 Nov 25-27

- **Shark Diving Certificated Course:** (NAUI and SSI) covers the myth fears phobias about sharks, the biology of sharks and specific knowledge of the spotted ragged toothed shark. The diving is done on Aliwal Shoal and a shark dissection is included providing an embryo is available from the Natal Sharks Board.

Dates: Weekends Mid July – end Nov

OTHER COURSES

I also run ***Wreck Diving Courses*** with a section on marine archaeology as I worked four seasons on excavating a Portuguese War ship that sunk in the 1600's off Mombasa Island.

Marine Environmental courses. As a marine diving guide you will be assessed on your generic knowledge of the marine habitat and its flag ship species and for those intending to a Marine Diving Guide for safe, sustainable and informative interactions with marine flora and fauna this course will be a core factor. We do require a minimum of 4 persons to run these courses.

Andrew and Jane Cobb.

6 April 2005