

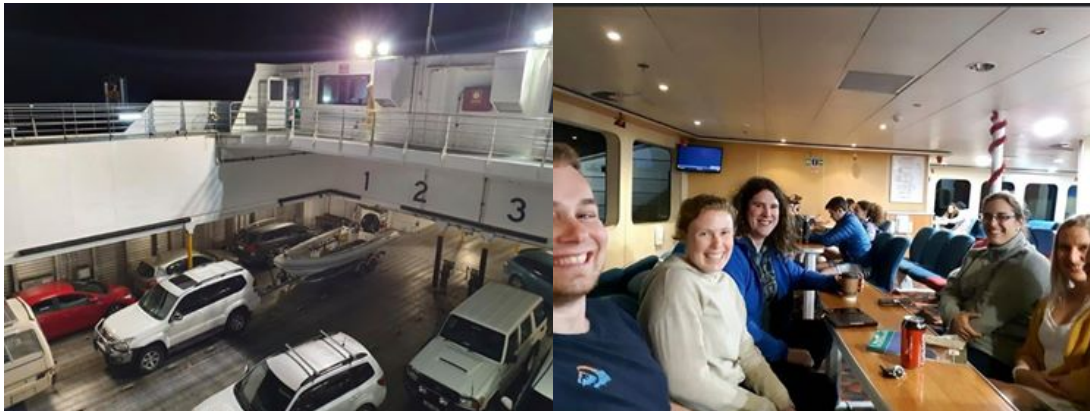
Trip Diary KI 26 December 2019 to 2 January 2020

Participants:

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Fiona McQueen, Emma Smadbeck
Bec Gore, Drew NJ
Jade Bruggeling, Anita Futterer – author
Photos (collection from the participants)

Day 1

We took the ferry with 3 cars and a boat in tow to Penneshaw and made our way to the flinders research station located at flinders chase NP. Night driving had its challenges with all the KI wildlife out to greet us.



Day 2

After a slow start due to arriving after midnight, we headed to Emu Bay for our first dive day. Launched the boat around lunchtime headed west towards Stokes Bay.

Note: the boat ramp was extremely good for launching (deep and concreted with grooves) however no water was available at the ramp. There was no cost associated with boat ramp usage.

Note: A local at Jamieson Marine recommended diving the head at Emu Bay (north-east), this should definitely be considered for future trips.

Dive 1 Emu Bay - Poo Rock **

Did a discovery dive at Poo Rock in around 6m depth.

Critters: boarfish, dusty morwong, blue throated wrasse, nudibranchs (sea hare, blue dragon, *Dendrodoris arborescens*), lobsters, female blue grouper.

Vis: 5m, medium surge, 21 degrees, 7m depth

Dive 2 Emu Bay - Rocky Island ***

Looking for more structure and bommies, we headed back towards Emu Bay. Dived on the west side of a Rocky outcrop from the mainland. Big bommies in 7m depth. Lots of overhangs, undercut bommies covered with yellow gorgonian fans.

Critters: snapper, male blue throated wrasse, female blue grouper, boarfish, bulls eye, zebrafish, drummer.

Vis 7m, medium surge, 20 degrees, 9m depth.



Day 3

Filling tanks was the morning duty. Good idea to get the key to the fuse board in case the use of the compressor triggers the safety Switch.

Dive 1 Hanson Bay (shore dive)***

Two dive sites - one west along the reef line.
And one around the bommie on the eastern side of the bay. Beach entry.

Rocky with lots of healthy brown algae, kelp, seagrass and sand.
Sea lion, school of salmon, female blue gropers, zebra fish, wrasse.

Vis: 8-10m, low swell, 18 degrees, 7m depth, medium to strong surge.

Dive 2 Vivonne Bay (shore dive)***

Looks like a tropical beach with jetty. Easy entrance via jetty stairs.
We expected a bed of seagrass and got so much more.
A reef structure with overhangs runs opposed to the jetty at a depth of 2-4m.
Healthy reef lots of soft coral, crinoids, the usual reef fish and baby leafy sighted.

Vis 10m, 21 degrees, 3m depth, slight surge



Day 4

Early start we headed to Stokes Bay leaving the accommodation at 8:30am. Beach launch at low tide was fun (there is a narrow channel and the locals use tractors - our Prado did a fabulous job with the assistance of eight divers in the water!).

Combined efforts got us out the bay heading towards Pissy Boy Bay.

Dive 1 Pissy Boy Rock *****

Fantastic sites with channels, big bommies covered with brown algae. We dived west of the rock heading towards the beach. Played for 30+ minutes with Australia sea lions. A number of male western blue groper and an orange Harlequin fish were sighted. Sea lions and fur seals sun bathing on the rocks.

The fish were extremely curious to see divers in the water – this must not be a usual occurrence.

Vis: 12m, 19 degrees, depth 16m

Dive 2 Pissy Boy Arch *****

Stunning topography on this site with 2 swim throughs with arch overhead. The site has female and male gropers. Found a harlequin fish under an overhang, accompanied by a cuttlefish and a marblefish. Various species of nudibranchs were found in the cathedral.

Vis: 12m, 21 degrees, depth 10m

Flat seas and sunny conditions made for a great day out with dolphins joining the boat ride back to shore.

Boat retrieval on higher tide was a smooth team effort.

We would recommend a whole dive trip along the coast, sites we did not get to include were the amphitheatre and the eastern side of Pissy Boy Rocks.

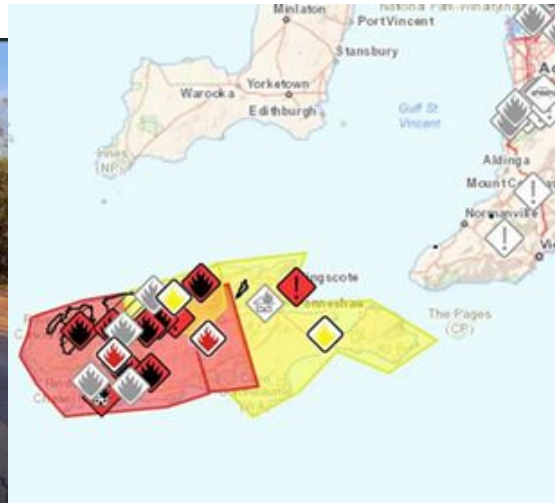


Day 5

Gathered for a meeting at 5am as we could smell smoke, dry lightning and thunder was occurring followed by some rain. There was an existing bush fire north east of our location before we arrived on the island however a new fire had been started by the dry lightning on the Playford Highway. Strong winds made for extreme bush fire conditions. We decided to stay and be on alert.

At 6am the park ranger visited, notifying us that we were to evacuate as there was a fire in the park. We also found out that we are not going to be able to return for the night, which made us officially homeless on the island at peak holiday season.

Without coffee and breakfast, we packed our gear, all the food, 2 compressors in record time (45 minutes) and made our way via the South Highway (only safe option) to Kingscote for some much-needed caffeine – the team worked beautifully. Evacuation was along the southern road, as the northern road and main road into the national park had already been closed.



The local playground provided the BBQ facilities for a Gourmet breakfast.

Miraculously during breakfast we found a place to stay thanks to a very generous person (friend of a friend) that let us all stay at his place for the remainder of our trip. It is perfect as it gives us now an opportunity to dive around Penneshaw for the next couple of days. Thanks to Jamieson Marine that fixed our boat this morning too.

No diving today. Filling tanks, getting settled at our new home, discussing dive plans, cooking dinner and beach walks summed up the day.

Day 6 New Year's Eve

After breakfast and a peaceful night sleep in our new home (for the remainder of the trip) we headed to the Penneshaw boat ramp to launch the boat. It was a pleasure to gear up at the house, then put the boat in the water fully laden whilst the divers all waddled down to the ramp in their wetsuits.

We managed to get about 20m out of the marina with an unhappy sounding engine. We anchored and trouble shot the engine problem outside the marina before we were towed back to the ramp by passing fishing boat that thought 9 divers anchored in front of the marina with the engine cap off didn't quite look right.



In the afternoon we headed back to Jamieson Marine in Kingscote and while the boat was getting repaired most of us checked out the jetty. Fantastic diving with leafy seadragons, nudibranchs, wobbegong shark and the usual suspects in very comfortable 23 degree water and a max depth of 5m. Others took the opportunity to visit the brewery and K.I. Spirits.

We returned with a fixed boat, cooked dinner and killed the time to midnight (New Year's Eve) by playing Yazzi and Charades.

Day 7 – New Year's Day

After a bit of a low start in the morning, we headed to the boat ramp to try again our luck. Conditions were great as we headed past snapper point to investigate Antechamber Bay. We drove as far as the Willoughby lighthouse then returned to find a good dive spot at the western end of antechamber bay.

Dive 1 Snapper Point East (Harley Heaven)*****

We anchored east of snapper point as the images on the sounder looked quite promising. The first buddy pair reported a sea lion multiple sightings of harlequin fish and blue devils of all sizes. Sponge garden started at around 16m)

There was a diversity of terrain at this site from sponge gardens (below 14m), sea grasses (below 7m), and kelp forests fixed in around the large rocks (above 5m).

Vis: 10+m, temp 19 degrees, depth 18+m (sloping to 30+m)

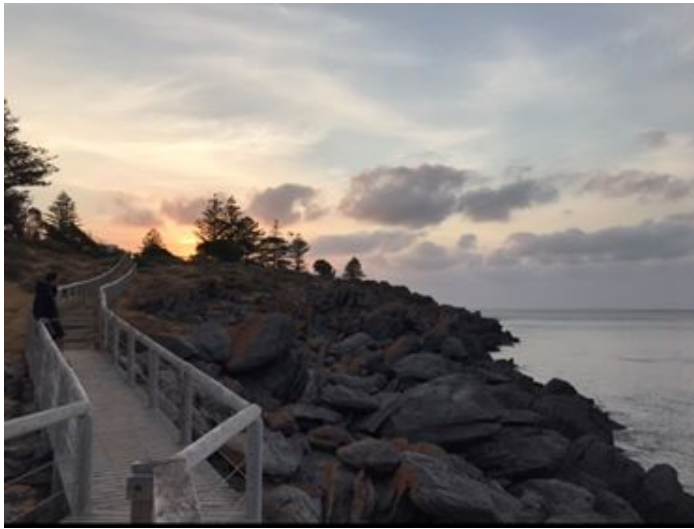
Snorkel Penneshaw Bay

On route to kangaroo head we came across a large group of playful dolphins (both common and bottlenose dolphins usually frequent the bay), half the group jumped in to watch the spectacle from the water whilst the remainder enjoyed the tail slapping and breaching from the surface.

Dive 2 Kangaroo Head **

This site was fondly remembered by locals to have leafies and be 'aquarium like' back in the day. Unfortunately, the dive site was not as well preserved as the sites we had explored. Maybe our enjoyment was clouded by the rough ride to the site and the team's exhaustion!

Vis: 8m, temp 20 degrees, depth 10m



Day 8

After breakfast it was time to pack up our gear and give the place we called home for the past 3 nights a thorough clean before we embarked on some sightseeing,

We visited the sanctuary, hiked up a look out for an amazing view, visited the Eucalyptus Distillery and the Brewery before heading to K.I. Spirits to sample a variety of gins and liqueurs.



Most of us managed to catch an earlier ferry which meant we were back at Cape Jervis and Adelaide in daylight.

This amazing and adventurous trip has come to an end. What a week we had and now knowing a bit after the event, it was good timing to leave the island as Day 9 saw the west coast in red alert and it looks like that we were the last visitors in the Flinders-Baudin Research Centre before the fires. Whilst I haven't seen any official confirmation, it was reported in the local news that the nearby Flinders Chase Visitor Centre has been lost in the fires. Sadly, this was later confirmed...