



December

This year December not only brings our last newsletter of 2023, but also a little reminder that we live in the northern hemisphere where the temperature gets down into the snow zone. Along with the arrival of snow comes too much shovelling, impassable streets and the dreaded hours long traffic jam. However, it also means skiing, tobogganing and all kinds of other fun snow sports are on the way. Aside from perhaps a post dive snowball fight, it doesn't offer much for divers. It does offer hope though. If it's cold enough for snow it might soon be cold enough for ice. And you know what that means! Alas, no ice diving article for December, though. This edition includes our usual NSUC news, plus a few other bits such as The Coastal Access Project, Marine Animal Response Society, memorial to Don Walsh, and a little throw back to summer about a snorkeler's encounter with a squid.

What Have We Been Up To?

General Meeting: The executive hosted a general meeting on November 13, 2023 at the Admiral Club in Spryfield with a short social afterwards. The socials are becoming a great part of the event as it allows people to catch up with one another and also provides a forum supporting the exchange of ideas. Highlights of the evening included:

1. Marine Animal Response Society (MARS): An informative presentation by Matt Mar.
2. NSUC Updates: Our latest ocean cleanup efforts, FB, web site and NSUC insurance updates.
3. Ocean Week: The event on the Halifax waterfront in June was very successful. We hope to participate again next year, but mainly as a participant rather than a coordinator.
4. Open Forum: Attendees were asked for suggestions as to what they would like the NSUC to work on in the future. We received lots of ideas and hope to implement at least some of them. Others will require more effort and time. If anyone would like to get involved, let us know.

Some ideas included:

- a. Underwater geocache
- b. Underwater photo contest
- c. Underwater park
- d. Artificial reef – there is a ship available in Pictou; owner willing to transport.
- e. Polling – set up an online questionnaire to solicit member input.
- f. Winter Talk Series - host events where divers give a talk about what they are doing.

Clean Up Dives: The NSUC hosted a cleanup dive at the Terence Bay Government wharf on November 4. We had a great turn out with many divers in the water, plus excellent shore support. 700 hundred pounds of debris was pulled off the bottom, including at least eight lobster traps. That brings our collection total for the year to between 1400 and 1500 pounds. We will be resetting the goal to zero in the new year and start all over again!



Lobster traps and other debris from around the wharf. Photo by Cliff Andrews



Facebook: It looks as though our Facebook page is permanently shut down. We submitted appeals and emails but have not received a response so we are moving on. There is still an old page hanging around that is available for use. We are cleaning it up a bit and once complete will send invites to everyone who was a member of our main page.

Don Walsh, Trieste Pilot

(Michael Schwinghamer)

Don Walsh passed away this November. He was a 92-year-old pillar in the ocean sciences community that few knew but all knew of his exploits. He was the Navy officer that piloted the Bathyscaph Trieste to the bottom of Marianas trench in January, 1960. For fifty years he was involved in subsea and ocean research. I always wanted to meet him but never had the opportunity. This year we lost several icons and this man's passing, along with Phil Nuytten greatly changes the landscape of the diving world. I may never measure up to these great men but I will do my best to encourage and help others achieve feats that may one day be as significant as theirs.

Dive Community Events

This section will eventually be presented in calendar format, but for now we will just list them. First though, a brief explanation of how we create the list. We contacted all the Nova Scotia dive shops we could think of, asking if they would like to participate in this initiative, then compiled a list of contacts from those responses. When it is time to write the newsletter an email is sent requesting everyone's events for the upcoming month. After a follow up email, we then take those responses and generate the events list. All responses are included. And that's about it in a nutshell. Our plan is to extend this to our website events page as well, which will ensure the events are promoted even if we miss a newsletter. So without further ado, here are the events for December:

Christmas Tree Dives:

- Torpedo Rays Scuba: 10:00am, Saturday, December 9 at Fox Point Beach
- East Coast SCUBA and Watersports: 9:30am, Sunday, December 17 at Mill Cove

Christmas Socials:

- East Coast SCUBA and Watersports: 1:00pm – 4:00pm, Saturday, December 16
 - Roasted nuts, potluck and refreshments!
- Torpedo Rays Scuba: 10:00am, Sunday, December 24
 - Lots of festive treats!

New Year's Dives:

January 1st for all

- Torpedo Rays Scuba: Time and site to be determined. Watch their FB page for details!
- East Coast SCUBA and Watersports: 10:00 at Bedford Mill Cove or Fox Point Beach depending on weather
 - New Years social to follow at the shop



Nova Scotia – Canada’s Ocean Playground

(Nicholas Winkler)

‘Nova Scotia - Canada’s Ocean Playground’ is a phrase printed boldly on every Nova Scotian license plate. However, growing conflicts over coastal access in the province are forcing coastal communities, landowners, and governments into asking: how should Nova Scotians get to the coast?

The Coastal Access Project is an initiative that will explore how changes to coastal access affects the way people access, live by, and explore the coast. The objective of this project is to foster greater public understanding of coastal access in Nova Scotia through informed storytelling, and explore equitable solutions to the challenges that are emerging. This project will feature a short-form, limited series podcast to be made freely available.

The Coastal Access Project is interested in stories from divers, snorkelers or free divers who have experienced challenges or conflicts in accessing dive sites or may have an interesting story about dive sites where access has been lost. Equally, if you are a coastal landowner that has interacted with the dive community, your perspective is also very much of interest.

People can submit their stories via a brief form at www.coastalaccessproject.com. Permission will be sought prior to using any submission in the podcast.

Marine Animal Response Society (MARS)

(NOTE: Excepting the volunteer paragraph, the text for this article was copied directly from MARS’ website.)

The Marine Animal Response Society (MARS) is a Nova Scotia-based charitable organization dedicated to marine animal conservation through response, research and engagement. Their goal is to build relationships that result in the conservation, recovery and stewardship of all marine animals and ocean ecosystems.

MARS collaborates with organizations to improve response, obtain expert equipment and training, develop protocols, and implement better safety standards. In Canada, they helped start the regional Maritime Marine Animal Response Network and the national Canadian Marine Animal Response Alliance.

Driven by a small team of deeply-committed staff and hundreds of passionate volunteers, MARS strives to make positive conservation impacts and inspire people to become stewards of our oceans

To learn more about MARS visit their website here: <https://marineanimals.ca/>

If you would like to join MARS as a volunteer, drop by their volunteer page to fill out and submit their volunteer form. You will be asked a series of questions to help match your skill set with their needs. They also have available a few free online courses. After submitting your forms, you will soon receive a few emails with lots of great information to get you started. You can find the volunteer page here: <https://marineanimals.ca/support/volunteer/>

Finally, to report stranded, injured, entangled or dead marine animals in the Canadian Maritime Provinces call please call 1-866-577-6277



The Squid and the Snorkeller

(Elli Ofthenorth)

Introduction: *With winter upon us and a fresh fall of snow, it's always nice to look back to the warm days of summer. Last August I was doing my usual arm chair diving, scrolling through the local dive and snorkelling FB pages when I came across an enthusiastic post in Scuba Diving and Snorkelling Nova Scotia. I thought it really summed up the excitement and wonder many divers experience during our brief underwater visits, especially when seeing something for the first time. It also goes to show you don't always have to strap on a tank to have an amazing underwater experience! With Elli's permission we reprinted her post from August 12, 2023. We hope you enjoy it!*

I had the most magical experience with one sweet little squid last night! Alex Wright and I went snorkeling just before dusk "on the fly", which means we didn't have our wet suits and so it was a bit chilly. Unfortunately, I was not able to find this cute little squid friend until Alex was out getting dressed and too cold for him to come back in the water.

The squid was smaller than others I had seen before (7 inches max) so perhaps it was not yet fully grown. This little one was sitting on the gravel sea bed six feet down, holding very still when I came upon it. The water was dark pink from the rain and the sun was setting so I'm surprised I was able to see it at all considering its camouflage capabilities!

I don't know what it was doing just sitting there but it looked so relaxed! Do they sleep? Its tentacles were initially resting on the gravel and its flappy fins were still. I looked around for a bit but there didn't seem to be any others. I started to move a bit closer and then do some diving down towards it to have a closer look. The camera wasn't able to pick it up from afar since it looked so much like the gravel. It darted away a few times but only a foot or two at a time, and seemed to keep its large eyes directly on me wherever I went. I know they can run like the wind when they want so I assume it was just as curious about me!

It was a bit of a challenge to stay on the bottom long enough so I put the camera in video mode and set it in the gravel. With some experimentation I was able position it and get some good footage.

The squid seemed very curious about what was going on but did not approach the camera. It just stayed in one area kind of looking around and doing this beautiful back and forth hovering movement. Maybe this is the movement that makes it safe to investigate something potentially dangerous while still making it possible for a quick escape? Ready to run! I don't know for sure, but that dark spot in the picture might be the ink sack it can deploy to confuse predators!!



Squid hovering above the gravel bottom showing off what might be its ink sac. Photo by Elli OftheNorth

I hated to leave it behind - I wanted to watch it forever and understand it's behavior, but the sun was setting and Alex was waiting so I'll just have to try to find it again and perhaps dream about it if I can't!



What's Happening Out There?

Are there any events or activities taking place in the upcoming months you think might be of interest to the underwater community? If you would like get the news out there let us know and we can post it in our newsletter. Just send your idea to any of the email addresses below and we'll get in touch.

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