

Nova Scotia Underwater Council Monthly March 2023



March

February came and went with nary a sentence. The January Quarterly was sent out later than planned and then life showed up for everyone here at the NSUC executive. But we are back at it again and managed to cobble together a bit of news for March. Winter continues to drag on, but it is nice to see lots of people are diving. And as much as we complain about the cold, it did bring joy to some adventurous divers in the form of ice diving. Winter cannot stop the North Atlantic diver! Anyway, on with the news. In this edition we bring you details about the upcoming AGM, an article about diver training, a list of important phone numbers and some news about an exciting event in early summer. And now we present to you our March newsletter. It's been a long time coming, but it's well worth the wait.

AGM

The 2023 AGM will be held at the Bedford Library, Tuesday, May 16 at 6:30 pm. It is usually in April, but this year May is the earliest time all the executive are available. We will present the usual updates, along with news about upcoming events. Exciting things are in the works! We will also have a guest speaker and present the annual Jane Biggs Award to this year's recipient.

Jane Biggs Award

Each year the NSUC presents the Jane Biggs award to a person who has significantly contributed to the Nova Scotia diving community. The winner is selected from a list of nominees, submitted by NSUC members. The nomination forms will be sent out separately from the newsletter, but to get you thinking about a nomination, this is the criteria:

- Nominations can be made by any member of the NSUC
- Nominees do not have to be members of the Nova Scotia Underwater Council
- Winners of the award will have made significant contributions to the development, promotion, teaching, and/or understanding of diving in this province
- Nominations must be made on the official NSUC form. It will be sent to our mailing list and uploaded to our Facebook page. You can also request a form by emailing the NSUC.



Jane Biggs Award

Apart from 2020, the award has been given out every year since 2019. Past recipients were:

- Greg Croft - 2019
- Tony Sampson - 2021
- Deon Jones - 2022



NSUC Presents: Ocean's Week Celebration

(Alanna Canaran)

The NSUC is hosting an Ocean's Week Celebration June 10th on the Halifax boardwalk at the Queens Marque courtyard. You will find us right across from the famous Queens Marque staircase that leads into the water. Join us for this day-long outdoor event to help celebrate our ocean playground! The event is free, open to the public, and family-friendly, so make sure to save the date and stop by. Dive into a fun-packed day full of activities, prizes, and interactive experiences from our ocean partners.

Are you part of a local ocean organization and would like to be involved? We are looking for volunteers to help run the show, so please let us know if you are interested in helping out!

Stay tuned for more announcements and information to come.

When: June 10, 2023, all-day
Where: Queens Marque Courtyard
1709 Lower Water St #104,
Halifax, NS

Courses, Courses, Everywhere a Course

Congratulations! You have just been certified as a new diver. The first stop in your exciting journey in the world of SCUBA diving. But where to go from here? Take more courses? Which courses? When? Well, it depends. There are so many courses available, but where you go next depends on your interests and goals. Many learn to dive because they want to explore the shipwrecks that dot our coastline, like The Arrow (30 - 90 ft) or the Daniel Steinmann (60 - 80 ft). In order to visit such sites, training beyond an open water course is required to ensure you have the knowledge and skills to safely conduct such dives. To dive the deeper wrecks, such as The Russian (130 -140 feet) or the L26 submarine (160ft), additional, more specialized courses are required. To realize either of these goals, there is a required minimum number of courses divers must take in order to participate in such dives. Others might find they are perfectly content diving within the limits of their open water certification, but discover an interest in underwater photography. In this case, the advanced courses are not necessary, but the underwater photography course offered by some agencies could be useful. In each of these examples, the divers all share a common interest in diving, but each have different goals and interests requiring different courses and so their diver education paths will diverge after the open water course.

But what if you don't know what you want to do next, other than get out and dive? That is ok, too. There is no need to immediately rush into the next course even if you meet the prerequisites. Take some time to build confidence, figure out which gear configuration works best for you, hone your skills and get comfortable diving in different environments. Engage in post dive discussions with your buddy and talk about what worked and did not work. For those who do have a goal in mind, this is still a good philosophy to follow – take the time to ensure you are comfortable before pursuing the next level and seek out divers who share the same objectives. Along the way you will interact with other divers and dive shop staff and before you know it, you will be plotting your continuing education path.



In addition to courses that train you for the diving you want to pursue, whether it be deep diving, ice diving, or whatever diving, there are many courses which are not mandatory prerequisites for any specific type of diving. Do you need them? No, but they can certainly enhance your dive experience. For example, an advanced certification is all you need for diving to 100 feet. However, the No Decompression Limit (NDL) decreases with depth, so although not required, an enriched air (Nitrox) course would be a benefit for advanced divers. Once properly trained in the use of Nitrox, divers can get depth appropriate Nitrox fills and achieve longer bottom times at a specific depth. Do you find yourself bouncing off the Saguenay, or crashing into eel grass beds? A peak buoyancy course might help. Surfacing at Paddy's Head near the bridge instead of the sandy shore? There is a course for that, too! Rescue Diver is a great course and should be considered by all divers – among other things, you learn how to recognize diver stress, recovery of unconscious diver, evaluate dive sites, respond to a distressed diver, and conduct in water rescues. This is just a small sample of available courses, so check out your training agency's website and visit your local dive shop (LDS). You might discover the perfect course!

This article touches on several types of diving and encourages patience before enrolling in the more advanced courses. But no matter what you decide to do, always, always stay within the bounds of your training. An open water certification trained you for daytime dives up to 60 feet with a buddy. It does not prepare you for the challenges of advanced types of diving, including solo diving. While solo diving can be conducted within open water limits, it is an advanced activity requiring skills beyond the scope of an open water course. To safely dive alone you must have experience, the right equipment, and be able to manage your own emergencies. Dive numbers alone do not prepare you for solo diving unless those dives include training from qualified dive instructors for dealing with emergencies at depth and the use of redundant air supplies. Preparation and training is prudent before you assume the risk of solo diving. However, if solo diving is something that interests you, courses are offered through at least three certifying agencies. One of the prerequisites for each, though, is experience: in addition to advanced certification, PADI and NAUI Self-Reliant Diver requires 100 logged dives, while SSI Independent Diver requires 75 logged dives. In a similar vein, an advanced open water diver is not prepared for dives to 150 feet – a depth that requires additional gear, special breathing gases, and, you guessed it, experience, and training. Of course, it is natural to be curious about different types of diving as you continue to dive, but do it safely and with the proper training. If a certain type of diving interests you, visit your LDS or Dive Instructor for a chat. Nova Scotia has top notch dive shops with friendly and knowledgeable staff who can help you plan a path for achieving your goals, addressing any questions or concerns along the way. A dive shop can also provide you with the certification standards for the courses they offer. With all this information at your finger tips you can make an informed decision as to whether you are ready for your next course, and if not, what you must do to get there. It will take longer than just jumping in, but in the end, you will be safer and have a much more enjoyable dive experience.



Who Ya Gonna Call?

(Wayne T. Joy)

The purpose of this article is to provide you with some dive related contact numbers you may want to program into your phone in order to better react to sightings, incidents or accidents while diving around Nova Scotia.

As recreational divers we are, by default, a community of marine loving adventure seekers who travel the region's shorelines to slip below the surface into a whole other world. As such, we get to witness some wonderful things and sometimes things that are not so wonderful. By its very nature, diving provides us with a perspective that few others get to see and at times there may be a need to reach out for help or to report something you have witnessed. Here are a few organizations that divers should be aware of:

- Marine Animal Response Society (MARS): 1-866-567-6277 (24/7) to report stranded, injured, entangled or dead marine animals in Canadian maritime provinces. Their e-mail is MARS@marineanimals.ca
- Canadian Sea Turtle Network: 1-888-729-4667 (24/7) for leatherback turtle sightings. They are also interested in Logger Head turtles or any other sea turtles spotted around Nova Scotia.
- Shark sightings of any kind: please email Dr Chris Harvey-Clark at Chrisharveyclark@gmail.com
- The general Canadian Coast Guard 24/7 telephone reporting system: 1-800-565-1633 is to be used to report a range of marine sightings such as flares, pollution, overdue vessels, or marine mammal incidents. This automated switchboard will direct your call to the appropriate agency.
- Atlantic Region Marine Pollution Reporting Ops Centre: The direct line to the centre, 24/7 is 1-709-772-7043.
- QE II Hyperbaric Chamber hotline: is 902-473-7998. After hours emergencies will be directed to the on-duty physician and technician through this number.
- Many of our local wharfs have posted contact information for their specific Harbour Authority. A courtesy call to these individuals goes a long way to inform them of incidents at their locations but does not replace contacting the appropriate authority for incidents requiring immediate action.

Finally, let's not forget 911. The 911 operator is your conduit to fire, police, medical and rescue in the event of a serious emergency including lost diver etc.

If anyone knows of other dive related numbers that could be added to this list drop us a note. By the way, I left out CAA who are particularly helpful when your keys are locked in the car.

In the News

A few stories of interest to those of us who play in ocean around Atlantic Canada have been in the news recently. The CBC reported on the creation of a virtual marine exhibit of the Bay of Fundy and a workshop hosted by a whale rescue group in Newfoundland.

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[Dive Deep into the Bay of Fundy](#): Published by CBC on February 12, 2023, the report tells us about 'Dive Deeper', a virtual exhibit created by the Huntsman Marine Science Center in St. Andrews, New Brunswick. The exhibit focuses on the Passamaquoddy area of the Bay of Fundy. The story includes all kinds of interesting little tidbits, including some of the marine creatures inhabiting the region, currents and the challenges of recording video in 360 format. As you read the article, take a moment to watch the embedded video of wolfish snacking on horse mussels at Deer Island. You can use your cursor to experience the 360 view – cool stuff! The article includes a link to the [Dive Deeper](#) website where you will find 3D maps of the sea floor around the islands, more 360 videos and links to many of the species in the bay, marine science technologies, species and much more.

[Learning the Ropes of Freeing Tangled Whales](#): This video posted on March 6, 2023, introduces a whale disentanglement tool workshop hosted by Newfoundland's Whale Release and Strandings group. The intent of the workshop was to look at current gear and prototypes and test them on different types of rope to find ways to make disentanglement easier and safer. The approximately six-minute video also includes members of the team talking about some of their rescues, along with some great footage.

[Whale Release and Strandings](#) runs the marine animal release program in Newfoundland. They respond to whales, leatherback turtles and basking sharks entrapped in fishing gear, ice or stranded on shores. Even though the group is based in Newfoundland, the site has a lot of general information regarding entanglements and entrapments. The entrapments page has a map marking incidents from 2013 to 2017 and the entanglements page includes a graph showing entanglements from 1979 to 2008 – you might be surprised at the numbers considering they are just Newfoundland.

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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