

FLOTSAM

Issue #1, 2008

**2009
COMMITTEE**

**LIFE MEMBER
SIMON
FREEMAN**

**SUMMER
AND
SCALLOPS**

**MUCK
DIVING
UNDER
ORAKEI
WHARF**

**CHILLING
OUT IN
LAKE
TAUPO**

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DISCLAIMER: The opinions and comments expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Auckland University Underwater Club, its officers or its members (the "AUUC"). Scuba diving is an inherently risky activity and no reader should act on the basis of any material contained in this newsletter without first obtaining appropriate instruction from a qualified scuba diving instructor. The AUUC expressly disclaims all and any liability to any person in respect of anything arising from or caused by any material published in this newsletter.

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*Cover photo: Red crayfish (*Jasus edwardsii*) taken on the Bay of Islands trip in October 2008 by Alison Perkins.*

Editorial

The last couple of years have been a bit lean for issues of Flotsam, the newsletter of the Auckland University Underwater Club

(AUUC). But we've never claimed that Flotsam was anything other than a sporadic publication! This issue, being the sole one for the year, will endeavour to sum up the activities of AUUC in 2008.

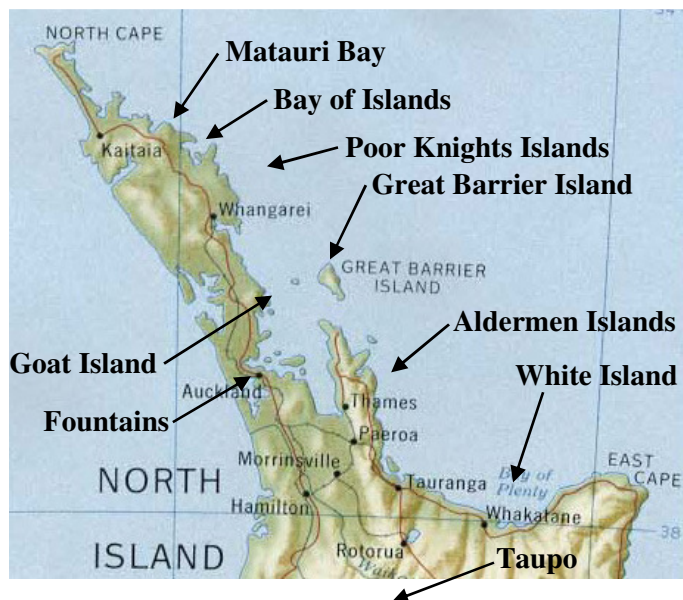
2008 started with the launch of a new club website, designed by Mazdak Radjainia and Guy Kloss, with regular blog posts from myself. With Rosemary's hard work, the club ran loads of courses, teaching students how to dive. Matt, Mike and Ming put a lot of work into obtaining grant money and selling the club boat so that we can buy a new one in 2009. Kathryn kept the administrative cogs of the club turning, so efficiently we even had committee meetings. Ryan and Ming made sure there were dive trips every couple of weeks so that we could all get wet and Mazdak built a strong spearfishing following, so that this side of the club is now as strong as it has been in recent years.

The year really couldn't have concluded in a more superb way, than with a fascinating talk from guest speaker Dr Roger Grace on the 'Ecological and Fishery Benefits of no-take Marine Reserves'. It was a thought-provoking presentation that will ensure the club does its utmost to support the creation of more marine reserves in future.

A big thanks to Ming for his scalloping trip report. As I churned this issue of Flotsam out in a hurry at the end of the year, it consists mostly of my articles. I'd love to receive loads of photos and literary contributions from club members in 2009. Email me! Thanks for reading. See you down under.

Alison Perkins (AKA Ali – Editor)
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Where did we dive in 2008?



Goat Island and Matheson Bay
Poor Knights Islands
Great Barrier Island
Matauri Bay (*Rainbow Warrior*)
Bay of Islands (*Canterbury*)
White Island
Lake Taupo and Waikato River
Aldermen Islands
Fountains of Auckland and Orakei Wharf

Is there somewhere else you would like to dive in 2009? Why not email your suggestion to committee@akunidive.com?

Committee Elections

Following a cabinet shuffle at the AGM on 01 October, we farewell (and thank for their invaluable contributions) Guy Kloss (Webmaster), Matt Cooney (Grants Officer) and Simon Freeman (Flotsam Editor). Welcome new committee members David Taylor, Oliver Furneaux, Peter Freeman and Hayley MacDonald.

The 2009 Committee

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Rosemary Freeman, Stan Woodhouse, Daniel Laird, Hayley MacDonald

Muck diving under Orakei Wharf by Alison Perkins

Orakei Wharf Trip Report - 25 April 2008

This report is the first in a series of reports on muck diving that can be viewed on the club website (akunidive.com). Visit 'Post History' in the right column and select 'Trip Reports' to find others.

Rising fuel prices are making the already expensive sport of scuba diving even less affordable. It's time to branch out, try something new. NOOOOoooooooooooo, I don't mean give up diving! We need to find a way to keep diving as often as possible, but more cheaply.

With that in mind, Cameron and I headed for the Orakei Wharf, in front of Kelly Tarlton's, off Tamaki Drive. I had long been keen to dive there. I'd heard you could see Seahorses, Pipers and Stargazers, and that seemed like reason enough for me. With bad weather approaching, Anzac Day was it! The timing was great for us. High tide was at 10:33am, which meant we could sleep in, go dive, and still be home in time for lunch!



The Orakei Wharf. Looks like a promising dive site. And a good way to combine tramping and diving!

We opted to enter the water from some concrete steps off the street east of the jetty. This made for an easy entry but a pretty decent swim to the jetty pylons. We picked a pylon and descended. I was thankful for the extra weight I had put in my weight belt. With the current, small chop on the surface and lack of visibility, I was able to descend quickly to the bottom.

Each pylon was a self-standing encrusted ecosystem of sponges, tube worms, green-lipped mussels, oysters, crabs, triplefins, sea stars, butterfly chitons, algae, sponges, anemones and much, much more! We quickly discovered the difficulties of navigating from pylon to pylon. We couldn't see our own fins, let alone the next pylon, and the current didn't help. We opted to pick a couple of pylons and examine them intently, before heading back to shore.

If you own or can borrow dive gear and have your own car, then this is a really cheap dive. For the cost of an air fill and the fuel from your house to the wharf, you're in the water. This probably won't be the most exciting dive you ever do, but I genuinely enjoyed it. It was a terrific way to spend half a day and have time left over for other stuff.



© Alison Perkins

A brilliant red sea star nestled on the shelly bottom.

Next time I dive the Orakei Wharf (yes, there will be a next time!) I'll tough out the long walk to the end of the pier with my scuba gear and enter from the end. There is a fence-free section which has a ladder down to the water. You're looking at a 2½ metre stride jump at high tide. I expect that the macro life under the end of the wharf, in slightly deeper water and with the greater cover provided by the end of the pier, will be even more spectacular. I bet that's where all the Seahorses, Pipers and Stargazers are!

You don't have to travel to the Bay of Islands, Poor Knights Islands or Goat Island to go diving. Those sites are spectacular and I do recommend you get out to them as often as you can. But in between, dive sites like the Orakei Wharf are worth a bash, and provide a cheap diving option close to home.



© Alison Perkins
Evidence courtesy of a fisherman...there are Pipers near the wharf. Apparently you can eat these little fellas!

The work has begun and you are all welcome to help me complete it: Auckland's Top 10 Dive Sites with visibility under 2 feet! A friend described it well. Muck diving! The Orakei Wharf provided some great muck diving.

Dive Statistics

Max depth - 4 metres

Visibility - 2 feet

Water temperature - 17°C

Bottom time - 29 minutes

Nearest bathroom - Okahu Bay

Backup in bad weather - Kelly Tarlton's Antarctic Encounter and Underwater World

Do:

- Dive at high tide for the closest thing to a slack current.
- Look out for a neap tide (moon at first or third quarter), when the difference between high and low tide is less and therefore the current may be a little less.

- Take a compass. The jetty is a single line of pylons and it's difficult to navigate from one pylon to the next in such poor viz.
- Wear gloves. The pylons are covered in shellfish with jagged edges.
- Watch out for numerous cyclists, rollerbladers, prams and joggers on the sidewalk when you're gearing up.
- Contact me if you plan on trying out this dive and I'll pass on some extra tips.

Do Not:

- Attempt this dive in anything other than a calm sea.
- Get sucked out by the current or you'll get stuck in a shipping lane with some massive container ships!
- Spend a fortune renting gear to do this dive, unless you're as mad about macro life or diving as I am.

Highs:

- Some of the worst visibility you'll experience short of diving with your eyes closed. Looking up, and not being able to see the surface when your computer reads 1 metre, is really novel.
- Loads of macro life.
- Beautiful views of the Auckland skyline from your dive site.
- If you're new to diving, you can sand plough all you like and your buddy will hardly notice.
- If you like being the centre of attention, you'll have every man and his dog show an interest in you while you're gearing up.



© Alison Perkins

Cameron gearing up. You won't get any sand in your regs gearing up for this dive, but watch out for cyclists.

Lows:

- Some of the worst visibility you'll ever experience short of diving with your eyes closed.
- A ripping current (which is okay on the bottom but roaring on the surface!).
- A lot of fishermen on the wharf – try not to get hooked!
- If you don't like being the centre of attention, you'll have every man and his dog show an interest in you while you're gearing up.

Why?

- For the chance to see Pipers, Seahorses and Stargazers.
- For the challenge of diving in poor visibility and currents.
- For diving that's practically free.
- For the chance to p!ss off the local fishermen.
- Why not? It was fun!

Chilling out in Lake Taupo by Alison Perkins

Lake Taupo and Waikato River Trip Report - 02 August 2008

The Spot X Diving New Zealand guide lists nine different dive sites in Lake Taupo. For almost every one of them it has a statement to the effect: “best on calm days with no rain for a week or so”. In a week where most of New Zealand was flooding and gale force winds were blowing the country down, it made perfect sense that the club would head to Lake Taupo for a dive trip!



© Alison Perkins

Taupo troopers (left to right): Ali, Shane, Peter, Ming, Luke, Kale, Nick, Cameron and Ryan.

Nine club members (Ryan, Ming, Luke, Nick, Peter, Shane, Kale, Cameron and Ali) travelled in a convoy to Motutere Bay on the eastern side of Lake Taupo on Saturday morning. Gloomy grey skies melded with steely grey waters as we traipsed through crashing waves into the water. Below the surface of the lake it was dark and still. Small speckled fish flitted around the bottom. We descended along a rocky wall, chased by a cloud of silt whenever a fin kick came too close to the bottom.

At 18 metres I was enveloped entirely by silt. I couldn't tell up from down, left from right. As fine particulate matter closed in around me I experienced vertigo. I took some long, deep breaths, suppressing an urge to panic and finned gently forward. As I moved out of the cloud I could see the shadows of my two buddies up ahead. Relieved, I settled back in to enjoy the dive and the koura we had just stumbled upon.

Freshwater crayfish (koura) have got to be the most fun thing about diving in New Zealand's lakes. These spunky little crustaceans always seem to be up for a fight. I probed the hidden corners deep under a rock with my torch. A koura came charging out at me, pincers waving. With no regard for my considerably greater size, the feisty crayfish danced around in a most intimidating manner. This episode was repeated with each koura I came across. As I marvelled at their brilliant colours, bulging eyes and thorny legs, and flashed away with my camera, they exhibited obvious disdain for this intrusion on their habitat and came out fighting, making for some hilarious moments.



© Alison Perkins

Beware, koura (freshwater crayfish) are feisty!

Departing the water with piercing icecream headaches, we jumped into our cars, heaters blazing and headed for a feed in Taupo. Pizza Hut didn't seem to have any issues with divers in wetsuits rocking up for a buffet lunch. Then it was off to the Waikato River. We were a little concerned that the river might be running high, to relieve pressure on Lake Taupo given recent heavy rains, but it seems they were limiting the flow down the river due to flooding of the Waikato at its northern parts. There was a pleasing gentle flow to carry us away.

Not fifty metres downstream, disaster struck. Ming, who had chosen to snorkel the river, broke a mask strap. This seemingly tragic event was greeted with raucous laughter by the other members of the group. Before entering Lake Taupo, Ming had enthusiastically informed us all that he was

carrying a spare mask round his neck, just in case anyone had a mask failure/loss underwater. Now, in his own time of need, he'd left his spare mask in the car!



Peter holds up an angry koura.

The Waikato River is surprisingly barren. We drifted over a pebbly bottom that occasionally plunged away below us. In places there were huge boulders, in others car tires. We kept a wary eye out for trees near the shoreline, not wanting to get caught or pinned by the flow of the river. A surprised trout buzzed us, as we accidentally blocked its escape downstream. On the surface, lush green banks sidled by as rain fell. Plumes of steam announced our final destination, a hot stream pouring into the river via a series of pools. We stripped off our icy wetsuits and relaxed into the naturally warm waters, massaging feeling back into whitened toes. River chilled beers were pulled out of catchbags and the defrosting began.

A fine days diving was capped off by further beer drinking, rugby watching, paying out of Australians and New Zealand national anthem singing. The group of intrepid divers split in three directions on Sunday. Some headed up the mountain, some drove back to Auckland, and Cameron and I travelled through driving rain to Lake Okataina for some more diving. We'll save that chilling story for another day...



Some kind of trout resting on the bottom.

Dive Statistics - Lake Taupo

Max depth - 25 metres

Visibility - 8 metres

Water temperature - 11°C

Bottom time - 43 minutes

Critter count - bunch of koura (freshwater crayfish), trout, catfish

Dive Statistics - Waikato River

Max depth - 14.9 metres

Visibility - 5 metres

Water temperature - 11°C

Bottom time - 13 minutes + snorkelling = 45 minutes

Critter count - 2 trout

Summer and scallops by Ming Lam

Jones Bay Trip Report - 21 September 2008

When arriving home on a Sunday morning at 4am, I normally look forward to waking up some time late in the day with plans to sit and stare at the TV and let my body recover. But the weather report was good, high tide was at 12 and scallop season was on! So after a 5 hour power nap I bounced (fell) out of bed and threw together my dive gear and headed out the door.

The sun was shining and I quickly made my rounds and collected fellow divers Matt, Rachel and Rosemary. Just an hour and a bit north of Auckland lay a well known scalloping spot in Tawharanui Regional Park, Jones Bay. The water was calm and the vis, contrary to normal, was good at 10-15 metres. The water temperature was just starting to get warmer and after a quick suit up in the convenient grassy parking area (no sand in gear) we waded out into the bay.

Being underwater went a long way to soothing the headache! Just wished I was breathing a higher percentage O2 mix! After a bit of a swim to get out to deeper water where the bigger scallops were to be found (advice from a friendly scalloper) we started finding legal sized scallops at about 10 metres. There was a bit of a current with the ebb tide but nothing we couldn't handle. Managed most of my quota and after 30 minutes of bottom time we all ascended. If the girls were feeling a bit cold from the dive the surface swim back soon warmed them up! After a shucking 101 lesson from Rosemary we boxed our bounty (minus a few taste tests) and had lunch in the sun on the rocky beach overlooking the sea and a distant Kawau Island.



Even with the bit of traffic we hit on the way back we were still home in time for dinner (garlic butter scallops). This excellent little day trip represents a cheap option for students short on time who can't sacrifice a whole weekend for a trip. The surrounding area has some good spots around Goat Island and Leigh. With the summer coming on and hopefully more good weather weekends, anyone looking to get wet should drop AUUC an email (2008@akunidive.com) and round up some other keen divers.

Relaxing at Jones Bay.

50th Anniversary - 2011

AUUC was established in 1961. We will be celebrating our 50th year as a scuba diving club in 2011. In preparation for this momentous event, we are establishing contact with our past long, lost members. Don't become one of them! You may be moving on from the club, but you can stay in touch with us by signing up to receive our 50th Anniversary updates. Look for this box in the right column of our website (akunidive.com):

Countdown to 2011

[50th anniversary in 814 days](#)

50th Anniversary

AUUC - And legacy lives on.

Sign-up for our reunion newsletter!

E-mail:

First Name:

Last Name:

Year of Club Membership:

Species

Looking at fish is fun. It's the reason many people choose to scuba dive. It's even more fun when you get to know the local species you're looking at and can recognise when you're seeing something rare or uncommon (this is critical for spearfishers too!).



What is this...a shrimp?

Photo taken at the Aldermen Islands in July 2008.

In response to requests, this year we started accumulating photographs of species of marine life found in New Zealand waters on our website. It's a growing resource that members can refer and contribute to.



It's a chameleon prawn (*Hippolyte bifidirostris*) on seaweed (*Carpophyllum maschalocarpum*)!

Life Member Simon Freeman



At the 2008 AGM, Simon Freeman was nominated and accepted as a Life Member of AUUC. Simon joined the club in 2001. As a student at Auckland University he studied engineering and marine biology, graduating to a position as a product development engineer at Fisher and Paykel Healthcare.

Simon became Secretary of AUUC in 2004, President in 2005, Training Officer in 2006, Boat Officer in 2007 and Flotsam Editor in 2008. He's made an enormous contribution to the club over the past few years for which we really can't be thankful enough.

Simon has TDI Advanced Nitrox and Decompression Procedures qualifications and was usually observed diving on twin tanks down around 50+ metres, looking for uncommon species of fish and coral and snapping away with his camera rated to 40 metres.

Thanks to our Supporters

Many individuals and businesses in the New Zealand dive industry help AUUC members out with generous discount prices and great service. We extend our thanks to the following for their support in 2008:

- Neil Walker of Stirlings Dive Shop.
- Shane Housham, Julia Riddle and Daryl of Northland Dive & Cowshed Backpackers.
- Bruce Dow of *Crayzee Diver* Charters.
- Mark and Denise Barnes of *Pacific Hideaway* Charters.
- Jim Hope of *Taranui* Charters.
- John Baker of Baker Marine Charters (*Ma Cherie*).
- Jamie Obern and Mel Jeavons of Dive HQ Greenlane (Sea & Ski Greenlane).
- Dr Garry Tee, former AUUC member.
- Dr Richard Willan for his expert assistance in identifying invertebrates for our species pages.
- Dr Roger Grace for his excellent talk at the AGM on marine reserves.

Club Meetings

Club meetings are held at 6:00pm at a room at the university on various Wednesdays throughout the academic year. Visit the club website (akunidive.com) to find out when the next one is.

Trips: What's Going Down?

19 October	Matheson Bay
22-24 November	White Island
29 November	Poor Knights Islands
30 November	Poor Knights Islands

Email trips@akunidive.com to register your interest.

Visit the club website regularly to find out what's going on around the club. We don't usually run any official club trips over the summer holidays but just because university is over for the year doesn't mean we won't be diving. There are always people looking for dive buddies. Email the club to find one: 2008@akunidive.com

Why not plan your own dive trip? Eg. A group of club members spent last New Year's Eve at the Cape Brett Hut in the Bay of Islands, snorkelling, spearfishing and diving. Search the club website for a trip report on that adventure and to be inspired!

Scuba Training 2008

It's been another awesome year for training divers. Congratulations on the hard work Rosemary.

- 8 PADI Open Water Courses (>50 people!)
- 1 PADI Advanced Course
- 1 TDI Advanced Nitrox and Decompression Procedures Course
- 1 TDI Extended Range Course

It is likely we'll be running two more PADI Open Water courses after exams. Email Rosemary to get on one of them: training@akunidive.com

How do you know if your buddy hates you?

Here's a quiz to help you find out

a. Do they give you the "wait here" sign and you are still on the boat?

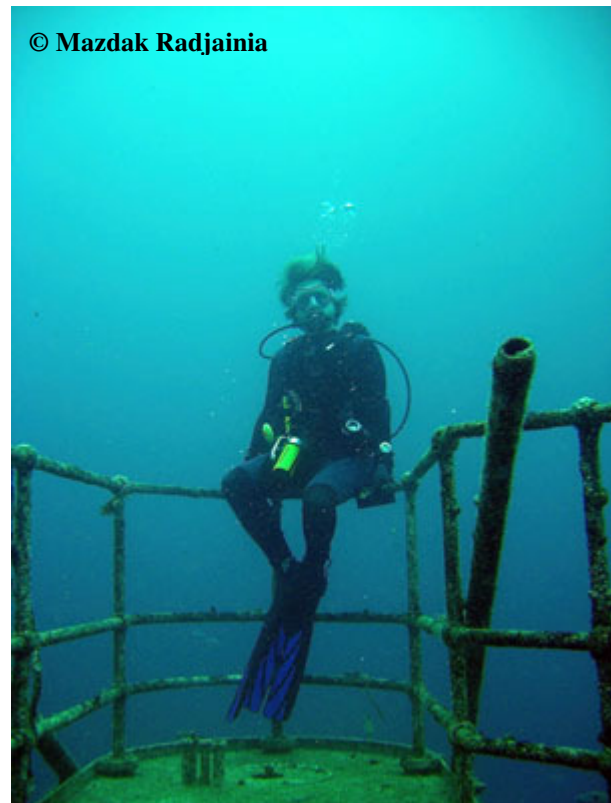
b. Do they "forget" to close your drysuit zipper?

c. When you give them the out of air signal, do they pass you their snorkel?

d. When you indicate you are low on air, do they write on their slate "I'll get you some" and swim off?

e. When you give them the "OK" signal do they give you the finger?

f. Do they spit in your mask for you while you're wearing it?



Mirko on the ex-HMNZS *Canterbury* in Deep Water Cove, Bay of Islands.