

Marsa & St Johns 2006

A chance email from the Tony Backhurst organisation resulted in Ken Blay and myself jetting off to Marsa Alan to join the Sea Serpent on a diving trip to St Johns and the deep South in July 2006. This was virtually the same trip we had done in November 2004 but at nearly £400 less. It was bargain we could not pass over. The others could not travel at such short notice, so missed out. An excellent holiday with one minor exception covered later. The water was even warmer than we were used to at 29 degrees and the water down St Johns was even clearer than it had been in November 04. Overall a very enjoyable week apart from the fact that we only spent one night at St Johns before heading North again. We finished up on the last 2 days doing sites which though nice enough were really things done as day boat or even shore dives. Not really sure why they do this (in retrospect, I realised that much the same had happened with Sea Whisper in 2004). It cannot be a fuel costs as we saved nothing by coming back after one night. I did raise the matter with Tony Backhurst on my return on the basis that if you do not tell the operator, they will be unaware of issues. To start with he tried to justify the itinerary, but eventually concluded that I was right and hopefully things will change. Equipment wise the trip was something of a disaster for me. Firstly my dive torch flooded. As it was only a £7 item from Lidl used as a spare, I was not too worried (in fact I got it exchanged on my return), then my laptop got soaked. Not sure how this happened as we never opened the portholes during the whole week to make sure the a/c could function properly. My suspicion is that the cabin boy did open the portholes at times and forgot to shut them when the boat was actually moving. Anyway water was running out of the laptop and it was very dead. Only that morning I had downloaded all the pictures to date from the memory cards and cleared them down for the second half of the week. We were unable to retrieve anything from the laptop.

On the very last dive I noticed water rising in the camera housing as I descended. A rapid ascent saw me opening the housing on the surface and removing the batteries. As we had been dropped by zodiac, which was now out of sight, there was little option but to re-seal the camera housing and continue with the dive. The fault this time was wholly mine, I had closed down the case with the eye-shield cord trapped inside. The only saving grace was that I had changed the memory card that morning so I did not lose any more existing photographs. However, Murphy's law now came into play as we saw things (including a family of squid laying eggs and fertilising them) which I would love to have recorded. The final insult was to find on my return that due to a confusion when transferring my contents insurance policy, I had no cover for any of the damaged items. Funnily enough, though the camera itself was beyond repair, the memory card and the batteries survived. I was lucky enough to find an identical camera on Ebay for £80 so can it was not too expensive a disaster. The laptop was old and no great loss, the only really upsetting thing was not recovering the pictures. A few lessons learnt the hard way but an excellent trip nevertheless.

Addendum: I sold the laptop for spares (with a caveat that should the purchaser be able to access the disk, that the photos should be returned to me). About a year later, out of the blue a CD arrived from which I managed to retrieve all but a handful of the 'lost' pictures.

Abu Dhabab – 16M	Elphinstone – 22M	Habili Ali – 31M
Dangrous – 21M	Dangrous – 22M	Little Habili – 30M
Small Goatara – 29M	St John Caves – 19M	Satayah Fury Shoal – 14M
Sahaab Malahy – 25M	Wadi Gimal – 12M	Marsa Abu Dabbab – 24M
Marsa El Shona – 23M		

If you click on any pictures which have a black border, you can link to a video clip. These are being added slowly as they take a long time to prepare.



Antheas and soft corals on a recent wreck. Amazing how quick they grow



One eyed Batfish, the left side which you cannot see.



Blue Spot Ray



Box fish - largish, about 1/2 metre in length.



Pair of Butterfly Fish



Yet another Clownfish defending his anemone



A family of clown fish with Ken's finger poking again



Cornet Fish. Very hard to get a good picture of these creatures. Hopefully there will be some video behind this picture shortly.



A shoal of Goat Fish. They stir up the bottom for food using their front feelers



Very odd little chap.



Coral Grouper



Ken swimming round the bow of a sunken yacht.



Close-up of a Lionfish



Night picture of a different type of Lionfish



Lunar tail grouper with a Napoleon Wrasse in the background



Another Napoleon



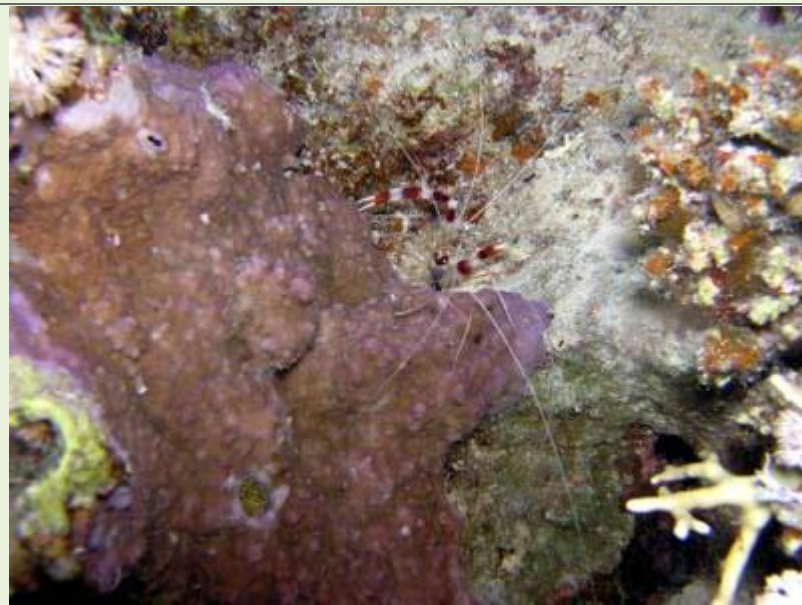
Pufferfish looking a bit grumpy after being woken up



A free swimming Remora, ugly creatures, normally they attached themselves to sharks and turtles for a free ride.



Scorpion Fish taken at night.



biggish cleaner shrimp



Really colourful soft Corals



Not sure what this spiky little chap is called



Green Turtle on sea grass with a family of Remoras on his back.



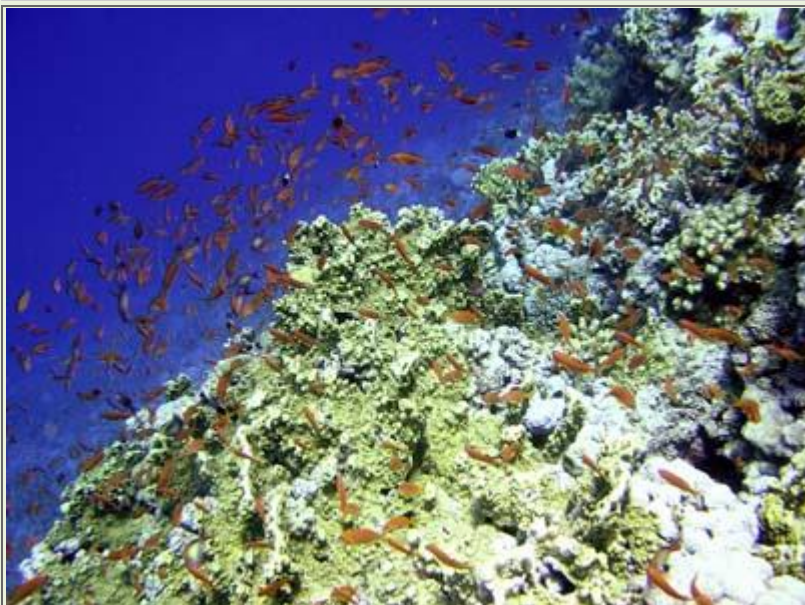
Another Green turtle at a different site, also with a Remora.



Small white Moray about the 2" in diameter



A rather bigger Moray sticking pout of his hole rather more than normal



Dancing Antheas on a reef wall



more of the yacht wreck showing how much coral has grown in only 5 years



A Napoleon sleeping in a rock crevice at night.



Spiky Box Fish, not sure if the always stick up like that or only as a warning to predators.