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Magnetic Island Dive Report

In early September 2010, John and I began discussing how we could get ourselves and our dive gear over to Maggie Island to dive the Orchard Rocks.

I had dived these rocks once before several years ago, and I remember it to be quite an impressive dive site, although a little subject to poor visibility. I became interested in returning to this site after discussing the area at a film night hosted by a local dive shop in June last year.

After considering our options, we decided to hire a small boat; and on Sunday morning we departed the city boat ramp en route to Orchard Rocks.

After about an hour of solid steaming, during which time we were overtaken by a turtle and a yacht, I realised that following the recommended load rating on a vessel's survey sticker is probably a wise move!

We assessed our fuel situation, and decided to pull up outside Coconut

Beach and dive the small reef in front of Base Back Packers.

We found the visibility here to be quite poor, but we stuck at it and dived together quite effectively. The effort here was worth it; John found a really small Stone Fish well hidden among the lettuce coral, and Bradley and I found we had attracted the unwanted attention of two Remoras, which began circling us in mid-water!

Also of interest here were several Lagoon Rays, one nice size Coral Trout, and several black and purple nudibranchs.

We then headed back to Picnic Bay, and continued around the point to where the two houses can be seen close to the waters edge. We found the depth here way too shallow for a dive, so we returned and anchored up just outside the marine park boundary off the end of the jetty.

I had participated in a club clean up dive at this site a few years ago, and remember it to be quite a good 'muck-dive'.

We swam along the sand on a bearing towards the jetty, and

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found a small bombie about 25m from the jetty's eastern edge. Around this bombie we found a small cloud of Glass Fish, a Scorpion Fish, and one large ray that didn't like the look of Bradley, almost as much as Bradley didn't like the look of him!

People were fishing from the jetty as we arrived, so we deliberately remained within the structure by staying inside the shadows cast onto the sand bottom.

Within the first five minutes, Bradley and I had started a fishing rod collection, and John was busy assembling an impressive collection of fishing and kitchen knives.

After comparing our 'treasure' we then found a girl's push bike, and discovered we could quite easily balance on it underwater!

At the end of the jetty, we found a really pretty cream and black nudibranch, a long spined sea urchin, and two baby sized Scorpion Fish. We also found a school of Sweep, a large school of Pike, swarms of Sardines, and several Sladey Bream (Mother-in-Law Fish).

As we swam back away from the end of the jetty, John made a fantastic find. Hidden within a plastic box-

shaped crate lay a fully grown Stone Fish, the size of an AFL football. These fish are amazing to look at, and we were able to get quite close without disturbing it, so close that we could even see the frilly pieces of skin disguising the main spines on its back!

By the end of the dive, we had found enough broken fishing gear to deck out a tackle shop, but the fishing activity hasn't seemed to diminish the life under the jetty; even with the reduced visibility we found plenty to look at.

By lunch time, and with a couple of interesting yet slightly unusual dives under our belts, we headed back to Townsville in time to get John home and off to his work.

Although we hadn't made it to our intended dive site, there's always next time, and we still had a successful morning exploring two other local dive sites.

Magnetic Island has provided me with some interesting dives, and while these two sites wouldn't make it into an edition of Dive Log, Coconut Reef and the Picnic Bay Jetty are definitely worth a look.