

Marine Parks

A Question of Balance

by Attila Kaszo

I have been travelling for some months and just got around to reading all the back issues of UWP mag. I noticed an advertisement by Sea Shepherd (an organisation I broadly support) opposing what appears to be marine zoos and aquariums but the caption at the bottom of the add, quote.."Captivity Kills, Stop Supporting Marine Parks" infers something quite different in my part of the world.

While the intent (I think) is aimed at zoos and aquariums, the slogan clearly is not and in my view is misleading and misrepresents marine conservation ethos.

I am unashamedly a strong advocate of Marine Parks, which since their establishment in Australia have clearly demonstrated their viability and ecological worth, so I have taken this opportunity to provide a glimpse into the establishment of a Marine Park and how it sits with local government and the community alike.

In the case of Jervis Bay Marine Park, situated on the east coast of Australia about 200km south of Sydney, the concept of a marine park

was foreign and completely opposed by local government officials pre1998.

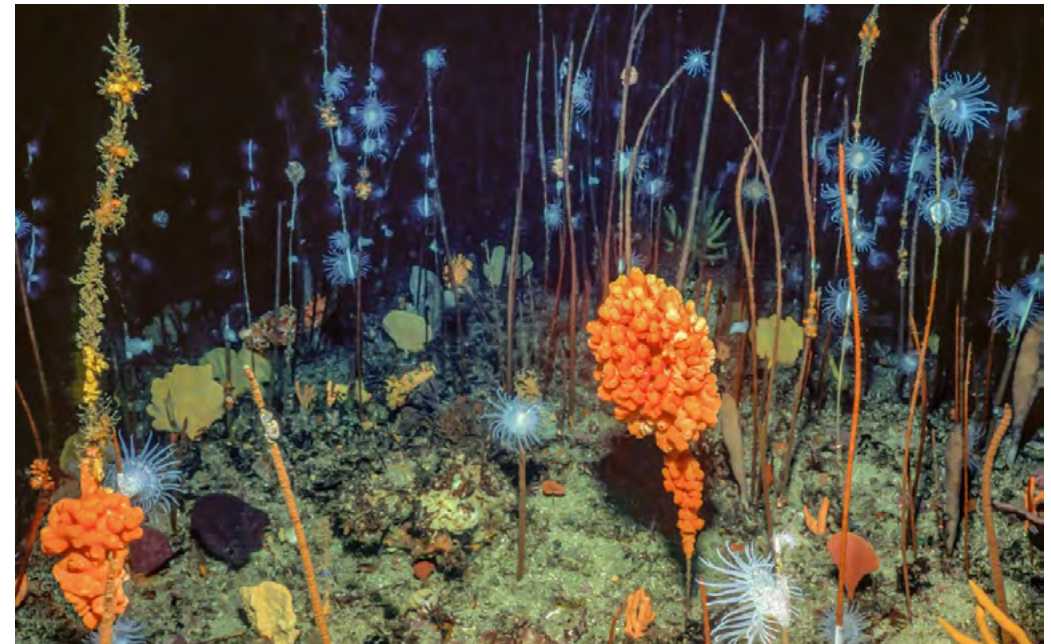
The opposition was aggressive, targeted and fuelled by the local media who chose not to be independent but rather embrace the rhetoric. The overall objection was that the formation of a park would severely inhibit recreational and commercial fishing and boating activities within the bay jeopardising incomes and tourism.

To put the whole thing into précis perspective, the RAN were

About 35m down on the SE side of Bowen Island is a beautiful garden display of Sea Whips and Ascidians which I first dived in the 1970's. During the year when the nutrient rich currents prevail, anemones attach to the stems of the Whips providing one of the most beautiful marine displays in the Park.



Jervis Bay in all its glory viewed from Hare Bay looking north. Clearly visible is the vast meadows of Posidonia and Zostera seagrass vital for juvenile fish fauna habitat and the overall health of Jervis Bay.





Grey Nurse Shark (Carcharias taurus) is making a comeback in Jervis Bay. Through divers anecdotal sightings it appears juvenile female sharks seem more predominant than males. Adult species have also been sighted more often in the past two seasons, which appear to indicate that the species population is becoming more established and permanent, although aggregation sites have yet to be scientifically documented.

planning on decentralising and moving an armaments depot from Sydney to Jervis Bay because the region already supported a Naval base (HMAS Creswell) in form of a naval college and a naval air base near Nowra. Local government saw this move as economically beneficial to the region through job creation and upgraded infrastructure plans and as a consequence lobbied the Federal Government to support the move.

The diving community and community at large had the opposite view and saw large scale encroachment by the military as an erosion of their unique landscape, seascape and in general, their lifestyle and public space.

And so began a community upwelling, the likes only matched by the Franklin Dam protests of the early 80's. The blueprint for the movement began with seven conservationists,



This picture was taken at about 45m on a reef know as "Stony Creek" during the early 1980's before Jervis Bay was declared a Marine Park. Infrequently dived due to its depth and varied currents, it was however, heavily fished to a point where a large proportion reef dwelling fish were decimated. Since the establishment of the Marine Park the region has regenerated to a healthy level where it supports a wide diversity of species.

me being one. It quickly turned into a national movement finally resolved in favour of the community. Jervis Bay Marine Park was born in 1998 and in 2002 the first zoning plan was drawn up, an area of 210 square km with about 100km of coastline, configuring the park as a multi use space with emphasis on protected areas and habitat zones. A government elected Advisory Board was set up with complete Stakeholder representation

and the elected Chairperson with a direct line of communication to the Environment Minister.

Up until this point, Jervis Bay had been severely impacted by fishers from the recreational groups to commercial harvesters who not only took as much as they were able, but dredged scallops indiscriminately destroying not only habitat but virtually everything that was trawled up as by-catch. The result was so

devastating that full recovery in those areas has still not occurred to this day.

I first dived Jervis Bay in 1970 and since then I can say there have been many changes to the area. Grey Nurse sharks once abundant, virtually vanished along with many species of reef dwelling fish fauna and crustaceans. Seagrass meadows were ripped to shreds by outboard propellers, rock shelves supporting shellfish were decimated, and riparian zones were trampled and defoliated. However, once the park was created protections were put in place, and a gradual recovery through careful planning began. Today, Grey Nurse sharks are frequently seen by divers and although only anecdotal evidence is available to suggest established aggregation sites, I have no doubt that scientific monitoring, when funding becomes available will provide sufficient evidence to support divers claims.

Divers I believe are the litmus test to marine ecosystems. They are the ones that explore the crevices, the depths and the gutters that support our unique seascapes. In turn, they capture images of what's really under there satisfying their own desires and helping to build a bigger picture of what needs attention and protection. After all, where do divers prefer to dive? Obviously not in areas that don't support something of interest.

Threats to Jervis Bay have been many and varied. In the 1970's the Government of the day saw fit to propose the establishment of a Nuclear Power Source on the foreshores of Jervis Bay. Seismic surveys were undertaken to establish the sub strata geology, resulting in huge circular patches imprinted upon the seagrass beds of the region. Even though I took this photo in the mid 1980's, to this day the seagrass has not regrown.

Marine Parks are suited to most levels of diving and provide a level of interest and diversity a diver seeks.

Marine Parks and reserves are established because they provide natural areas with lower human impacts and have unique ecological properties that should be preserved for future generations to enjoy. They also provide a collective of genetic material for natural or assisted recovery of regions affected by overfishing and various forms of pollution. In affect, they are there for long term sustainability.

So it quickly became evident that Jervis Bay Marine Park not only attracted more visitors than previously, but became a magnet for small business operators and investors, significantly adding to the economy of the region without compromising its aesthetic appeal or integrity.



Jervis Bay is a unique area with clear warm water from the East Australian Current and cold water currents and periodic nutrient fed upwellings from the Continental Shelf. The combination of these currents flowing into and around the bay flush it out about every three weeks and help support the wide range of life-forms on rocky reefs, kelp forests, seagrasses and soft sediment bases in a mixed ecosystem environment.

There is no doubt that there are naysayers out there that don't see value in Marine Parks. But there is no doubt in my mind that Marine Parks and reserves work and provide the necessary protection for species

that enable populations to remain sustainable. Jervis Bay is proof of that!

In closing, I believe it is particularly important that globally recognised organisations like Sea Shepherd be mindful of their messaging and how it may be interpreted by others across the world.

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The response to UwP has been nothing short of fantastic. We are looking for interesting, well illustrated articles about underwater photography. We are looking for work from existing names but would also like to discover some of the new talent out there and that could be you! UwP is the perfect publication for you to increase your profile in the underwater photography community.

The type of articles we're looking for fall into five main categories:

Uw photo techniques - Balanced light, composition, etc

Locations - Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards,

Subjects -, Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail

Equipment reviews - Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment

Personalities - Interviews/features about leading underwater photographers

**If you have an idea for an article,
contact me first before putting pen to paper.
E mail peter@uwpmag.com**

How to submit articles

To keep UwP simple and financially viable, we can only accept submissions by e mail and they need to be done in the following way:

1. The text should be saved as a TEXT file and attached to the e mail

2. Images must be attached to the e mail and they need to be 150dpi

Size - Maximum length 20cm i.e. horizontal pictures would be 20 cm wide and verticals would be 20cm high.

File type - Save your image as a JPG file and set the compression to "Medium" quality. This should result in images no larger than about 120k which can be transmitted quickly. If we want larger sizes we will contact you.

3. Captions - **Each and every image MUST have full photographic details** including camera, housing, lens, lighting, film, aperture, shutter speed and exposure mode. These must also be copied and pasted into the body of the e mail.