

Tech Dive NZ

Newsletter January 2012

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WELCOME TO OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



Welcome to our first newsletter for 2012 and what a dramatic start to the year it has been. The Rena container ship which ran aground 3 months ago has finally broken in two, with the stern section sinking and the bow section still firmly on the top of the reef. Clearly this is a huge environmental disaster, with debris scattered along a large section of pristine coastline, but does it mean we will get a new wreck to dive? At present it is unclear what will happen, with mixed reports coming from those close to the scene. Some say the ship will have to be salvaged as it is required by law, but others are pointing to the costs of

such an operation - who will be footing the bill? When the Lermontov sunk there was a lot of talk about salvage, but in the end only the oil and some valuables were ever removed. I guess we will all be watching the developments over the coming weeks and months with a keen interest.

Of course the reason for the break-up of the ship has been the weather, which has been incredibly unsettled. The Otago region maybe experiencing a drought but up here in the north we have seen far too much wind and rain. Fingers crossed things calm down and the beautiful kiwi summer we all love turns up soon.

However, what has arrived exactly on schedule in 2012 is the new look newsletter, just as promised. This year's newsletter is longer, has some new and very interesting sections and is hopefully even more informative and entertaining than before. We have added sections highlighting important diving skills and diving equipment, pioneers of the diving world and the best diving destinations around the globe. We have also brought back the monthly quiz. We hope you like the changes - and of course we'd love to get your feedback.

We are also trying to give you far more information about our forthcoming trips, including details of who each trip is aimed



Debris from the Rena

at, costs and other logistics. We have big weekends already planned for January, February and March, plus our winter diving extravaganza 10x10x10 and we are already looking at other trips for the rest of the year. Check out the back page for a quick summary of upcoming events.

Finally make sure you check out our final new section, Mel's thoughts for the month. You'll find this on the back page, where each month Mel will be giving us some ideas to ponder. This month she's been thinking about New Year's Resolutions and how to use these to get the most out of your diving in 2012. She's a big advocate of looking ahead and planning - so if you have some trips or courses you've been meaning to do for a while check out Mel's section for ideas and inspiration. Safe diving everyone.

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WHY?

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Why do tech divers use wings?



Air and water maybe very different elements, but with the right equipment humans can fly effortlessly through both. Everyone agrees we need wings to fly, but not everyone agrees we need wings to dive. Here I explain why I use a wing for all my diving, plus look at some of the reasons given for not using wings.

The first reason for using a wing is that it makes it much easier to attain a horizontal position in the water. This is because the lift from a wing is spread more evenly along the entire length of the tank, rather than mainly in our shoulders as is common in jacket style BCDs.

Secondly wings are more comfortable. When jacket BCDs are inflated we get squeezed and when fully inflated this squeeze can become very uncomfortable. To avoid it we either have to wear jackets that are too large for us, which is not ideal, or never inflate the jacket fully, which can be a problem when we are waiting on the surface. With wings all of the inflation happens behind us and does not change the fit of our harness. This means we can always wear our harness snugly and avoid the other common problems with jackets, where they ride up above our heads or allow the tank to roll from side to side.

Thirdly wings are more streamlined. Whilst jackets add extra bulk all around us, wings leave our front and sides clear and tend to wrap around our tanks. This makes it far easier to explore underwater – no matter whether you are inside a cave, hunting for crabs or getting close to the coral for a photo.

OK, so if wings are clearly better why doesn't everybody use them?

MYTH 1: Wings don't guarantee a head up position at the surface.

Oddly enough this was one of the major arguments for keeping ABLJs when jacket style BCDs were first developed. Contrary to popular belief jacket BCDs do not guarantee a head up position – check the first couple of pages of your manual if you

want confirmation. The position that a jacket or wing holds you at the surface is determined by a complicated mix of factors, which include a) the type and size of tank you are using, b) the amount and position of your weights and c) even how high up you have positioned your tank on your BCD.

MYTH 2: Wings are only for technical divers.

Yes technical divers all use wings, but that's because you want the best equipment for challenging dives. Technical divers value streamlining, exact buoyancy control and comfort, especially for long dives. Oddly enough these are all things that recreational divers also value.

MYTH 3: Jacket BCDs are the standard.

Yeah yeah – and once upon a time horses were also the standard instead of cars. There is always a lot of inertia and scepticism to overcome with anything well established, but with all new technology once the benefits become clear people soon start changing.

MYTH 4: Wings are difficult to get in and out of.

To new divers all dive gear is difficult to get in and out of. Getting in and out of wings is just different from jackets. Don't mistake the fact that something is new and hence unfamiliar with it being difficult.

QUICK QUIZ

The theme for this month is pop music, with all the songs having a link with the sea. Can you match up the artists and the song titles?

SONGS

1. Pure Shores
2. The Dock of the Bay
3. Yellow Submarine
4. Caribbean Queen
5. Sail Away
6. Echo Beach
7. On the Beach
8. Surfin' Safari
9. Pearl in the Shell
10. Sand in my Shoes

ARTISTS

- A. Billy Ocean
- B. Howard Jones
- C. David Gray
- D. All Saints
- E. Dido
- F. Martha and the Muffins
- G. The Beatles
- H. The Beach Boys
- I. Otis Redding
- J. Chris Rea

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DIVING

TRIP OF THE MONTH

Trimix at the Poor Knights 14th & 15th January

It takes a lot of effort to spend a prolonged period of time underwater. Sure we can all manage 20 or 30 seconds holding our breath, with a small amount of practice we might even manage a minute or two, but to stay down for 30 minutes or an hour is not something we can do on a whim and there is a certain amount of preparation that is required to do this safely.

As you are reading, the chances are that you are already a qualified diver. Most likely, you've done sufficient diving to at least start to feel pretty comfortable in the water. As we get more experienced, most of us forget the trials and tribulations of learning to dive and quite how much work it seemed to take to get ready for the simplest dive. Over time, we settle into a 'comfort zone', where preparing for a weekend's diving can be done almost automatically. In fact those of us who are really well organised can normally get ready for a weekend's diving in a shorter period of time than we are planning to spend underwater.

Some people stop here, content with the ease with which diving now happens, however



A Black Coral tree - only seen down deep at the Poor Knights

others move towards the stage of wanting to extend their time underwater and with this comes more training, more equipment and a return of some of the feelings of 'trials and tribulations' of preparing all this new gear. Once again, over time this becomes more automatic, but the more complex the dives, the more important it is to spend this time and not allow the 'comfort zone' to slip into

becoming the 'complacency zone'. On my latest weekend diving, I was planning on spending a very long time underwater but I knew my preparations would certainly take longer than that.

Firstly there was the equipment to prepare - double tanks and a stage with our bottom mix (15/55 trimix) add to that a 50% decompression bottle to switch at 21m plus a 100% oxygen bottle to switch at 6m; scooter, canister light and backup light batteries needed to be charged and checked; argon suit inflation system set up and all the other usual gear. And we needed yet more bottles, as the 5 listed above were only for the first dive - which makes packing the car for two divers both equipped in this way a real art form. We also needed to review our plans. How deep and for how long? What deco? Do we have enough gas for the dive, including contingencies? What are all the different turn points - total time, average depth, gas usage? If it hasn't become clear yet we were not planning on doing a long dive at 10m. Our target was 75m - just a little beyond recreational limits.

Of course most people never see all these preparations. By the time the other customers get to the boat we are usually already there, having arrived early so we can set up our vast pile of gear in peace, grab the seats closest to the back of the boat and begin the process of

double and triple checking everything. All most people see when they get on the boat is the James Bond looking scooters; the more observant also notice the double tanks - but it starts to get more exciting as we approach the dive site.

The normal procedure on the Dive Tuts boats is for the boat to moor up at the chosen site and then for the skipper to do a detailed site and dive brief. Having logged many hundred dives at the Knights we usually bypass the



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brief and start our kitting up preparations 15 or 20 minutes before we moor up as our planned dive time means that we need to be in the water promptly in order to avoid the other divers having to wait for us for too long. These advance preparations often causes a slight flurry of activity from the other customers who assume they should be 'doing something' as well, but after quick word from the crew they are usually quite happy to sit back and watch the 'techies' with interest. Sometime they ask questions, most of the time they simply look confused. For non techies the sight of a diver gearing up in double tanks, then

getting in the water and being passed 3 more tanks and a scooter looks difficult. I can see the faces looking quizzically at me, wondering why so many tanks and is it really worth the effort.

There have been times when I ask myself the same questions, but this is always answered as soon as my head goes under the surface. Like with every dive, once you are underwater the weight disappears and you can start to enjoy yourself. With the added benefit of a scooter you don't even notice the drag of the extra tanks and you can comfortably explore a huge area. The underwater world is generally

a tranquil and peaceful place, and even more so when you drop below recreational depth and really have the ocean to yourself. The visibility is almost always better, the reef life far more pristine and you can see and explore things very few people get the opportunity to do.

When you talk about deep diving to many divers, most experienced divers have got stories of 'going deep'. 50m is certainly a reasonably common depth (especially in warm tropical waters), with a few divers venturing down to 55m but when you actually talk about the dive itself, it invariably turns out that the drop to 'deep' was for a matter of a minute or two, with the rest of the dive being in far more 'comfortable' depths of 30m or less.

The dives that really require the numerous tanks and scooters are the ones that are geared towards spending the entire dive at depth. On our first dive of our recent weekend at Poor Knights, we were dropped off by Light Shaft Cave and we descended the near vertical wall straight down to 75m. The surface water temperature was 21 degrees with 12-15m visibility, but after passing through two very distinct thermoclines.....

The rest of this trip report can be found in the usual place on our website:

<http://www.techdivenz.com/reports.html>

Photos courtesy of Dive! Tutukaka

10x10x10 Diving Extravaganza

10 amazing days

10 awesome dive sites

10 great prizes

12-Fathom Reef

Cave Bay Wall

Scary Cave

Tie-Dye Arch

Red Baron Caves

The Lost World

Taravana Cave

Demoiselle Rock

Fraggle Rock

The Tunnel

Dates as follows:

19/20th May

16/17th June

14/15th July

18/19th August

15/16th September



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SKILLS

HOW DO YOU DO THAT?

Each month we highlight an import diving skill or technique. This month we focus on:

VALVE DRILLS



Diving with double tanks greatly extends our potential adventures underwater. By carrying more gas and having redundancy in our life support system we can go further, deeper or longer. However, by increasing our exposure underwater we are also potentially increasing our risks - especially if we cannot properly enjoy the redundancy benefits offered by the double tank configuration. This is why valve drills are so important.

At a high level a valve drill is simply a way of showing that we can reach and operate all of our valves whilst wearing our equipment. By doing this we are demonstrating that we can take advantage of the different options available to us should we experience a failure with either regulators or valves.

The steps of a good valve drill are as follows:

Step 1: Signal to your team mates you will be doing a valve drill and make sure they are watching.

Step 2: Shut down the right post, breath the air out of the hose, swap to the backup reg and clip off the 'dead' reg. Then reopen the post and reset.

Step 3: Shut the isolator, pause, then reopen.

Step 4: Shut the left post. Purge the air from the system. Then reset.

Step 5: Do a flow check of all valves, from right to left.

This is all fairly straightforward, but remember we rarely have failures when we are comfortably kneeling on the bottom. You should be able to do this drill whilst maintaining your buoyancy, trim and position relative to your team mates.

So be honest with yourself - if you currently use double tanks, can you do this drill? If not, ask yourself why?

Poor Knights Deep Reefs & Pinnacles

January 28th - 29th

OceanBlue and TDNZ are proud to offer you a rare chance to do some exploratory diving at the beautiful Poor Knights. Join us as we tackle some of the rarely (if ever) dived deeper reefs and pinnacles.

Do something different in 2012

In response to our requests Kevin has spent the last year plotting every isolated bump, lump and blip on his sonar, compiling a list of 'new' dive sites. He's also been chatting with several of the Poor Knights 'regulars' - divers who have been exploring this area for 30 years or more - and now has a very exciting list of potential dive spots. Most of these sites are un-named and never regularly dived. There's even a few we think have never been dived!

The costs

The cost for each day of diving is \$150.

Logistics

We are running this trip as two separate days, so you can do either the Saturday or Sunday or both. The boat will return to Tutukaka harbour on Saturday night but you are still welcome to sleep on-board if you wish.

Nitrox & Trimix

As these sites offer the potential for deeper dives we will be providing an additional unique benefit for this trip - the ability to get nitrox and trimix fills overnight in Tutukaka. We will be bringing up our compressor and blending system, so you have the opportunity to dive using whatever mix you desire!

Who can come on these trips?

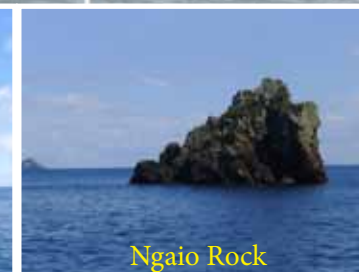
Everyone is welcome, but as these sites are deep you should be comfortable with doing ascents from 20m upwards 'in-the-blue'. We would also recommend you bring at twin tanks in order to get the most out of this trip.



Serpent Rock



Oculina Point



Ngaio Rock



Sugar Loaf

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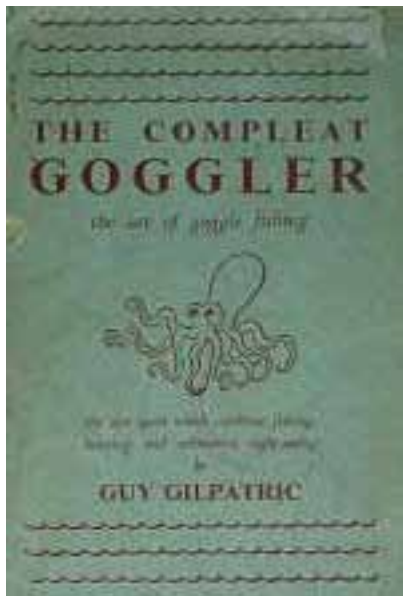
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PIONEERS

GLOBAL DIVING LEGENDS

Each month we highlight a famous and influential diver from around the world. This month we focus on:

GUY GILPATRIC



Guy Gilpatric was born on January 21st 1896 in New York. His earliest passion was flying, deciding at 7 years old he wanted to become a pilot, which he did. In 1912 he set the USA altitude record; before he turned 21 he was a qualified instructor, an exhibition pilot and a test pilot; at 21 he volunteered to fight in the First World War in France.

After the war he settled at Antibes on the French Riviera and in the summer of 1928 he discovered spear fishing and became completely possessed.

In 1938 he produced the first ever book on sports diving. The Compleat Goggler combined instructions and tips on diving techniques with numerous anecdotes from undersea hunting and marine life. The book was written in a style which was not entirely serious. One chapter is entitled: "Gargling of a garrulous goggler, witnessing wonders, telling lies, exploring wrecks and hunting treasure". The book was probably the first widely available eye-account of undersea hunting. In the day when diving was the new frontier for adventure seekers, The Compleat Goggler gave inspiration to those who later became the "household names" in diving.

Philippe Tailliez gave a copy to Cousteau and for decades it sailed in the Commandant's cabin on the Calypso. Hans Hass, who as a teenager actually stumbled upon Gilpatric while vacationing in southern France, was profoundly influenced by Gilpatric's work and went to become one of the most influential underwater explorers and film makers.

References:

Trevor Norton: Stars beneath the sea, Carroll & Graf, NY 2000. ISBN 0-786-70750-X

EVENT

Mel's Big Birthday Bash February 18th & 19th

[40 years old!]

Come up to Northland and have a fun filled weekend at the Cowshed as Mel celebrates turning 21 again. (*For the 20th time....*) You all know Mel loves to party so this promises to be the social event of the year. There will probably be hangovers, there will definitely be cake and if Mel has her way there will also be dancing - although we don't expect most of the boys to join in. I'm guessing there will probably be some dodgy photo opportunities as the weekend progresses....

But we also plan to do some diving and enjoy the beautiful Bay of Islands. Top dive spots on our to do list include: The Canterbury,

Danger Rock, Cathedral Cave and Cape Brett.

For anyone hasn't been to the Cowshed yet it is possibly the best set-up for diving in NZ. There are two RIBs, nitrox available for everyone, Julia provides superb food, the dive sites are close and the atmosphere is welcoming and relaxed. It is definitely one of our favourite spots to go diving.

The diving is suitable for all experience levels and offers something for everyone. We've done shallow reef dives at 10m, extensive wreck penetrations and deep (75m+) trimix dives.

Costs for two nights staying in a bunk room, with 4 dives, air fills and food is \$269. See the website for more details

<http://www.northlanddive.com/diving.html>



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LOCATION

GLOBAL DIVING DESTINATIONS

Each month we highlight an awesome diving destination from around the world. This month we focus on:

SCAPA FLOW



Scapa Flow is one of the great natural harbours of the world and was the UK's chief naval base in both WWI and WWII. Surrounded by the Orkney Islands, which lie 10 miles north of mainland Scotland, Scapa Flow is known to have provided safe anchorage to ships for over 1000 years - with the Vikings being some of the very first visitors.

For divers it was the events of Midsummers Day 1919 which have become legendary. At the end of WWI the German High Seas Fleet was interned in Scapa Flow, pending the result of negotiations between the Allied Powers. After 9 months of waiting the German Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter took the decision to scuttle his fleet.

In total 52 ships went down on this day; battleships, cruisers, destroyers and more. Although many of the ships were salvaged in the 1920's when scrap metal prices were high several large vessels still remain, providing superb diving for keen wreck divers.

We first dived Scapa Flow in 1993, visiting the light cruisers: Karlsruhe, Brummer, Dresden and Cöln, plus 3 of the block ships. On subsequent trips in 1994 and 1997 we also visited the three battleships: König, Kronprinz and Markgraf.

Thankfully the diving conditions are not as challenging as you would expect so far north. The harbour is relatively sheltered, the depths are not huge, 30-60m for the main ships and the visibility is reasonable, if a little green at times. The biggest diving challenge are the block ships, which although shallow and very accessible, all lie in areas of major current. These wrecks must be dived at slack water: the currents can get up to 9 knots at times.

Poor Knights Caves & Caverns

March 2nd - 4th

OceanBlue and TDNZ are proud to offer you a unique caves and caverns live-aboard experience. Join us for 3 days exploring the many hidden places inside these islands.

Cavern and cave diving offers a unique combination of beauty, peacefulness and adrenalin. Enjoy the buzz and excitement that comes from entering 'inner-space' as well as the calmness that comes from getting away from the crowd. Tackle your fears and challenge your diving skills in an environment both serious and stunning at the same time.

The Poor Knights is the perfect place to start your cavern diving career, offering a wide variety of potential sites: Taravana Cave, Red Baron Caves, Crystal Cave and more. The visibility is good, the water is warm and there is scope for everyone to enjoy the dives, from beginner to fully qualified cave divers.

The costs

The cost for 3 days of diving (up to 11 dives) is \$660. This cost includes your accommodation on board on Fri/Sat; lunch and dinner on Friday, all meals on Saturday and breakfast and lunch on Sunday. All your air fills whilst on board are also included.

Who can come on these trips?

Anyone can come along on these trips, you don't need to be a qualified technical diver.

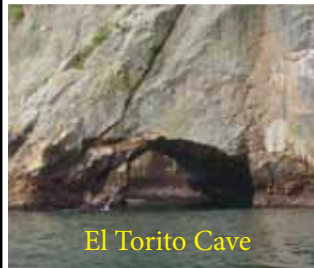
Additional Training Options

During this trip you can also complete either the TDI Cavern Introductory Cave Diver courses - or even do both.

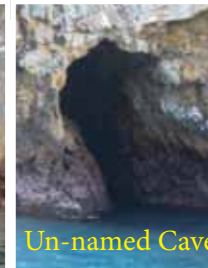
Total costs:

TDI Cavern class & live-aboard: \$1,150
TDI Intro Cave Diver & live-aboard: \$1,350
Both TDI classes & live-aboard: \$1,750

Contact Jamie if you need more information.



El Torito Cave



Un-named Cave



The Lost World



Shark fin Cave

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LAST WORDS

MEL'S THOUGHTS FOR THE MONTH



Mel Jeavons: dive instructor, cave diver, trimix diver and party animal shares a few of her thoughts with us each month.

To contact Mel:
mel@techdivenz.com

The first day of January can be a very special day. The coming of a new year typically causes one to reflect on the previous year and recall the significant events - both the highs and the lows. It's a time to pause and think about your friends and loved ones who have shared in your life and given it meaning, as well as think towards the coming year and imagine what wondrous things you may achieve.

Which is all very well, but my New Year started rather differently. I awoke to discover a family of elephants had moved into my head and had apparently stolen my vision over the three hours of unconsciousness that could laughingly be called sleep. The only reflecting I managed to do was wonder quite what had possessed me to send some of the texts and Facebook postings that had

been so hilarious the night before. The most important thought that crossed my mind was how soon I could send Jamie to Countdown to buy copious amounts of comfort food so that I could spend the rest of the day on the sofa watching Harry Potter DVDs.

However, once the alcohol had slowly worked its way out of my system in a manner that can only be achieved by the aforementioned vast quantities of junk food, it did occur to me that this year brings with it a relatively significant milestone for me. Aside from it being 5 years since we arrived in New Zealand (so we can now officially apply for citizenship), it is also the year that sees the end of my thirties. While forty is widely thought to be the new thirty - admittedly mostly by people in or approaching their forties! - I still have to acknowledge that I have already lived through a significant percentage of my life. I don't mean this in any negative way, so far my life has been pretty fantastic and I fully expect the best is yet to come! But like any old bugger will agree, it does make you realise quite how fast time passes and how easy it is to look back and wonder why you didn't do or achieve the things that you wanted to. Sometimes there is a genuine reason for this, plans change, desires change, but a lot of the time, you realise that another year has just passed by without prioritising the things in your life that are important to you.

The more observant amongst you may have noticed that I have a small interest in diving. I started diving in the era of the ABLJ - some of you may have to Google that, and I'll give you a hint that it's not the American Bankruptcy Law Journal! - and have been very fortunate to have dived in many, many countries around the world. I've spent two years on a picture postcard beach in Fiji running a diving project, I've run my own dive shop, explored caves at 60m, been narked at 20m (!), probably own more dive gear than most dive shops and am one of what I suspect is a very small group of divers

in NZ (or indeed anywhere) who have been to the Cathedral in Blue Creek Resurgence.

Over the years, I've had a lot of people tell me how lucky I am. Well, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, "I'm a great believer in luck and find that the harder I work, the more I have of it." The only way I've been able to achieve most of these things is by putting the time in and most importantly planning ahead. I first visited the cave overhead environment in 2001. Suddenly a "mere" 10 years later, I'm in the "lucky" position that I can comfortably dive below 50m in 6 degree water in a



Mel cave diving in Mexico in 2007 - photo by Danny Riordan

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challenging overhead environment.

From that first dive in the Mexican cenotes in 2001 to my last dive at Blue Creek in December 2011, there has been a lot of time, effort and money spent on getting the training and experience needed. I had no idea at the time where it was eventually going

to lead me, but I've always believed in being ready for any opportunity that might arise, because you never know what will be around the corner or when.

After 5 years in the NZ diving industry, I've heard all the excuses and they are just that – excuses, not reasons. If you really want

something, the first thing you need to do is just get started and remember that some things take time and investment. Good training is obviously necessary to learn the required skills but just as important as that is getting out there and doing dives that challenge your current level of diving, regardless of whether you're a new qualified open water diver or a "techie" with 5,000 dives under your weight belt.

My father once said to me "everyone has dreams, you chase yours". If you think that makes sense, then make chasing your dreams your New Year's resolution for this year. They don't have to be big dreams, they could be as simple as learning to backwards fin or improving your skills to be able to hold a truly horizontal ascent, becoming comfortable exploring the Leningrad restaurant in the Lermontov or reaching the end of Taravana (safely – big difference!). Or they could be as ambitious as enjoying sharks and black coral at 70m+, diving the Niagara or laying line in a virgin cave. Whatever your dreams are, maybe this is the year to start making them happen.

See you on the water!

TECH DIVE
New Zealand 

DIARY

January 28/29th

Poor Knights Deep Pinnacles Exploration

January 30th [Auckland Anniversary]

February 4-11th

Niue

February 18/19th

Mel's Big Birthday Bash

February 20-23rd

GUE Fundamentals course (Auckland)

February 24-26th

GUE Fundamentals course (Auckland)

March 2-4th

Poor Knights Caves and Caverns
TDI Cavern & Intro-to-Cave course

March 17/18th & 24/25th

GUE Rec Diver 3 Trimix course

March 29th - April 2nd

GUE Fundamentals (Wellington)

April 6-9th [EASTER]

April 13-15th

ADEX (Singapore)

May 19/20th

[10x10x10 trip]

June 16/17th

[10x10x10 trip]

July 14/15th

[10x10x10 trip]

August 18/19th

[10x10x10 trip]

September 15/16th

[10x10x10 trip]

Mel exploring Blue Creek Resurgence in February 2011 - photo by Steve Trewavas