

## Trip Report: Tech Dive NZ “Big Day Out”, Taupo, 27-28<sup>th</sup> March 2010

*Andy Connor*

The best way of measuring the success of a dive trip is definitely just looking at the size of the grins on peoples faces after each dive. And on that basis alone, our inaugural Tech Dive NZ “Big Day Out” was a great success! We chose Taupo as a central location and weren’t disappointed, with divers travelling from Auckland, Wellington and Tauranga to come and join in the fun. Throughout the weekend we were blessed with great weather and great diving conditions.



There was plenty going on with dives in the lake, the drift dive down the river and a little bit of teaching with an Overhead Protocols workshop – all of this following on from our very successful night drift dive down the Waikato River the night before.

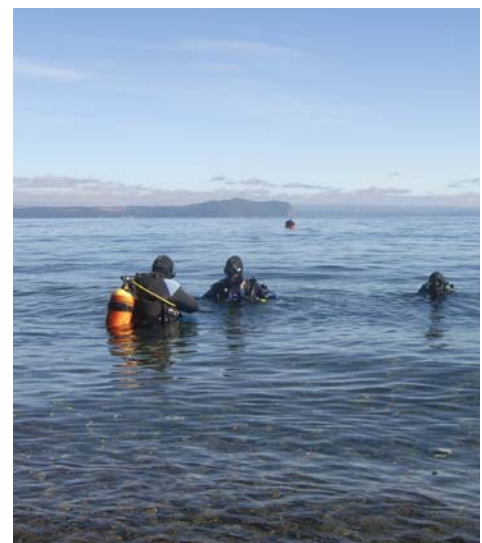


Aaron and Leela had travelled up from Wellington for the Overhead Protocols workshop, and spent a few hours on Saturday morning going over the basics of line use, team positioning and touch contact that are core to all of our overhead environment courses. Anyone who has done a course with us will no how this goes – it’s not just about how to use a line, but also about how to identify and solve problems underwater whilst relying on the line to guide you out to safety! Having coped marvellously with all the problems that Jamie threw at them on the surface, Aaron and Leela then got to dive in the lake and redo

all the skills whilst actually diving. During the dive, Jamie was impressed enough to comment afterwards that it was refreshing to see divers who focussed on their buoyancy control rather than trying to rush through things whilst planted on the bottom. High praise indeed, guys!

Whilst the Overhead Protocols workshop was going on, Astrid, Tony and Mike took a dip in the waters of Lake Taupo at Motutere. The water was crystal clear and Mike got to dive with his new 7’ hose on his regulators – with his pony bottle clipped on, a backup regulator on a bungie necklace and a long hose Mike is now a role model Self-Reliant Diver! The diving at Motutere was as good as ever, providing nice conditions to explore the underwater cliffs, take some photos and practice ascent skills.

With the morning dives done, there was just enough time to grab a bite to eat and head towards Cherry Island in time for the 2pm release of the flow control gates. A quick phone call gave us the information we were after, the flow rate was up at 120 cumecs which was fast enough to provide a really nice dive.

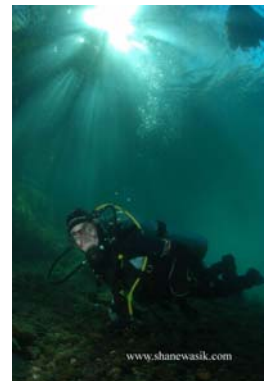


# TECH DIVE New Zealand



Looking down the river from the car park is a glorious site, with clear blue skies the clarity of the water is not only obvious but it makes the whole idea of a dive in the river so appealing! We were joined for the afternoon dive by members of the Mount Maunganui dive club who had come over from Tauranga with Shane Wasik for the dive.

After a quick courtesy visit to the bungy crew to let them know what was going on, everyone geared up for the dive as quickly as they could, and in their teams entered the water a few minutes apart. The flow was definitely higher than the night before, it was difficult to keep your footing crossing the river to the still water in the lee of Cherry Island itself. As Tony, James, Leela, Aaron and I drifted along the surface we were treated to watching a bungy jumper plunge from the top of the cliff and get dunked up to their waist in the waters of the river. Shortly after, we descending into the swiftly flowing water and as a group navigated the twists and turns of the river's course before surfacing just upstream of the hot springs. This was the first dive in the river for Aaron and Leela, and the size of their grins was enough to tell the story of their day! The clear water, the ever present trout and the thrill of rushing down the river make this a must do dive for everyone!



As each teamed exited the river, the story was much the same – everyone agreed that it had been a fabulous dive. It was the first dive in the river for nearly everyone, and it raised a few comments about our night dive in the river the evening before. The general consensus was that Jamie, James and I were just “plain nuts” for doing the dive with just our lights to guide us. Personally, I prefer to think of it as “visionary” rather than nuts!

Having finished the drift dive in the middle of the afternoon, it gave us a chance to relax and “talk diving” for a couple of hours. If there is one thing that divers love as much as diving, it's the chance to talk about it! Which is something we managed to do for most of the afternoon and evening, it's good to just hang out with people and get to know them. That's what the “Big Day Out” is really about, bringing like minded people together whilst doing something they love.



Our plan for Sunday was to do just one dive before all heading home, so we headed to Motutere again with the aim of doing some longer dives. James and I were planning a trimix dive, not deep but with an extended bottom time and then using oxygen to accelerate our decompression. Having spent nearly forty minutes exploring the site at a maximum depth of 35m, the oxygen nicely cut our deco time to less than ten minutes. It's these dives that are truly the joy of technical diving; spending a longer time at relatively shallow depths gives you loads of time to appreciate the character of the dive site. After completing our deco, we returned to shore where we were shortly joined by the others.

As we said our farewells, there was enough time to reflect on the weekend – and what a great weekend it was! Now we've got a couple of months to start planning the next “Big Day Out”, so the question that needs to be answered is “Where do you want to go?”