



August

We hope everyone is having a great summer! Judging by the all the diving and snorkelling going on out there, that would be an affirmative. We have had some stinking hot days when just the thought of a drysuit was almost unbearable, but thankfully there were (and still are) a lot of relatively cooler days more conducive to suiting up. It's great to see everyone enjoying the shore diving and weekend charters. Here's hoping for many more throughout the summer and into the fall. To tide you over until your next ocean adventure, we bring you the August newsletter. This edition is shorter than usual, having just one article along with an events recap and some reminders. But what might this one, single article be you ask? Here's a little hint: Diver's Alert Network! Be sure to read its introduction for more exciting news!

What Have we Been Up To?

Here's a quick recap of our activities since the spring. Some will be familiar to you, but we also have a few new items to tell you about.

Annual General Meeting: Our AGM was May 14, 2024 at the Admiral Club. Highlights of the evening were the Jane Biggs award and executive elections:

- Jane Biggs Award – This year's award was presented to Dave Rowat
- Executive Elections – Here are the elected members for the 2024-2026 executive:
 - President: Jenn Meisner
 - Vice President: Wayne Joy
 - Regional Director: Alice Ortmann
 - Secretary: Cliff Andrews
 - Treasurer: We are currently seeking nominations for this position

World Ocean Day: The NSUC hosted a booth during the June 8 World Ocean Day celebration on the Halifax waterfront. Although it was a wet, freezing day we had a lot of fun! Visitors stopped by to check out our display and ask all kinds of questions about local diving, what we see and activities around harbour. The ROV live feed was a big hit and the kids loved the touch tank!



Alice and Ken set up as Mike talks to our first visitors. Photo by Cliff Andrews.



The cleanup crew. Photo by Cliff Andrews

Ocean and Shore Cleanup: Sunday, July 7 marked our first cleanup of the year. It was also our largest turnout ever! Conditions were perfect for diving – a calm and relatively cool day at a great site with an easy entry and exit. Supported by 22 divers, 2 snorkelers and 12 shore support we removed 388 pounds of trash from the ocean and shoreline at Shaw's Landing.

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NSUC By-law updates: The executive is reviewing the bylaws to bring them up to date and streamline them so they are easier to read and interpret. All proposed changes will be reviewed with our members and voted upon as per the current bylaw requirements.

Dive Talks: We are working with the Halifax Public Library to organize another diver talk. We are still working out the details with them regarding dates, number and frequency but they are very interested in working with us, so you can expect at least one event in the future.

Upcoming NSUC Events

Quarterly General Meeting: The next general meeting is 6:00 PM August 12, 2024 at the Admiral Club at Graves Oakley. Main topics of discussion include:

- Treasurer Nominations & Voting
- Treasurer's Report
- Upcoming Events
- Social

Treasurer Nominations: If you are interested in joining the board as Treasurer, or know someone who is, you can submit a nomination via our [Nomination Form](#). If you are nominating someone else, be sure to check with them first!

Reminder From the Halifax Port Authority

We recently published a brief Facebook post about this, but here is a bit more detail about the report received by the Halifax Port Authority (HPA).

The HPA asked us to reiterate to our members the importance of obtaining prior authorization before conducting any recreational dive in Halifax Harbour. In June the Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) received a report from a tour boat operator advising them of a diver or snorkeler in the water at dusk near a busy waterfront wharf. The individual was wearing a dark suit and not displaying any kind of "bright" marker. The person was not in distress so the JRCC contacted the HPA. Because the HPA did not receive an authorization request they did not know to issue an advisory to marine operators in the harbour that evening. The HPA reminds all divers and snorkelers to obtain prior HPA authorization and notify MCTS prior to the commencement and after completion of each dive. This is especially important for your safety during the summer months when there is heavy boat traffic. Information for creating a Port Control account and submitting a request can be found on our website: <https://www.novascotiaunderwatercouncil.ca/diving-hfx-harbour>.



NSUC would like to welcome DAN as a regular contributor. This space will be used to share a variety of diving health and safety content. To get started, DAN is sharing a case study from a diving incident in Tobermory.

Free flow at 45 Meters

I led a group of 12 divers on a recreational dive trip to Tobermory. Some of the divers were new to cold water, and some were seasoned cold-water divers, but they all were ready for three days of diving the 1800s shipwrecks for which the area is known.

The trip began with a dive briefing from Captain Tom, who told us how the ship we were about to dive was sunk for recreational divers, which explains why divers can see much of the ship at a depth of just 15 meters. Experienced divers can drop down to 45 meters to see the stern.

As my wife and I were getting set up, the rest of the group paired up. One diver, who was a new cold-water diver, paired up with two of his friends who had already done a few cold-water dives. The captain soon dropped the ladder and said, "The pool is open."

We descended and followed our planned route to the bow and then moved toward the stern. We saw part of our group on the wreck, and everyone looked like they were having fun exploring the ship and keeping warm as best they could. My computer recorded the water temperature as 5°C at depth.

After spending 28 minutes on the wreck, my wife and I slowly made our way up the bowline for our safety stop. When we arrived on the surface, the other divers were already on the boat. As we were getting on board, Captain Tom said, "Not to alarm you, but I have one diver on oxygen."

I immediately checked on the diver who looked panicked and was breathing heavily from an oxygen mask. It was the new cold-water diver. The captain told me that the trio surfaced within five minutes of entering the water and had reached a maximum depth of 45 meters, according to their dive computers. He said he saw a lot of bubbles come to the surface before the divers returned.

I calmly asked the diver what had happened. He said that his group had dropped straight down to the stern of the ship, and at 45 meters his regulator free flowed. Being in cold water surrounded by bubbles was disorienting, but he remembered he could still breathe off his regulator. When his two buddies noticed the problem, they grabbed him and began to ascend, possibly exceeding 9 meters per minute. At a depth of about 15 meters, the diver's tank was empty. He signalled to his buddy that he was out of air, and the buddy offered his spare regulator. They ascended to 4.5 meters, where the diver was calm enough to attempt a safety stop, but they didn't stay for the full three minutes. When the divers returned to the boat and told the captain what happened, the diver was shaking and breathing hard, so the captain decided to administer oxygen. It took a while to calm the diver, who was scared and hyperventilating. DAN medics are always available to help with a consult no matter where you are when you need it.

As soon as I heard his story, I called the DAN Emergency Hotline. I have been a DAN member for 12 years and had my card in my dive bag. I told the DAN medic that I was with a diver who possibly had an arterial



gas embolism and asked if they could help me perform a neurological exam. The DAN medic listened to my retelling of the incident and asked to speak with the diver.

She asked the diver yes or no questions for a couple of minutes, and then he handed the phone back to me. The DAN medic directed me to ask the diver to do things such as “follow my finger with your eyes” and “lift both arms out like a zombie,” and I reported back my observations. The DAN medic coached me through my first non-simulated neurological exam, which I performed exactly as I had been trained in my divemaster class. After the exam was over, the DAN medic talked to the diver and determined that his symptoms did not warrant an emergency evacuation. DAN advised him to cease diving for the rest of the day and to refrain from diving the next day as well to be safe. The medic gave me a list of things to watch for and told me to seek advanced medical care for the diver if I noticed any of those symptoms.

We made sure to go over free-flow procedures in every dive briefing from then on. The diver recovered while sitting out for five dives but completed the last two dives of the trip without problems. Fortunately, this situation ended on a positive note. DAN was there when we needed them.

For more diving health and safety content, or to explore DAN World’s coverage options, visit World.DAN.org

What’s Happening Out There?

Are there any events or activities taking place in the upcoming months you think might be of interest to the underwater community? If you would like get the news out there let us know and we can post it in our newsletter. Just send your idea to any of the email addresses below and we’ll get in touch.

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