

## Deepwater Dragon, Egypt 2008

1. Have arrived safely in Egypt, a good thing! Ridiculous heat, landed at 18:30 local time to temperatures of 32 degrees C, which remained steady until long after the sun had gone. Excellent food put on by the Tropicana Hotel – awesome place! – pink gelatinous goo was a particular culinary high point, to the end that no one is suffering from food poisoning&hellip; yet!

11 Jul 08 – OCdt Levey

2. Swimming pool –no doubt containing meticulously measured and maintained levels of chemicals – provided the evening’s entertainment. The 6 person pyramid was unsuccessful (though not for want of trying), and that no one drowned can only be considered miraculous!

12 Jul 08 – OCdt Pates

3. After a relaxed breakfast at the hotel we assembled to wait for transport to the liveboard, unfortunately the company changed the times of departure but after a brief from the crew and the expedition authorities we got underway and got our first dive. We did some practical training for ocean diver and then had a swim round to see what the undersea world had to offer – a good introduction to what the red sea has to offer.

13 Jul 08 – OCdt Levey

4. Ras Katy was the first dive this morning, the rest of the group went down with the instructors doing Ocean Diver skills and having a general mooch around, but not many fish apparently. The weather is incredible though, really hot, really sunny, nice and calm at sea!

5. Dunraven wreck was the next dive this morning, which is an 1870s wreck. This dive is meant to be excellent for wildlife even if the wreck itself looks pretty much like, well, a wreck! Apparently there’s so much coral growth on it that it looks more like a lump of coral than the husk of a ship. I’m on slate duty with Rachel since we’re invalids at present, me with my ear, her with her teeth. It’s a learning experience!

6. The current down there is strong, and the groups have ended up drifting away from the wreck itself, Chris claims to have seen it for only 30 seconds! But they drifted over to see some great coral shelves, and a school of 12 dolphins!

7. Arrived at our next location, which is called Small Crack. The groups have gone off on a pinnacle and TJ’s SMB is making&hellip;well, interesting tracks across the surface of the water, he appears to be lost!

8. Groups have surfaced, lots of lion fish down there, and they found a conch in a shell too. TJ claims not to have got lost but only to have “been unable to relocate the pinnacle”, sounds like the same thing to me but whatever!

9. Rachel and I both completed drills successfully and narrowly avoided a bit of an encounter with a lion fish! It’s the Thistlegorm wreck tomorrow and we’re hoping to get a go at that now we’re sorted. Chris and Dave are organising a night dive with one diver each.

14 Jul 08 – OCdt Corcoran

10. Time for our briefing, the first dive today is on the Thistlegorm. A British military cargo ship sunk on 6th October 1941 by German bomber planes. An absolutely gigantic wreck, the total length being over 120m, we only dive a small amount. We descend on a shot line due to strong currents around wreck. Unfortunately our buoyancy control is still a bit naff and we are all arms and legs, I got a fin hit to the face by the RSM. Then we swim from the bow to the bridge, as we swim by the side of the wreck there is a massive drop-off from our level at the top deck to sea floor some 30m below.

11. Glad then to swim back over the top of the wreck and look down into the holds where you can see Bedford trucks. Everything seems so amazingly intact railway trucks on the top deck and apparently motorbikes in the holds deeper inside. There is a multitude of life that has claimed this hunk of junk as its home. Near the bridge I spot this prehistoric looking crocodilefish and loads of brightly coloured parrotfish.

12. Back on the yacht it's time for breakfast. Then we chill out for a bit just lounging in the sun. Nell and Rachel get a chance to dive the Thistlegorm and they seem ecstatic. The second dive is back on the Thistlegorm, this time we are led by Dave the wreck lover. He leads us through the companion ways, in and out through bits of wreck. In front Dan doesn't notice a piece of wreck jutting out and hits his head, ouchy. Streams of bubbles come up from other divers deep inside the wreck. I'm amazed by the amount of stuff I hadn't noticed before. Then back up the shot line, we carry out our safety stop in the company of a shoal of fusiliers.

13. We get back to the boat and de-kit which seems to happen like clockwork now even after so few dives. The yacht now moves on heading west towards our next dive site. The sea on the crossing is a much rougher compared to the millpond it had been the previous days. Most people end up asleep on the top deck; this is the start of the problems for those who suffer from seasickness.

14. The third dive today is on the Barge, which is barely a wreck compared with the Thistlegorm but is teeming with life. We change dive buddies for the first time and this dive is a bit of a navigation exercise, not everybody found the wreck. We swam from the boat heading towards the reef then bearing right under the second boat. On the way there we saw giant moray eels for the first time. Most of their bodies are hidden in the coral; just their heads and gaping jaws were visible. I also saw a yellowfin goatfish which have little prongs at the side of their mouths to move the sand at the bottom. There are also pipefish and cornetfish both of which are distinctively long and thin. On the wreck there was a huge resident giant moray eel swimming around known lovingly as Jaws. It had claimed this wreck as his home for the past fifteen years. On the way back Pete pointed out a Frogfish a mad little creature that pushes itself along the seabed using its fins.

15. Later on we have our first night dive, as the sun is setting. This time we are led towards the wreck each buddy pair following the one on front. A large shoal of fish surrounds us and the shoal can be split using the torch beam. On the Barge we spot Jaws still swimming around and a well disguised crab scuttling along. The darkness gives the dive a much more closed in feel. Back to the yacht for dinner and then to bed, it's still warm in the evening but there is a cooling breeze so tonight I'll sleep on the top deck.

15 Jul 08 &ndash; OCdt Kopp

16. Woke up this morning at 6 again (these early mornings are a bummer). Had our early morning brief ready for the dive on the wreck of the Carnatic. What followed was a mad rush when everyone rushed to get kitted up and then we set off in two waves on the RIB to the dive site. For some the RIB trip was a very exciting journey across 10 metre high swells jumping 50 ft into the air. TJ was whooping with joy and the RSM turned into a dead fish. He managed to not throw up until everyone had left the boat and then sunk into the bottom of the boat, cried for his mum and waved at the boat hand to take him home in a wet fish voice. Meanwhile the rest of us intrepid explorers descended to the wreck of the Carnatic. It was an old sailing and engine powered cargo ship and sunk at a 45 degree angle. We all had a good swim around (apart from the RSM who was being stared at from all the other liveboards who thought he had DCI from the way he was sprawled in the bottom of the RIB). On the wreck the rest of us all had a jolly good time swimming in and out of the holds and under the deck support timbers in the bow. There was lots of rust to keep the wreck lovers happy and lots of fish to keep the fish lovers happy. After about 30 minutes of swimming around on the wreck it was time to return to the surface. We were then picked up from the dive site by the RIB and returned to the My Hyatt, de-kitted and munched merrily on breakfast.

17. After breakfast we had another dive brief preparing us for the epic journey down to the wreck of the Giannus D. This began with another RIB trip over to the dive site which progressed in two waves. This time the RSM managed to actually make into the water. We descended to the wreck and had a similar but very enjoyable dive to that on the Carnatic. We had a great time swimming along companionways and through the open holds of the ship, admiring all the amazing marine life that was now covering every surface. This wreck was a lot more recent (sunk in 1983) and as such, parts such as the bridge were a lot more intact. This made this wreck a very imposing but impressive site. We then ascended to 6m, stayed here for a safety stop for 3mins and then returned to the surface. Unfortunately for the RSM the RIB trip back to the My Hyatt was fairly rough and he descended into his wet fish impression that we have all come to know and love. Once at the boat we de-kitted, and had lunch. After lunch the boat moved off to the next dive site. The journey across was quite exciting because there were fairly big swells. This meant we all took great enjoyment in watching each other trying to walk over the swaying deck.

18. The third dive site is a place known as The Alternates in the Ras Mohammed National Park. This site is a mainly sandy seabed with big coral heads that have a diameter of about 30m across. The walls of these coral heads are literally festooned with life of all kind and it was around one of these that we had our third dive. This meant that all the fish lovers had an awesome time staring at the myriad of colours on show. We saw lionfish, Nemo and Dori fish plus many others all swimming around in the coral. Once we had made our way around this coral head we ascended back up to the boat.

19. Once back at the boat we had another briefing about the night dive we were to undertake. We left My Hyatt at 20:30 and descended to the bottom. We proceeded around the same coral head as we had on our third dive and looked at all the nocturnal marine life. There were many interesting fish, most of we don't know the names of. Some lucky people did spot a big octopus whilst others concentrated on not being eaten by a shark. Once around the coral head we ascended as before and made our way back to the boat. Once out the water and dekkitted, we had dinner followed by relaxing on the upper deck. That is until TJ roped me into writing this diary entry. Anyway, its now 00:17 and time for bed considering we have to be up at 06:00. Everyone is really excited and some a bit nervous (myself included) about the diving tomorrow as there is a chance we may see some hammerhead sharks.

16 Jul 08 &ndash; OCdt Ash

20. I woke to another gorgeous morning on the Red Sea, and prepared for the first shark hunting trip of the day. We dropped straight off of the back of the boat above an 800m plunge, luckily no one made any ridiculously speedy descents today. We started our search at Yolanda and Shark reef, known for the ship Yolanda sunk in 1976. The Captains BMW once had prime position on deck but now sits on the sea bed, where amongst the toilets and bath tubs of the wreck we were lucky enough to see a turtle. Such observations would have, during the first few dives sent many of us racing unwillingly to the surface in excitement, we managed however to control ourselves and watch it munch its way through perhaps 10 years growth of coral. Awesome! No sharks so far, apart from one 'claim' of a sighting of a white tip from Nell, but does a falling tree make a sound if no-ones around to hear it?

So after a spot of breakfast and a sleepy lesson the hunt continues to Jackfish alley, which was beautiful but devoid of our sharp toothed friends. There were lots of eels and we explored a little way into a stunning cave, so made for a really good dive.

21. With strict warnings about busting our depth limits we get suited and booted and take to the sea once more at Ras Ghozlani. The descent was a little troublesome, two divers had to go back up because of ear troubles and got themselves safely back to our home. The rest of us unfortunately went a little over our limit and earn ourselves a firm place in the dog house. We completed the rest of the dive with little hassle, and took in our gorgeous surroundings even spotted an electric ray. A calm ascent and return to M Y Hyatt, and I have to say the RSM's zodiac trips are becoming more graceful by the day.

22. A bit of a snorkeling! and a chilled out evening for most while the supreme few who didn't burst the limit took in the watery sights around us on the night dives. We eagerly awaited their return, it meant dinner! Oh and to hear their sightings of course!

17 Jul 08 &ndash; OCdt Wheeler

23. The last day of diving held excellent coral growths and good fish life. We're all gaining experience and becoming excellent divers!