

Welcoming 2026 | Vol. 33

Bottom Time

Maties Underwater Club Newsletter



MATIES
UNDERWATER SPORT

Cover photography: Rebekah Haschick
Editor: Liya Hiestermann

Welcome back MUC family!

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A message from our

CO-CHAIRS!



Zeané Nel

Dear Matie, welcome back! And if you're new here, congratulations on finding the most exciting sport that SU has to offer! Whether you're a seasoned diver, or from landlocked Joburg and completely new to the magic of the underwater world like I was, Maties Underwater is the place for you. Our committee works hard to foster a vibrant community with plenty of amazing opportunities to explore the beauty of South Africa's coastline. We look forward to having you as part of the MUC family and hope to see you under water soon!



Benjamin Tate

Hello, and welcome to the new year! I've been part of MUC since my first year; first as an instructor, then as Head of Scuba, and now as Vice Chair.

From the start, MUC has always been more than just diving to me. It's the people, the culture, and the feeling that you belong the moment you show up.

Whether you're brand new or returning for another year, the club is built on being welcoming, supportive, and genuinely excited to share the underwater world with one another.

The club follows a simple philosophy: to learn and grow in a safe, supportive environment, whether you snorkel, spearfish, scuba dive, or freedive. Diving is a niche sport, but not many universities can say they have a 5-Star PADI Dive Resort on campus. The people you meet and the friendships you build here are all rooted in a shared passion for the ocean.

We dive because we love it, but we stay because of the community. MUC offers more than certifications and dives; it offers mentorship, confidence, and a place to belong. I'm proud of what this club stands for and grateful to be part of a community that continues to grow, both in and out of the water.

Out with the old and in with the new:

Welcome to 2026!

by: Liya Hiestermann

Phew! What a year 2025 was for MUC. Ups, downs and lots of moments under pressure... but that's what we're here for right?

2025 was a year filled with a lot to be proud of and a lot to be grateful for, starting with our club members (yes, that's you). Without the shared love of diving, spearfishing and the underwater world, MUC would cease to exist, so thank you, to every member, for being part of MUC and using it as a vessel to explore the wonders of our ocean.

As one year rolls into the next, it's hard not to pause and appreciate just how much the club achieved in 2025. From completing 41 qualifications (Open Water and Advanced) and going on 140 dives in total, to social events that continued far into the night, last year reminded us what this club does best: bringing people together through a shared love of the ocean. It was a year of momentum and we welcomed 127 members!

Whether you logged your very first dive with us in 2025 or added yet another page to an already well-loved logbook, every member played a role in shaping the year we're so proud of.

As great as last year was, 2026 is shaping up to be even better. With new energy, fresh ideas, and a calendar already filling up, the year ahead promises more events, new dive sites, the annual Sodwana Bay trip and plenty of opportunities to get involved. From dives and workshops to socials that remind us why we enjoy spending time together, there's something on the horizon for everyone.

This year is also about growth. Growth in confidence, experience, and in community. We're looking forward to welcoming all our new members, whether you are here as an experienced diver or to love the ocean and learn to dive, find joy in the sea alongside the familiar faces that make the club what it is.

Here's to early mornings, gear washing, nudi hunting and bring-and-braais at the club, supporting each other on every dive, and making the most of every opportunity that comes our way. Here's to learning, laughter, and dives that become stories we'll be telling for years.

Out with the old, in with the new - welcome to 2026. Let's make it a year to remember.



Fiery Nudibranch ©Rebekah Haschick

WATCH OUT! NUDI BEACH!

The secret lives of vibrant sea slugs

by: *Rebekah Haschick*

If you happen to find yourself peering into the rockpools along the coast, or wandering the kelp forest beneath the waves, these little creatures may well elude you. But! Once you catch a glimpse of these marine kaleidoscopes, you will not be able to take your eyes off them. Let's take a dive into the world of one of nature's cutest critters – the nudibranch – so you can keep an eye out for them on your next marine adventure!



What are Nudibranchs?

Nudibranchs, or 'nudis', are brightly coloured, soft-bodied sea slugs. They are very similar to snails (part of the same family in fact), except these guys don't have a shell. The name "Nudibranch" can be broken up into "nudi," meaning "naked" and "branch" which means "lung" or "gill," referring to the vibrant, feather-looking gills on their back that they use for breathing. What also makes nudis particularly adorable are the two 'horns' situated on top of their heads. These horns help nudibranchs navigate through their environment since they can't really see through their tiny eyes. In some species, like the Sea Bunny, these horns are frilled and look more like bunny ears than horns.



©Lawrence Scheele

Above: Blue Dragon nudibranch approaching its prey, the Bluebottle .

Often smaller than the size of your index finger, these critters would probably go unnoticed if it wasn't for their striking appearance. Boasting bold colours like electric blues, fiery oranges or rich pinks and purples, these colours play multiple important roles in a nudibranch's life (not just because they look pretty). Most nudibranchs are inedible, and these bright colours serve as a warning to predators to stay away. Almost like a "Watch out! I'm poisonous!" signal that many predators pick up, and so they steer clear. Alternatively, these colours help the nudibranch blend in amongst the luminous algae or sponges that they live and feed on. Often times, the colour pigments of their foods can even influence a nudibranch's colouration, efficiently hiding them from plain sight. Some nudibranchs have the ability to steal toxins and stinging cells from their prey and use them as their own defences. A really cool nudibranch to keep a lookout for is the Blue Dragon (*Glaucus atlanticus*). This species has adapted to "borrowing" toxins from Blue Bottles (Portuguese man of war) and uses these toxins to become a stinging slug. But be careful, this potent creature can even deliver a painful sting to an unsuspecting diver.

Nudis to look for

Now here on the shores of Cape Town, there are more than 70 kinds of nudibranchs that you could possibly find. Whether you're exploring dive sites like Windmill, A-Frame or Castle Rocks, here are a couple of fan favourites that you will likely encounter on your next rock pooling session or dive, if you keep your eyes peeled...



Cape Dorid © Madelein Wolfraadt



Black Nudibranch © Madelein Wolfraadt



Fiery Nudibranch © Madelein Wolfraadt

Species like the Cape Dorid and Fiery Nudibranch are mostly white and smooth along their tube bodies, with bright purple and orange spots in the case of Dorid and orange stripes for the Fiery Nudibranch. One nudi that might be particularly difficult to spot but oh so rewarding when you do find is the Black Nudibranch. As their name suggests, its whole body is black except for two electric blue stripes that run down its body from its horns to its rear. All three of these nudi species have their gills positioned on their rear, resembling a frilly flower. Another two species that are a must see look like little underwater hedgehogs. The Gas Flame and Cape Silvertip nudibranchs look very similar in body shape, except the former boasts yellow and purple "spikes" while the latter has pink and silver ones (hence the name, Silvertip).

So, on your next underwater adventure, keep a close eye on the algae fronds and rocks around you. If you're lucky, you'll catch a glimpse of these colourful little creatures as they go about their activities. From fiery specimens to glowing hedgehogs, nudibranchs truly are a diverse group of critters. I wish you the best of luck on your nudibranch endeavours! If you want to find out more about all the nudibranchs that False Bay waters have to offer, check out Nudibranchs of the Cape Peninsula and False Bay by Guido Zsilavec.

Can you spot the Gas Flame nudi?



©Rebekah Haschick



Gas Flame Nudi ©Madelein Wolfraadt



Gas Flame Nudi ©Madelein Wolfraadt

Fish Tales from the Holidays

by Liya Hiestermann

Our Head of Spearfishing, FC van Niekerk, had a busy holiday spearing, with some great trophies to show for it! Have a look at what he got up to below, and if you fancy, contact MUC to join him on his next spearing adventure! Whether you are experienced or a novice, MUC caters for anyone interested in this unique sport.



Yellowtail speared in Struisbaai (above, middle) and in Cape Point (far right).



Bronze Bream speared in Camps Bay and a braai with a view afterwards (Left: Benjamin Tate, Right: FC van Niekerk).

Soddies, Salt and Lekker Locals

by: Liya Hiestermann



Sodwana Bay ©Adrian Harcourt-Cooke

There are places you visit, and then there are places that quietly claim you. Sodwana Bay falls firmly into the second category...

A favourite dive spot and overall holiday destination for people from all over the world, Sodwana has a way of feeling both wild and familiar at the same time. Warm water, endless reefs, white beaches stretching as far as the eye can see, and a tropical pace that slows everything down... It's the kind of place where days blur together in the best possible way.

The diving itself never disappoints. One dive brings turtles cruising past like they own the reef, the next has a breathtaking swarm of devil rays soaring past and never forget the curious Old Lady Angelfish keeping safety stops interesting. Conditions keep you honest, currents keep you alert, and every descent holds

the promise of something, even if you can't pinpoint what it will be.

And of course, Sodwana wouldn't be Sodwana without the locals. Skippers who read the ocean like a second language, dive masters who seem to know exactly where to look, and familiar faces on the beach who make each trip feel like coming home. Add in the fun and games between divers: sharing coffee before sunrise, gear washing, fish ID, and it's easy to see why people keep going back.

Soddies isn't just about the diving. It's about the people you dive with, the stories you bring back, and the feeling that once you've been, a part of you is always planning the next trip. Same sand, same sea and different stories every time. The annual MUC Sodwana trip will always be the trip of a lifetime.

Qualifications: Year End 2025

*Congratulations to our newly certified
Open Water divers:*

Federico Stà
Philipp Bolli
Laura Uhlmann
Lucas Sturm
Jan Koch
Luca Hà Sgen
Lukas Kramer

Kelvin Francis
Johannes Bohlig
Matthias Frank
Karel van Overbeke
Demann von Ehrenstein
Justus Mischke

*Congratulations to our divers that received
their EFR certifications:*

Rebekah Haschick
Jeane Joubert



WE'D LOVE TO PUBLISH YOUR STORIES!

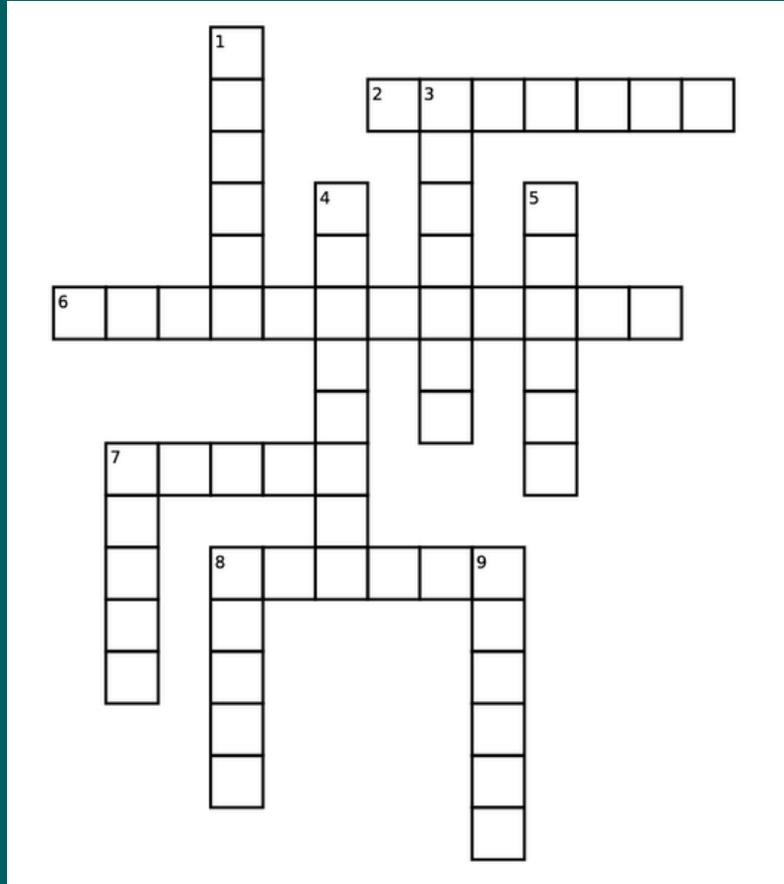
Do you have a great diving or ocean related story that you want to share?
Send it to 26895900@sun.ac.za. We'd also love to include any photos of
your diving adventures.

It's the perfect place to share your experiences!

Kraken Your Brain

A new edition to Bottom Time: The games page

EQUALISE YOUR MIND



Down:

1. Shell-backed reptile common on reefs
3. Eight-armed master of camouflage
4. Striped reef fish with venomous spines
5. Breathing gas with reduced nitrogen
7. What you always dive with for safety
8. Breathing apparatus used by divers
9. Word meaning "great" or "awesome" in SA slang

Across:

2. Book where dives are recorded
6. Device that shows depth and time underwater
7. Post-dive outdoor cooking tradition
8. Group of fish moving together

Keep an eye out for the solutions on the Maties Underwater Club members WhatsApp group.

Happy diving!

Maties Underwater Club

PRICE LIST

Prices are all inclusive with the exception of transport

Courses

*DSD (discover SCUBA diving) - R690 (pool only) - R1060 (with sea dive)

Refresher Course - R530

Open Water (OW) - R7160

Advanced OW - R7160

EFR (emergency first response) - R2810

Rescue Diver - R4670

Divemaster - R15 900

**Freediving workshops & Seminars - contact us for information

Club Member Dives

SCUBA Dive (Full Gear Rental): R350

SCUBA Dive (Hard Gear): R300

SCUBA Dive (Soft Gear): R285

SCUBA Dive (Cylinder only): R250

Boat Dives are priced on demand.

Guided Free Dive (Full Gear): R120

Guided Spearfishing (Full Gear) : R170

Guided Free Dive/Spearfishing (No Gear): R70

Membership and Gear Rentals

Club Membership for Jan to Dec:
R900

This includes

- 50% discount on gear rental
- Information on upcoming dives and trips
- Access to club events and networking opportunities

If you sign up for a course, you automatically qualify as a club member, and the membership fee is waived.



MATIES
SPORT

Contact us to sign up!



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