

Ranger Diary

**WHAT'S ON**  
**JOIN** ornithologist Ian Venables tomorrow morning to identify birds in the sub-tropical rainforest at Maiala, Mt Glorious. Take your binoculars to look for pitas. Common in rainforests on the east coast of Australia, these shy birds hop about on the forest floor searching for insects, snails, worms and berries. Sub-tropical rainforest is a diverse ecosystem and is sure to provide great birdwatching opportunities. Cost is \$18.40 for adults including morning tea. Join a ranger on Tuesday for a night-time search through Daisy Hill Conservation Park. Enjoy a cup of billy tea before heading out on an easy-paced guided spotlight tour. Cost is \$12.85 for adults, \$8.20 for children and \$34.15 for families. For more information and bookings, please telephone 1300 723 684.

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 16**  
 Cool it by Degrees Day: Set your household fridge to 4C to help reduce the effects of global warming. The refrigerator is one of the largest users of energy in the home and a change of just 1C can reduce energy consumption by up to 5 per cent, saving you money and reducing your footprint on the environment.

**NEWS**  
**ROADWORKS:** These are continuing in the vicinity of Lake Eacham, Crater Lakes National Park. The Lake Eacham Road and car park are expected to open on November 6. For further information please phone QPWS Atherton on 4091 1844.

**WILDLIFE**  
**SNAKES:** Twenty-seven species of terrestrial snakes are found in the Brisbane area. Most common species reported are the carpet python, common tree snake and yellow-faced whip snake. Australia has some of the world's most venomous snakes and about two-thirds of these may be found in and around Brisbane. Snakes can be found in almost any suburban back yard and even in the city centre. To reduce the chances of snakebite incidents, wear rubber boots to knee length in high-risk areas, wear thick gloves when gardening, remove rubbish piles and get to know what species of snakes are found in your area. Most victims of snakebites are those who have tried to kill or interfere with the animal. Best advice . . . if you see a snake, give it a wide berth and don't threaten or provoke it. When left alone, snakes present little or no danger to people. Visit [www.epa.qld.gov.au](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au) for safety tips and advice on reducing the chances of snakes coming into your back yard.

**CAMPING**  
**MORETON ISLAND:** This week's severe weather has affected some parts of the northwest camping zone. Heath Island camp sites 1-5 are closed. Please avoid this area and obey all signage. For more information please contact QPWS offices at Moreton Island on 3408 2710 or Cleveland on 3821 9000. At Lizard Island National Park in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area, the water pump at Watsons Bay campground is unavailable. Visitors can use the Marlin Bar at Lizard Island Resort, about 1.2km from the campground. Info on all of Queensland's national parks at [www.qld.gov.au/camping](http://www.qld.gov.au/camping), or by calling 131 304.

Compiled by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service



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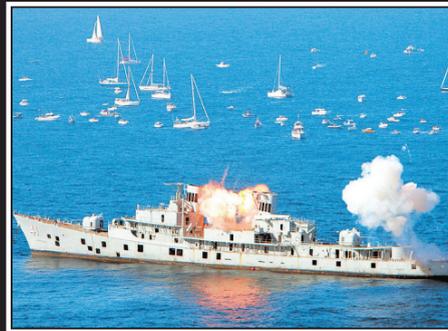
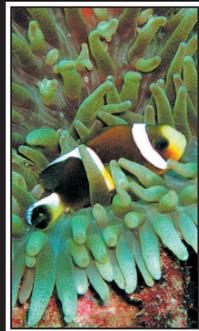
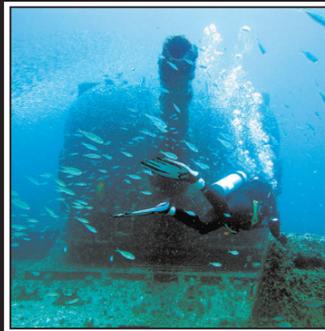
Ed:FRST

MAIN SHEET

Fri, Nov 2, 07

COURIER-MAIL

NOTES:



WALK on the ocean floor . . . scuba diving at the wreck of HMAS Brisbane in waters off Mooloolaba. The decommissioned ship was sunk to provide an artificial reef which is now a haven for marine wildlife. Pictures: Bart den Ouden, Bruce Long and Noosa Blue Water Dive

# Dive of discovery

**HATE** wetsuits. First of all, it's difficult to squeeze into the formfitting neoprene, and I usually end up taking forever to stretch, grunt, sweat, jump up and down and finally have someone zip the back up for me.

Imagine trying to squeeze toothpaste back into the tube; that's what it feels like.

It is not particularly an attractive sight. Fortunately, wetsuits are not designed for fashion, but for keeping you warm under water.

This scene repeats itself any time I go scuba diving, as on the recent Saturday when my husband, Tom, and I arrived at the Sunreef Scuba Diving shop in Mooloolaba at 7am.

Once the wettie ordeal is over, it was time to hook the scuba gear together, load the trailer and drive to the jetty. We were on our way to dive the former HMAS Brisbane, a guided missile destroyer decommissioned in 2001.

The former Royal Australian Navy vessel was scuttled in 2005 off the coast off Mooloolaba, and is now the Sunshine Coast's artificial reef, sheltering myriad sea life and a popular recreational dive spot.

It was the second time Tom and I had ventured out to check out the ship, the first being in July.

This time a friend who dives the wreck regularly, a master instructor with the Professional Association of Driving Instructors, Bart den Ouden, offered to be our personal tour guide.

As soon we hit the water my first thought was: "Hell, this water is colder than I remember."

As we followed a rope guide down to the ship, I started to warm up.

I love wetsuits, I thought for a moment. Almost immediately we saw many types of fish everywhere. It was a bit like walking through the tunnel at

## Jodie Munro O'Brien takes a dive to a scuttled destroyer, now a wildlife haven

Underwater World, except there was no glass between us and the marine creatures and a vast expanse of ocean, though on this particular day we could see only about 10m in any direction. Soon we saw the large hulk of metal sitting on the sandy bottom in about 27m of water.

The eight-storey ship towered above us as we sank to the bottom.

Some of it even resembled a ghost ship, with barnacles and coral already covering the deck and railings.

Some objects could only be seen as silhouettes, making the ship seem surreal at times. At first we swam around the exterior and on to the deck where there were multitudes of fish

such as trevally, angler fish, parrot fish, moorish idols and banner fish, with smaller varieties hiding under and inside the hull.

We covered the stern of the ship, where a large intact gun sits stationary.

Then we started to venture inside where it was so dark it was like being inside a cave. I should mention that wearing gloves and having a torch were a must for this dive, especially for exploring inside the ship.

It was certainly worth ducking inside, and I mean duck. There were sudden surges of current through any opening of the ship we decided to swim through, and bumping your head on a hulk of metal underwater hurts

just as much as it does above ground. Despite having knowledge of the need to duck, thanks to memories of the July dive and an egg on my head, the current once again managed to slam my noggin against the ship.

Yep, it hurt just as much as it did the first time when I did not expect it, if not more.

Rubbing my head with my gloved hand and clapping my camera in the other, I continued to follow Tom and Bart, who both had torches.

We swam through living spaces, the ship's gym, the boiler room, the engine room and the galley.

Most of the time I had no idea what room we were in, but it was fun trying to guess and trying to spot the different varieties of marine life that had made the vessel their home.

Inside the Brisbane, some rooms were obvious; the galley had sinks and tables that reminded me of the type of tables you would find in a restaurant; in a corridor there was a control panel of some sort, with visible numbers and dials; another room has toilets.

I imagined the sailors who once worked aboard the destroyer and wondered what they would think of seeing it under the ocean now.

Some divers have said they have seen less marine life on World War II shipwrecks, so the quickly forming reef on the Brisbane is a fascination in its own right.

Other wrecks that were not purposely sunk can also just be hunks of wood or metal strewn over the bottom of the sea, and divers are not able to go inside. Thanks to our torches, we were excited to spot a cleaner shrimp and a lionfish inside the ship.

Back on deck, Bart pointed out an octopus hiding under a ledge, as well as a small orange clown fish (think Nemo) at home in its anemone.

### Checklist

- **WHAT:** Scuba dive the ex-HMAS Brisbane
- **WHERE:** About 9km (or 20 minutes) by boat from Mooloolaba on the Sunshine Coast. By road, Mooloolaba is about 100km north of Brisbane.
- **WHEN:** Dive year-round
- **VISIBILITY:** Often between 10m to 20m; can get up to 30m.
- **WATER TEMPERATURE:** Between 18C and 27C, depending on the time of year.
- **COST:** With Sunreef Scuba Diving Services, two dives start from \$120; a double dive with all gear supplied is \$184.50, plus a \$15 conservation fee per trip.
- **DETAILS:** Website: [www.sunreef.com.au](http://www.sunreef.com.au) or phone: 5444 5656 or

- email: [dive@sunreef.com.au](mailto:dive@sunreef.com.au)
- **Marine life spotted on the dives:** crayfish, groper, shovel-nosed rays, stingrays, stone fish, clown fish, lion fish, octopus, sea snakes.
- **Visitors must be certified divers.**
- **The growing artificial reef has been labelled a conservation park, so a permit is needed to visit the area and fishing is not allowed.**
- **To enter the park and dive the ex-HMAS Brisbane, visitors must either:** book a dive tour with a licensed dive tour operator; or obtain a permit for a club dive or a private dive, by booking through Maroochy Tourism.

