

Trip Report: Poor Knights “Skive Dive”, 15th April 2010

Andy Connor (Photos: Mike Smith)

Sometimes smaller really is better! That was certainly true for our recent skive dive out to the Poor Knights, where Dive! Tutukaka put us on board Bright Arrow with just a total of seven divers on board that meant we had a very relaxed day. Mike, Tony, Jamie and myself joined three other divers for the day, Cecile, Mike and Rainer. Whilst the sky was a little overcast, sea conditions were excellent with just the smallest of swells and light westerly winds. Having not dived at the Poor Knights for ages, I was really looking forward to some nice dives!

The journey out to the islands passed quickly and after a quick chat with our Evan our skipper, we decided that the first dive of the day would be at Light Shaft Cave. Being on the eastern side of Aorangaia Island, this site is fantastic for seeing pelagic species that cruise by. On this side of the island, the vertical cliffs plunge straight into the water and continue dropping vertical to a maximum depth of over 70m. The plan was for everyone to jump in at the same time, and rather than anchor, Evan would pick us up further down the wall.



Jamie and I were planning a nice cruisy dive, not too deep and just drift along the wall. Being ready to go first, we jumped in to the water and swam to the back of the cave where the shaft of light pierced the darkness of the water producing a lovely blue aura. From the mouth of the cave, we turned north and drifted along slowly surrounded by dense schools of pink mao mao and demoiselles. Just floating there and watching the sheer numbers of fish leaves you with no doubt that marine reserves really do work! Lurking on the edge of the schools, larger predatory fish drifted by in the hope of catching smaller fish unawares. Huge snapper drifted by then around the middle of the dive a dozen large kingfish darted in to the middle of a school of pink mao mao, scattering them in all directions. It took us an hour to drift just a hundred metres or so down the wall, slowly coming shallower where at the end of the dive we the pink mao mao were joined by large schools of their blue brethren. For Cecile, Mike and Rainer this was their first dive at the Poor Knights and you couldn't have asked for a better introduction.



Our second dive of the day was at the Cream Gardens, a site that more me is always more about the encrusting life on the wall as it drops into deeper water. Again, Jamie and I cruised along the wall looking out for nudibranchs and admiring the growth of bryozoans and gorgonian fans. Another relaxing dive at this wonderland, made all the more fun by knowing that nearly everyone else was at work. Well, apart from Cas who only works part time, who came to meet us in Tutukaka for après-dive drinks and nibbles after a half day of working in Whangarei. All in all, a great day of skive diving!