

Trip Report: Lake Taupo & Waikato River, 27/28th June 2009

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We'd left the planning of this weekend purposefully vague, and so had simply arranged to meet for breakfast in Taupo and see who turned up! Winter had definitely arrived, the fog was hanging down as we sipped coffee and tea, and tucked into well proportioned breakfasts whilst trying to ignore the fact that we were going to be going for a dive in the coldest water any of us had dived in for a while! The fog delayed Tony who was driving down from Auckland, but on his arrival we put our heads together and came up with a plan. Last time Jamie and I had been here, we'd not really had the time to explore the dive sites we were diving at – let alone any other options. Because Jamie and Scott were planning a deeper dive, we decided to head first to Motutere Bay where we knew the lake was deep enough to take advantage of the trimix in Jamie's tanks!



Our first dive site was characterised by large rock walls that drop in deeper water, with ledges at various depths. The real advantage of the site is the lack of surface swim and how quickly the walls step down. This let Jamie and Scott very quickly get to their planned maximum depth of 50m, whilst Natacha and I were quite happy at 25m to try out her new drysuit. Tony, Mike and Chris were just a little deeper. Visibility wasn't as good as on our last visit, but was much better than any dive in Lake Pupuke! The surface of the lake was a rather chilly 11°C with reports from deeper in the lake that it dropped to 8-9°C. Cold enough in a drysuit, spare a tough for those hardy souls in wetsuits!

For our second dive of the day, we chose to go and explore Waipahi Stream Mouth – not necessarily the best decision! After a couple of hundred metres of swimming on the surface we were still in just a couple of metres of water. Eventually, though, the bottom dropped away and Jamie, Scott and I followed the sand down to our planned maximum depth of 30m. Here we found large numbers of koura who were quite happy to take us on! We took advantage of the space to practice some skills in blue water and no visual reference before hightailing it back to shore to warm up and head back in to Taupo for the evening.

We'd only planned for one dive on Sunday, the drift dive down the Waikato River. An early morning phone call confirmed that the flow rate out of the lake was fairly low, around 70 cumecs, but we decided to go ahead with the dive as the lower flow would give us a good chance to get to know the dive site better and fully appreciate the rock walls of the gorge that plunge down into the depths of the river. After a quick courtesy visit to the staff at Taupo Bungy we found ourselves zooming down the river, with shallow fast sections followed by deeper pools and other sections where the challenge was to dodge the tree roots and big boulders. Great fun, and a dive that must be on everyone's list of dives to do in 2009!

