

Niugini Blue®

Papua New Guinea's Premier Water Sports Magazine

JANUARY 2007 • ISSUE 1

An inquisitive Orca draws close to the camera.

'A Close Encounter', page 40

Photo: © Thomas Kuhn, June 2006



FEATURES

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| The Blue Hole | 8 |
| Photographer and part-time travel writer Don Silcock takes us on a journey up the Esis River to dive a mysterious sink hole created by ancient underwater cave systems. | |
| PeeWees in the Cook Islands | 12 |
| Three PeeWee sailors challenge some of the world's best Optimist sailors at the 6th Oceania Optimist's Championships. | |
| ET's Escapades | 14 |
| Andrew 'ET' Ettingshausen writes to us about his latest visit to Baia Sport Fishing Lodge in search of the infamous PNG Black Bass. | |
| Canoe Sailing in Central | 16 |
| The story behind Motuan canoe sailing. | |
| Kimbe Bay's Invitational Fishing Tournament | 18 |
| A tournament to boost game fishing in Kimbe Bay gets off to a promising start. | |
| Surfing PNG | 22 |
| A brief history of the Surfer's Association of PNG and Andrew Abel's hopes for the future. | |
| Hook-up in Hawaii | 32 |
| New Britain Game Fishing Club takes out second place honours in the 2006 Hawaiian International Billfish Tournament. | |
| Suki Creek | 34 |
| Four mates head to Suki Creek on the Fly River for a real fishing experience. | |
| A Close Encounter | 40 |
| Pippa Ward gets in the water with Orca and dolphins in Kimbe Bay. | |
| Kite Surfing | 54 |
| Jason Pini shares his passion for a sport that is still in its infancy. | |

REGULARS

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| Club Talk | 4 |
| Club reports from around the country. | |
| Tide Tables | 28 |
| Handy tide predictions for Port Moresby, Lae, Madang, Rabaul and Aloiau. | |
| The Galley | 31 |
| Easy cooking for ocean-going folk. | |
| Storibod | 46 |
| Tales and stories contributed by our readers. | |
| Underwater Photography | 48 |
| Photographer Don Silcock walks us through underwater photography. Part One. | |
| Tech Tips | 50 |
| Steve Landon offers some tips on maintaining your reels. | |
| So They Reckon! | 52 |
| The stories you didn't want us to know about. | |
| What's New? | 53 |
| Industry reviews on the latest gear available. | |



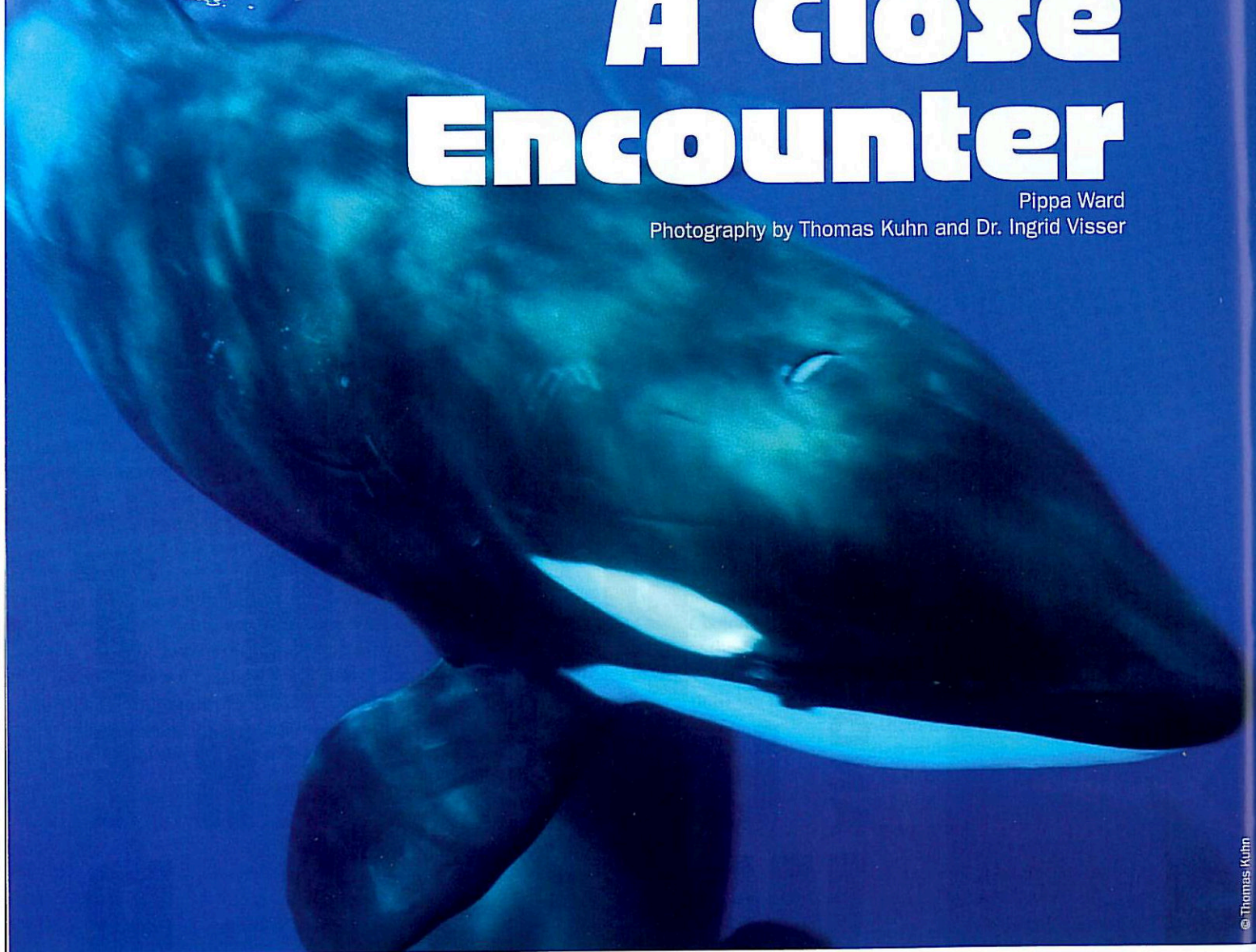
A Vanimo surfer in the barrel of a wave. Cover shot by Jason Pini.



A Close Encounter

Pippa Ward

Photography by Thomas Kuhn and Dr. Ingrid Visser



© Thomas Kuhn

It may come as some surprise to realise that Orca, normally seen in documentaries featuring ice floes, penguins and cold water, can be found in the Bismarck and Solomon Seas. Although resident within this huge area, the Orca are an unusual sight in our beautiful tropical waters, preferring to hunt far out to sea.

Occasionally though, there is the once in a lifetime opportunity to see these utterly spellbinding creatures closer to land.

Kimbe Bay, home to Walindi Plantation Resort, is a favoured haunt of the Orca, with regular sightings throughout the year. We had our first sighting in June 2006 when a small pod of six Orca, intrigued by the thrum of

the engines, came to investigate our dive boat and its occupants.

Specially designed boom nets which extend from the hull of the boat allowed us the opportunity to examine the Orca in their own environment. Hanging onto the boom nets, masks and snorkels firmly in place, the boat cruised slowly through the water with the Orca surfing in the wake of the bow, scant meters from our entranced eyes. The Orca spent about an hour playing in the waters around the boat before - as if obeying an unheard signal - they turned to resume their hunting, disappearing as quickly as they had appeared.

The library at Walindi displays photographs of past encounters with the Orca, including one much loved

but sadly sun damaged grainy image taken from video film of an Orca with the spoils of the hunt for a hammerhead shark.

The story goes that the Orca were being filmed, when suddenly one disappeared into the inky depths below. Some few seconds later, the Orca returned bearing in its mouth the delicate morsel of an adult hammerhead shark. At the time this was the first recorded witness of such behaviour. To the shock and surprise of the divers fortunate enough to witness this event, the Orca approached and presented the hammerhead to them, as if in a clear invitation to tuck in. Alas, as no divers were tempted by this appetising invitation, the Orca turned and presented



© Thomas Kühn

it to his mate.

Clearly a creature that regards a hammerhead as somewhat akin to a cup of tea offered to an unexpected visitor is a creature to be treated with a healthy dose of respect and circumspection.

Life at Walindi was recently



© Thomas Kühn

enlivened by the presence of one of the world's foremost experts on Orca, Dr Ingrid Visser, a New Zealander who knows a terrifying amount about these wonderful cetaceans.

Unashamedly passionate about the Orca, Ingrid had returned to Walindi to continue her research into the Orca and other marine mammals that call Kimbe Bay home. Alas, the Orca in true Murphy's Law style had decided that

discretion was the better part of valour and despite avidly scanning the horizon we had to be content with Melonhead Whales and dolphins.

Ben, the infinitely better other half, had some holiday time while Ingrid was conducting her research, and he appointed himself research assistant, disappearing each day with his floppy brimmed hat and sunscreen clutched in his hot sticky hand, returning later to dazzle all and sundry with his newly acquired marine mammal terminology.

I was wrestling with admin and was not at my most receptive with the air-con unit on the blitz, so on the basis that if you can't beat 'em you should join 'em, I chucked the admin back into the in-tray and headed out to the open sea with Ingrid and Ben.

It had been decided on some

undoubtedly spurious reason that Spud, our dog, would join us on the trip, ostensibly so that we could monitor his reaction to the high pitch of the dolphins' communications, more so for the entertainment factor.

Spud, a true PNG dog, most closely resembles the unfortunate love child of a Rottweiler and Daschund affair. With a Rotty-sized head and body, and Daschund-sized legs, Spud's centre of gravity is so low that the roll of the boat posed no obstacles.

Appointing himself admiral of the high seas, Spud dispatched Peter, our spotter, to the roof of the boat where Peter was forced to spend the rest of the day cowering. Even so much as dangling his feet over the edge lead to a volley of barks and a hasty retreat.

All was quiet, glorious blue skies stretched into infinity, and the sea slipped below the keel of the boat with barely a murmur, when the shout for "dolphin!" went up. Scudding across the surface, leaping with breathtaking agility, the sea all at once came alive as a pod of Spinner Dolphins seemed to come from every direction, turning to ride on the bow waves.

Spud went berserk.

Hurling both himself and torrents of abuse at the dolphins below, he was only stopped short of a full frontal assault by me grimly hanging onto his lead.

Mixed in with the Spinner Dolphins were a small pod of Bottlenose Dolphins. Huge and gun-metal grey,



© Dr. Ingrid Visser



A CLOSE ENCOUNTER

Story: Pippa Ward



© Dr. Ingrid Visser

they dwarfed the sleek pinky spinners as a frigate does next to a high-speed pleasure craft.

The largest bottlenose could clearly see the demented dog hurling himself against the railings above. Turning to watch Spud, he kept level with the boat with careless flicks of his tail fin, until he dived down into the blue depths below. The dolphin would repeat this action, each time circling back to regard the dog through curious eyes. It was clear that he could hear Spud's barking and was intrigued.

Ingrid meanwhile was frantically whirring away like a member of the dolphin paparazzi. By photographing

and studying nicks and marks on each of the dolphins fins, she would be able to identify individuals and compare the photographs with previous studies she had undertaken a couple of years earlier.

Sadly waving goodbye to this school, we headed on towards May Reef, a large ridge of reefs that is home to some 300 Spinner Dolphins.

Sure enough, as we approached and could see the surge of water over the shallow reef top, accompanying splashes marked the presence of the dolphins leaping high into the air. Ben and I were then given the opportunity to try out the boom nets, which were quickly affixed to the side of the boat.

A boom was extended out from each side of the boats hull with cargo nets hanging down from them. Ben and I then grabbed a hold of the nets, lying with our feet resting on a lower rung. As the boat moved forward, the nets rose, supporting us so that we were then able to hang safely with our face masks in the water.

The result was amazing.

Six dolphins were apparent on the surface, gliding and leaping in the bow wake, and below a further forty or fifty dolphin soared beneath. The clear waters disappeared into a faint haze of the seabed many tens of meters below, while layer upon layer of dolphins sped beneath our awestruck gaze, darting to and fro. The cacophony of clicking and whistling was deafening. At times it seemed as though the dolphins were so close that if you outstretched your hands your fingertips would brush against them.

I've seen dolphins many times from a boat, I've snorkelled with them, and on rare occasions I've been fortunate enough to encounter dolphins whilst on Scuba; but I've never had an experience to equal the sight of the dolphins on this day.

Unlike a glass bottom boat, hanging in the boom nets gives an overwhelming sensation that you are part of the dolphins' world. The dolphins easily matched the pace of the boat, diving and weaving from just below us to far below



© Dr. Ingrid Visser

in the inky depths, and the whistling was just overwhelming.

Regular dolphin watching trips are available from Walindi, visiting sites that are home to the large pods. Diving day trips frequently encounter smaller pods of the dolphins as they move from

site to site, and boom nets are carried on all the boats, so that chance encounters can quickly turn into an enchanting opportunity to view these wonderful animals from a unique perspective.

Just a word to the wise. More than a week since our excursion, Walindi's



© Dr. Ingrid Visser

A CLOSE ENCOUNTER

Story: Pippa Ward



© Dr. Ingrid Visser

dive staff are still sniggering over the sight of my bright white bum as my bikini bottoms were pulled down by the force of the water. A one piece bathing costume is probably a good idea. ■

Pippa Ward



MMI
PACIFIC INSURANCE

KEEPING YOU COVERED IN PNG



BUSINESS



MEDICAL



MOTOR



MARINE



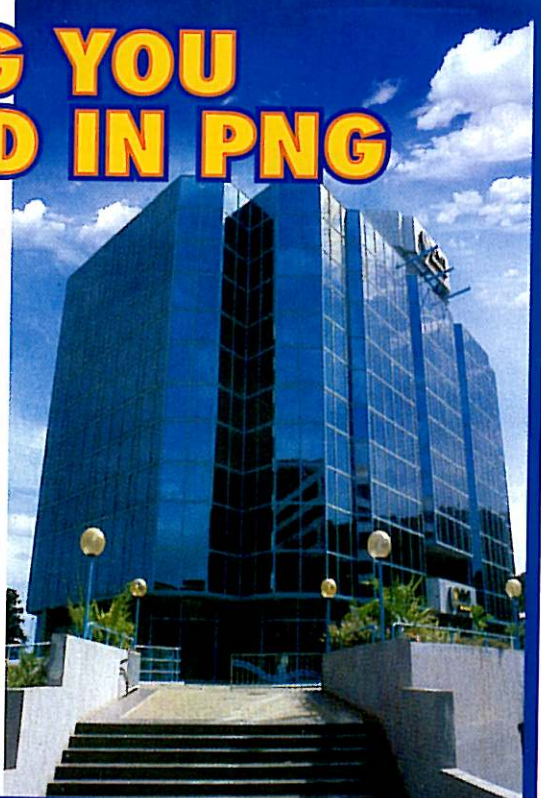
HOUSE



LIFE

With many years experience in Papua New Guinea, we at Pacific MMI Insurance take pride in providing insurance products that meet international standards and are unique to Papua New Guinea.

Consult with your Insurance Broker or Advisor today for the best solutions to your insurance needs...



Level 4, Pacific MMI Building, Champion Parade
PO Box 331, Port Moresby

Email: enquiries@pacificmmi.com

Website: www.pacificmmi.com

321 4077

Facsimile: 321 4837