

REEF WATCH



A Reef Watch diver is transfixed by a chance encounter with a Common Weedy Seadragon.

Photo: Mark Norman

Take a dive that counts!

Victoria's marine environment is incredibly unique, with more than 85% of species living in our southern waters found nowhere else on earth.

In fact the waters around Victoria are so rich in marine life they rival the Great Barrier Reef for biological diversity. However, this underwater world is facing mounting pressures from threats such as overfishing, pollution and invasive species.

That's why our Reef Watch program is so important!

Run by the Victorian National Parks Association in partnership with Museum Victoria, Reef Watch brings together volunteer divers and snorkellers from across the state to help survey and monitor important reef sites.

Equipped with underwater identification kits, their mission is to record information about 180 marine species and feed that information back to marine scientists.



Go on, take the plunge!

We are always looking for more volunteer divers and snorkellers. To get involved phone Wendy on 03 8341 7446 or email info@reefwatchvic.asn.au

By giving scientists and conservation planners access to reliable, up-to-date marine data, we are helping them make more informed decisions about protecting Victoria's marine world.

Reef Watch divers and snorkellers also take part in regular educational seminars and workshops that help improve their knowledge and skills in identifying marine life.

How do I get involved?

As a community-led volunteer program Reef Watch coordinates a number of marine conservation initiatives, including 'Feral or in Peril', and the Great Victorian Fish Count.

Feral or in Peril helps divers, snorkellers, fisher folk, and the wider community identify which of Victoria's marine species belong in our waters but are in peril, and which are invasive species – we call them ferals!

It does this through easy-to-use species ID kits that include images of introduced species, potential pests, and native marine species that are of conservation concern.

The Great Victorian Fish Count is held in December every year and brings together hundreds of volunteer divers and snorkellers to help keep track of 25 important reef fish species.

Last year it proved invaluable in helping verify the presence of Western Blue Groper in Port Phillip Bay.



REEF WATCH IS A VICTORIAN NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION PROGRAM
DELIVERED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MUSEUM VICTORIA.

www.reefwatchvic.vnpa.org.au | email: info@reefwatchvic.asn.au | phone 03 8341 7446



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The Great Victorian Fish Count

Once a year hundreds of volunteer divers and snorkellers plunge into Victoria's marine waters as part of the largest community-led ocean monitoring program in the state.

Called the Great Victorian Fish Count, this extraordinary project has been growing in popularity since it began in 2005, and last year boasted more than 200 divers and 200 snorkellers visiting 25 underwater sites across the Victoria.

Run as part of the Victorian National Parks Association's Reef Watch program, the project welcomes anyone interested in diving, snorkelling, marine ecology, or conservation.

What does it involve?

The Great Victorian Fish Count helps us discover which fish species live in Victoria's temperate coastal waters.

Participants organise which day and where they will dive through their local dive club, 'Friends of' group, or the Reef Watch Coordinator.

Supplied with fish ID kits divers then gather data on a list of marine species and report their findings.

With help from Museum Victoria scientists, the data is entered into the Reef Watch database and made available to community groups, students, scientists, coastal and marine managers, policy makers, and the general public.



PORT PHILLIP & WESTERN PORT DIVE SITES



The spectacular Blue Devil Fish. Photo: Matt Krumins

Where does it happen?

Dives can take place anywhere along the Victorian coastline. Specific locations are determined by participating groups, in conjunction with the Reef Watch Coordinator, and recorded on a map with the data.

It's essential to the long-term goals of the project to return to past locations, but because of the dedication and loyalty shown by many Reef Watch volunteers, new sites are often added.

When does it happen?

The Great Victorian Fish Count runs for three weeks – December 3-18.

Volunteers decide which organised dive they will join. This flexibility allows for greater participation and helps avoid any issues regarding diving conditions.

Why do we count fish?

No single organisation in the world can tackle the great challenges we face with respect to managing our marine environment without the help of the community.

That's why the Great Victorian Fish Count helps passionate people take part in an event that promotes active education, gathers valuable marine data, and gives volunteers the chance to reconnect with their local coastal environment.

In turn, this creates understanding, awareness and co-operation between the general public, scientists, and government agencies.

How do I get involved?

- To get involved contact Reef Watch Coordinator Wendy on 03 8341 7446 or email info@reefwatch.vic.asn.au.

COASTLINE DIVE SITES

