

# Snorkeling Bayside

**An Introduction to  
Snorkeling in the  
Ricketts Point Marine  
Sanctuary and Nearby  
Waters**





# ***An Introduction to Snorkeling in the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary and Nearby Waters.***

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*Author: Raymond V Lewis OAM*

*Email: [ray@lewisfamily.com.au](mailto:ray@lewisfamily.com.au)*

*Publisher and Distributor: Greypath Press 1/16 Crawford St  
Cheltenham Victoria 3192.*

*September 2015*



Southern Tailed Sea Jelly

# ***Introduction***

This book has been written primarily to assist members of Marine Care Ricketts Point Inc with their snorkeling.

It has been based upon general advice and the experience of many local divers.

*The opinions expressed herein are those of the author at the time of writing. They are not necessarily the views of any other person or organisation, and everything here must be taken as one man's opinion only.*

*The author does not accept any responsibility for errors, omissions, information or advice in relation to snorkeling matters in or as a consequence of any person acting on anything which is contained in this modest book.*

Snorkeling is easy and most people manage with no coaching or support at all. People from 8 to 80+ snorkel at Ricketts Point. That said, the first snorkeling adventure is important. A foggy or ill fitting mask or snorkel that lets in water, a snorkel mouthpiece that is too big, and more, are all simple to fix, but can alienate a first timer for good.

This book will help beginners. Hopefully more experienced snorkelers too, may learn something here, and make their time in the water more enjoyable

Snorkeling is like all other outdoor physical activities - quite safe, but it carries risks that one should be aware of and minimise.

All marine life images shown are local, and might be expected to be seen by any snorkeler.

## ***Protecting the Environment***

*My thanks for the following information which is précised from that excellent book Beneath our Bay [ISBN 9780646511290].*

- Use clearly marked paths to access sites and avoid trampling coastal vegetation.
- Minimise your impact on the marine environment by avoiding plants and animals when you enter the water.
- When in shallow waters avoid kicking with fins to minimize damage to algae.
- Take all rubbish home with you as marine animals easily get entangled with or consume your litter.
- All marine life and natural objects are protected by law in Marine National Parks and Sanctuaries and therefore may not be removed or disturbed.

## ***Protecting Yourself***

When snorkeling in Port Phillip Bay boats, especially jet ski's, are a hazard, and you should display a dive flag.

Never snorkel alone. Swim with a buddy.

Your level of experience needs to be considered in the light of each site.

Wind, tide, currents, reefs, depth and more need thought. Always get a weather forecast.

Wear appropriate gear for the water temperature. Hypothermia is possible in winter.

Avoid touching anything you do not know well, as some Bay species are dangerous to touch.

*There is more such advice scattered throughout this book*





Port Jackson Sharks



Underwater Ricketts Point

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# ***1. A General Introduction to Snorkeling in the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary***

Snorkeling in the Sanctuary is dramatically affected by both tides and winds. Entry at the recommended spots can get a person to snorkeling depth water much quicker, and avoid unnecessary damage to sea grass beds and intertidal reefs.

Tide levels for every day can be found at this excellent site

<http://tides.willyweather.com.au/vic/melbourne/beaumaris.html> and similar, and a look at the Beaumaris Yacht Club 24 hr webcam ( <http://bit.ly/1rVqzrn> ) is a great help too, as it is live 24/7 and will show you up to the minute images of the Tea House Reef area, which is the main snorkeling location in the sanctuary.

Wind from all directions, if low, (say less than 10 knots) are OK for snorkeling , but over 10 knots your dive site needs to be thought about. Mostly, the sanctuary, being on the eastern side of Port Phillip Bay, suffers from all winds coming from the South through the West to the North. Light winds or even stronger ones from the North through East to the South East are ideal for local snorkeling.



Quiet Corner (called that for good reason) can sometimes be a good spot when other places are blown out , (as also under the Mentone Cliffs beside the Sea Scouts Jetty).

Sometimes it can help those new to snorkelling, and a little fearful, by having them kneel down on all fours in shallow water so as to get comfortable and confident in wearing their mask and snorkel with their head underwater.



Having them do this close to a small reef of interest is a good idea. Once they are happy, it is a simple second step for them to simply stretch out slowly and swim.

Keep a first snorkel to stand up water depth, as it is only the boldest who are happy to swim

over their depth the first time.

It is a rule of thumb that it is ***best not to snorkel until 24 hours after local rain,*** as street water flows in to the Bay and sits on top of the salt water for a while. Twenty four hours gives it time to dissipate. (Some recommend 48 hours)

## ***2. Snorkeling Equipment Advice***

Our local waters vary markedly in temperature over the year. The usual low is around 9 degrees in mid to late winter, and we have a high of around 21 degrees, in high summer.

At 21 degrees many can swim for an hour without any protection, and without getting cold, but at 9 degrees, 1 in 6 unprotected swimmers, can die of hypothermia in 15 minutes.

The snorkeling 'season', as such, is from November through till end March. That said, with the right gear, a number of people dive here throughout the year, as winter waters have their own attractions of water clarity, splendid alga and more.

For most of us, a wet suit is of great value. Wet suits are called such because they are designed to let the water in around the body, which is then quickly warmed, offering extra insulation against the cold. An ill fitting wet suit lets water flow in and out and is useless.

A suit of 3mm thickness for summer is fine, and for winter a 5mm suit with an added say, 3mm vest and hood, are essential. Hoods are important, as much heat is lost through the head, especially from males.

For a first timer who may or may not enjoy the experience, a [late summer] trial snorkel, using borrowed gear or a cheap department store package of mask, snorkel and flippers, can be a cost effective way to go. However if a person is to continue, then it is of value to get things right, by talking to the experienced and then buying the right gear.



**Snorkels** come in many shapes and sizes. Most have removable mouth pieces as one size rarely fits all. A large mouthpiece can cause some people to gag.

On the left hand page there is a removable mouthpiece displayed.

The first snorkel is an open snorkel. This is used by more experienced snorkelers and scuba divers [as they let in water easily in rougher surface conditions or after a small duck dive]. Such water needs to be blown out before one can breathe properly again.

The next snorkel is a modern well designed one that tends to shed much casual water that may get in to the snorkel. It has a handy exhaust valve at the bottom to aid in getting rid of any excess waters that may get in. This is a suitable snorkel for most people. (They are described as having a water deflector with purge valve)

The final snorkel takes things a step further in snorkelling comfort. It has an added plastic float at the top which prevents almost all water from entering, and also includes a purge valve.

All of these snorkels are fine once one has a few snorkelling experiences, but many, even experienced snorkelers, prefer the latter versions.

For very young snorkelers select a snorkel of small diameter (less total air volume) so that, with their more limited lung capacity, they can clear exhaust breath (CO<sub>2</sub>) more effectively, on breathing out. A small mouthpiece too can help prevent gagging for some people.



**Masks** come in all shapes and sizes. The most common two are shown here plus a special one that indicates that mask design is on the move. On the bottom left we have a normal mask. Today everyone uses masks like this. Top left is a special mask that has much less air volume inside it, and once placed over ones head the reduced air volume makes ear clearing easier advanced diving. On the right is an imported mask that can be helpful to people who gag with a snorkel in their mouth, as such is built in. They are also well designed to prevent fogging and have good visibility. They are designed for surface snorkelling only, due to the larger volume of air, and inability to pinch ones nose to help clear ears when duck diving.

1. Masks should be made of silicon which is flexible and lasts longer. As with all gear that is used in salt water, give them a fresh water rinse after use. Always give new masks a 3 times rinse in baby shampoo before the first use. (This or a toothpaste rub, removes makers protective coatings that can cause fogging.)
2. All faces are different sizes. The test for a suitable mask, is to place it over the face, and it should remain there if one breathes in, (i.e. it is air tight), even if one faces down, and only drops away when one breathes air back out into it.
3. Before each dive, spit and swish the inside of the glass to reduce fogging, or use diluted baby wash. Clear all hair from the mask surrounds or it will leak.
4. Masks can have prescription lenses added.



**Fins and Flippers.** These items are usually called either fins or flippers. At the top of the left hand page we have a fin, (spilt fin variation) and below, a flipper. They come in many variations. Snorkelers who are experienced usually wear wet suits to extend their season and this need for warming also extends to wearing boots and hoods. The top fin is designed to take a boot or bootie, and has a variable size fitting strap.

The flipper below is designed for warm water only, [or beginners who will usually have bare feet], hence it has an in built heel like a shoe. They have less size flexibility than most fins.

Some fins, like the top one, also carry a 'split' which can reduce the stress on calf muscles when using them, without reducing their effectiveness.

A flipper that is oversize can be bulked up little with a soft shoe or thick socks.

You are there to see underwater life, so don't splash fins noisily on the surface, (no propulsion anyway from surface splashing), swim slowly and quietly with fins partly submerged, and you will see much more.

An open toed fin will usually be a better buy as it will press less on the toes.



Weights can help duck diving



**Weight Belts.** As a snorkelers gather experience and begin to really see things underwater, some duck diving skills become desirable, especially if you have an underwater camera.

If one is wearing a wet suit, it can be almost impossible to duck dive very far, or stay down long enough to observe things close up, (a wetsuit is full of air bubbles), and hence a weight belt is needed. Weight belts have two parts, a belt and a 'quick release' buckle.

Always buy about 400 mms or more belt length than you think you need, as threading extra winter weights on, can use up a lot of spare length. (Don't tuck any excess away, let it dangle). You add lead weights to suit your individual 'floatability'. Always fasten you belt's buckle before hand carrying it, as weights can fall off an open belt and break a bone in ones foot. There are many variations in belts and shoulder harnesses. (You can paint your lead weights for handling safety). Gloves too, can prevent nasty surprises as one turns over rocks and more. (Especially beware sea urchin spikes)

If you are going to be more adventurous, then join a marine care group and get some oversight on **the techniques for duck diving and safety issues, before you even think about trying it.** (Ask Parks Vic Tel 13 1963, who to contact).



SAXON HOOD



MALE



FEMALE

**Wetsuits and Hoods.** Wetsuits are shaped for both men and women, and can also be bought off the rack or tailored, from on line or local sources. Usually a 5ml wetsuit will suit Melbourne's waters from much of the year. A 3ml thickness is the norm for the warmer months, but can quickly become insufficient for many people.

Wetsuits can also come in two pieces and with or without zips, (to aid in getting in and out of them). When getting out of a wetsuit, seek to roll the arms and legs down rather than try and drag them off. (Plastic bags over hands and feet can help getting into a wetsuit).

Adding a hooded vest, (see right), over a wetsuit, can extend the protection needed in colder months.

Hoods with or without vests, are important, as it said that we lose most of our heat out of the head. Snorkeling hoods usually come in 3 to 5 ml and more thicknesses. When used, their flap is tucked inside the wet suit collar.

Wetsuits are designed to retain the initial flow of cold water inside the suit, and when warmed by body heat, to aid insulation. A wetsuit with loose areas around the neck, hands or feet is mostly useless as it lets cold water move through continually.





Zebra Fish at Ricketts Point

### ***3. Snorkeling Locations in the Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary at Beaumaris***

The Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary is about three kilometers long and stretches about half a kilometer out to sea. There are a number of places as shown below, that are considered to be preferable areas to snorkel in. This has to do with factors of underwater life values, and accessibility.





McGregors Rock at Quiet Corner

### **3. Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (Melways 85 K6)**

#### **3.1 McGregors Rock at Quiet Corner**



This area is renowned for both the marine life, and also as a place to go when the wind blows snorkeling out elsewhere. (Hence its name Quiet Corner)

Access is via a steep set of steps as shown, [or further up Beach Rd a steep sealed pathway that can take a wheelchair)

There have been many sightings of dolphins, Eagle Rays and more here.

Fish life and alga is profuse, with many species, including a recent sighting of a very big Conger Eel.

Waters range from very shallow around the first reef section, to about 5 metres depth around McGregors Rock Point.



Banksia Point

### ***3. Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (Melways 86 A7)***

#### **3.2 Banksia Point**



This area is rarely snorkeled, but as such can be very pleasant on a calm day.

Most action is close in with water up to around 2 metres max..

It is backed by stands of Banksia and a beach that make for a nice picnic spot.

It is a shallow close to shore dive, with enough interest to keep most people engaged.

It has difficult access for the disabled.

We don't know much about this area, as it is so seldom dived, but it does have a quite different 'feel' about it.



Tea House Reef

### **3. Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (Melways 86 B8)**

#### **3.3 Tea House Reef North. (Tea House Reef is 'Dive Central' at Ricketts Pt)**



This is a dive for those who are developing confidence, but are more comfortable over water that is mostly around chin deep. It is an easy swim out to the yacht club marker, [an interesting bommie], and then back 15 metres to the inner reef, and then north towards the green marker and return. The first half is mostly reef and the return is over tracts of sea grass and much alga.

At low tide it is always best to begin a local snorkel in front of the Yacht Club, rather from the disabled ramp, as it can be a struggle over the shallow reefs otherwise.



Tea House Reef Low Tide

### **3. Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (Melways 86 B8)**

#### 3.4 Tea House Reef South. (The Main Dive at Ricketts Pt)



This is a dive for experienced snorkelers and the depths further out can be up to five metres or so. It isn't easy to find the turning points but doesn't seem to matter too much to most divers. The dive covers most habitats we have in the sanctuary. Fish life is prolific once you get beyond the Tea House Reef. At low tide it is always best to swim out to the Yacht Club marker and then back to the Corner rather than from the disabled ramp, as it can be a struggle over the

shallow reefs otherwise.

There is also an 'outer lagoon' (dotted) and a swim around its reef edged perimeter, can also be rewarding.



Tea House Bay

### ***3. Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (Melways 86 C9)***

#### **3.5 Tea House Bay.**

An excellent dive for beginners as it can be quite shallow along the foreshore



and up to around four metres further out. It is well protected by reef.

Enter just north of the Tea House. (If it's low tide, try a bit further south opposite the Tea House). To avoid running aground, begin by swimming out on an angle towards the yellow sanctuary marker as shown. Not a great dive for fish but always produces a small surprise, especially at the North Arm Reef end.

A haul further out to the marker and back, can be of real interest for more advanced snorkelers.



The North Arm Reef

### ***3. Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (Melways 86 C9)***

#### **3.6. The North Arm Reef.**

Not often snorkeled these days, but it has its own charm. [The entire sanctuary varies in the marine life that can be seen, both location-wise and seasonally, and this area is no exception].



This dive can be a good one for beginners, as it mostly shallow and is based close to and around the exposed intertidal reef section. There is plenty of parking nearby.

There are also showers two hundred metres further south on Beaumaris Beach, just past the BLSC, and a close by there are toilets.

The reef is usually well exposed, (look for fossilized worm tracks), and allows any non diver to stand on the end of the reef, do some close viewing of those in the water.



South Triangle Reef (Ricketts Pt)

### ***3. Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (Melways 86 C9)***

#### **3.7. The South Triangle Reef at the Ricketts Point.**

Like the North Arm, is also not often snorkeled these days, but it has its marine life attractions. It is a rather long shallow snorkel out to a reef line, then across to the Triangle Point area and back in. Don't try to shortcut coming home as one will run



aground. (We try and avoid any unnecessary trampling on our reefs). Also it can be tricky to safely exit the dive near the triangle marker due to sharp rocks.

This dive offers often unseen shellfish such as cone shells and more, under the various rocks. It also helps adults to wander out across the mostly well exposed reef to the Point, and monitor younger divers. The main dive area can be better accessed from the end of the North Arm reef.



### ***3. Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (Melways 86 D10)***

#### **3.8. Table Rock.**

An exciting snorkel for most, with great reef life and some deep water for the sightings of larger fish at times. A look at the cave like structure under the rock itself, and con-



tinuing on further as shown, [for an exit at the sea scouts jetty], make for an interesting dive.

There is a cliff top path back to the beginning.

A snorkel along the rock face itself is a unique local experience.

There is no beachside parking, so be careful crossing Beach Rd.

This beach has a very remote and isolated feel, and is well regarded as a dive spot by all and sundry. It suited to intermediate and advanced snorkelers



Sea Scouts Jetty

### ***3. Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary (Melways 86 E9)***

#### **3.9 The Sea Scouts Jetty.**

This is the southern end of the sanctuary. Parking is across the Road in Rennison St.



Cross the road with great care.

This can be a good dive when the winds are against you in other places, as it is sheltered under the cliffs to some extent.

It can be an exciting dive for a new snorkeler as it involves and interesting transit under towering cliffs and a boulder strewn bottom from various cliff collapses.

Entry and exit via the concrete ramp is easy. Marine life is usually far less interesting

here overall, but can be exciting in the ledge areas shown. The remote feel and lack of people, adds to its unique quality.



Jawbone Marine Sanctuary Williamstown

## ***4. Snorkeling Locations Elsewhere– Top of the Bay (Mel 56 J10)***

### **4.1 Jawbone Marine Sanctuary. Williamstown.**

It's about a hundred metres walk in from the car park at the bottom of Rifle Range Rd, then down a short track to a black, volcanic, boulder strewn, sandy beach.



It is a great scenic place for children to play too.

Underwater it is quite different to the rest of the upper bay, due to the many large stones in the water, small caves and more and also a variation of algae from the more eastern bay waters. Keep your eye out on the return track for old scuttled boat remains.

There are no local facilities for changing or toilets. A close by wetlands walk to see a rare stand of mangroves, will be of interest to many.

The water in the bay at Jawbone and on the route shown, will be shallow, especially at low tide, and no deeper than 3 m. Among the beautiful things to be seen here are the shallow but lush seagrass beds where one might find elusive pipefish, and both dumpling and pygmy squid.



The Beach at Jawbone



Sea Grass Beds Jawbone



Point Cook Marine Sanctuary

## **4. Snorkeling Locations Elsewhere– Top of the Bay (Mel. 199 K2)**

### **4.2 Point Cook Marine Sanctuary.**

Point Cook gives a unique feeling of being away somewhere on a remote island

beach, even though one can see the towers of Melbourne on the skyline.

Offshore if one ventures a little beyond the inner reef areas, it is renowned for many interesting shark varieties, (especially Port Jackson Sharks). Fish abound and algae is very interesting too. Algae varies in size and colour from other parts, probably due to the fertilisers from the Werribee river. This is mostly a shallow dive over two or three metres depth.



There is good parking, and the historic old homestead and a cafe, are close by.



Half Moon Bay

## **4. Snorkeling Locations Elsewhere– Top of the Bay (Mel. 85 H2)**

### **4.3 Half Moon Bay (Black Rock)**



The can be an exciting dive as it has great surface scenery (the wreck of the Cerberus) and the nearby Red Bluff. Underwater an encounter with a friendly and very big Eagle Ray, is common. Seahorses can be found under the pier. Beyond the Cerberus to the north, about 30 metres or so, are a couple of cannons from the wreck, that are well covered in algae, but being on sand, their mound is easy to find. There is also a Tea House on the foreshore. Shore access is easy.

A cautious exit is sensible from route B due to boat traffic. Keep 25 metres or so away from HMVS Cerberus, and tow a boat/diver warning float if swimming route B



Green Point Brighton

## ***4. Snorkeling Locations Elsewhere– Top of the Bay (Mel. 76 C3)***

### **4.4 Green Point—Brighton**

This is a convenient place to dive with two options. One can transit the point and back as shown, or walk down the beach 100 metres south, and have a look at the remaining piles of the old baths. They begin about 20 metres out in the water.



There is supposed 'elf art' and the odd coin, about half way out the southern set of piles.

Plenty of parking here, and it is also a short walk from the Brighton Beach Station. This isn't a highly rated snorkel but is a nice change, and convenient for many.

The famous Brighton beach boxes are only a few hundred metres away around the point of land to the north.



## ***4. Snorkeling Locations Elsewhere– Top of the Bay (Mel. 76 G11)***

### **4.5 Southey St Groyne—Sandringham**

This is a very convenient dive and is close to the Bay Rd shops and Sandringham railway station.



Access is easy, being just off the path down to the beach, which begins a little south of the groyne.

There are enough fish, sea stars, sea squirts, algae, molluscs and more around the groyne itself, to keep a beginner interested.

With it's good beach and easy supervision, it is a good place to start for many families.

The same applies no doubt, for other local rock groyne dives.



## **4. Snorkeling Locations Elsewhere– Top of the Bay (Mel. 67 A3)**

### **4.6 Pt Ormond Reef Brighton**

A good snorkeling spot for beginners. Point Ormond is easily accessible from the ramp on the northern side of the point.



Before reaching the reef, cross the sand-bank, which at low tide is convenient to stand on, if you need to adjust your gear halfway.

Look out for stingarees hiding in the sand. The reef is quite shallow with some interesting areas on the far side (as seen from the shore) and a great variety of plant life.

It seems to be a fish nursery, as big schools of young fish are frequently spotted.



## **4. Snorkeling Locations Elsewhere–Top of the Bay (Mel 86 F8)**

### 4.7. Fossil Beach Cromer Rd Beaumaris.



A double dive area here in the BMYS surrounds. One to the South under the Beaumaris Cliffs, and another to the North of the BMYS where we have a secluded and aptly named Fossil Beach.

Fossilised *lovenia* [heart urchins] are often found here, plus it is rumoured, other

finds. It is a shallow and interesting dive, with a small wrack littered beach. Access is via the BYMS entry Rd and then along the back or front of the clubs wired off area. No parking here. Park on the other side of Beach Rd.



Cromer Rd South of the BMYS



Fossil Beach Cromer Rd. North of BMYC



Decorator Crab

## **5. Other Matters Of Interest**

**5.1 Hand Signals.** Using hand signals can be both fun and also increase safety. See next page. It is better to communicate via such when in the water, rather than to drop ones mask or remove a snorkel to talk. (The risk of eyes full of salt water or a gagging mouthful, is reduced, and learning and using such signals can enhance a new snorkelers safety awareness).

**5.2. Time in Water.** This depends on many factors such as water temp, fitness, health etc, but the usual summer target is for up to an hour. As a general rule disabled snorkelers should not snorkel in temperatures under 18c. Our local summer season temperatures are roughly 18c to 24c at max, and down to around 8.5c in late winter.

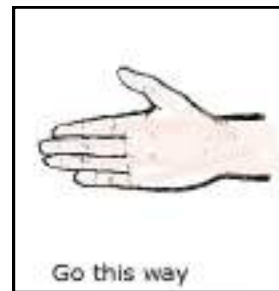
**5.3 Water conditions.** Off shore winds, poor visibility underwater, nearby drains expelling street water over the past 24 hours, (e-coli risk), or strong surface flow of the water, are good reasons to look somewhere else.

**5.4 Which way to snorkel?** Usually one snorkels so that when you are tired, you are coming home with the surface flow, not against it. The surface water can move a little differently than the sub surface due to wind effect.

**5.5 Buddies.** It is a golden rule that one snorkels with a 'buddy' if you have one. The idea is that if one duck dives the other stays on top and vice versa. Many people snorkel alone, but it can be great help to have a friend nearby, should you get into mask or snorkel or other difficulty .



If one is in trouble and needs assistance, a single or double wave of hands is used. If all is well, a hand or double hand on the head is used



For a minor problem, a horizontal hand shake and then pointing to the problem, (leaking mask, cramped leg or whatever), is used. The other useful signals are OK, lets go this way, and stop. Time to 'go in' is indicated by a circular wave of ones hand, with the forefinger up, and then the 'go this way,' sign to the shore. (When cold, a two arm body hug is the signal).

**5.6 Warning Flag.** Most group dives these days require the leader to drag along warning float and flag. Many are made up. While they may not seem



necessary in safe boat free areas, snorkeling is not confined to sanctuaries, which are mostly boat free. The blue and white flag is a warning to boat owners that someone is in the water. With even small waves a diver can not be seen and a collision accident can happen.

**5.7 Cramp.** In Victoria's cold waters, leg cramp can arise. A pull towards you, on the fin tip of the effected leg, or a short rest, less strenuous snorkeling, and especially a change of style, help too.

A change of style that works well for most snorkelers is to take on a bike pedaling action. You still move along, but use different muscles

**5.8 Insurance.** When groups organise snorkels for their members or the public then public risk insurance by them is required. Also Parks Victoria can direct people to courses for snorkel leaders. These courses are a requirement for Parks Victoria's insurers to cover any groups snorkelling in Marine Protected Areas,(known as MPA's).

**5.9 Eyesight matters.** Glasses don't fit under masks very well at all, and their arms can cause water to get in and spoil a snorkel.



Special optical lenses can be purchased to replace the standard flat mask lenses. Also, as shown here, cheap variable strength plastic half lenses can be found on line, and when

wetted, they stick on the inside of a dive mask. They can be very helpful in reading the settings and more of a digital camera when underwater. (Note that they can easily be lost during handling in the marine environment, as, when wet, they slide off).

**5.10 Marine Photography.** This subject is another book in its own right. Suffice to say that for beginners, a cheap camera, (under \$300) rated waterproof to 10 metres and with a close to 10 megapixel image option, and set on auto, is a good start. (Try a LUMIX with a waterproof silicon jacket).

Always attach your camera to your wrist in some way, as it is a common occurrence to lose them otherwise.

**5.11 Ear Troubles.** Simple foam ear plugs, from a local chemist, can help. (Ear plugs should never been worn when diving beyond four metres, as they may impede clearing of the ears which is needed under pressure). Never duck dive if your ears hurt from the water pressure, damage can ensue. Duck diving requires ears being cleared with a 'swallow' every metre. Ear clearing can also be helped by holding ones nose and gently blowing with ones mouth shut. You should hear a crackle and the pressure subside if this is successful.

**5.12. Water in Mask.** If a mask lets some water in, then, before you take it off to let the water out, try instead pushing down on one side of the top of the mask with the palm of your hand, and then breathing out through your nose hard. This can force water out via the bottom of the mask opposite to the pressed side.

**5.13. Wading Over Sea Grass.** So as to lessen damage to our sea grasses, it is usual to wade out to snorkel depth and then put your fins on, before you begin to snorkel. Try and find a sandy bottom to wade out over if you can. Half a dozen people a year in Port Phillip manage to tread on a stingray and get spiked. Painful. It is best then to shuffle along if in any doubt.

**5.14. Duck Diving.** There is technique involved. If you get to do such, never dive under anything, and always put your hand above you as you come back to the surface, so as not to collide with your buddy or a boat or jetty planks or other, above. Weights and more are usually needed to duck dive easily and effectively, and some professional advice about how to duck dive safely, is essential.

### **5.15 Some Things to be Wary of.**

**Sea Urchins** have sharp spines, the tip of which can break off and embed in the skin. Leave them alone as a broken off spine can irritate for some months.

**Blue Ring Octopuses** are common, although only hand sized and very shy they carry a dangerous venom, (tetrodotoxin), and can bite if upset. Don't touch them.

**Sea Jellies** are mostly benign, and while most people are unaffected, some jellies can leave a nasty welt. All of us are adversely affected by the Lions Mane Jelly (brownish), and the Portuguese Man o' War, and both are well known stingers.

**Sting Rays** can inflict a dangerous wound if interfered with.

**Globe Fish** are poisonous, but only if the flesh and more is eaten. When they blow up for protection and bristle, their extended spines can hurt if handled.

**And, as a principle,** treat rocks and ledges in the water like logs in the bush, don't put your hands under them, if you can't see what's there.

### **5.16. Things look Different Underwater**

Underwater objects look closer by 25% and larger by 33%.

### **5.17. Colours Fade With Depth.**

Red colour fades out by 10 metres, then green then blue.

**5.18. Cold Water.** 1 in 6 people will die of hypothermia if unprotected by a wet suit or similar, and immersed in Victoria's cold (8 degree) late winter waters for 15 minutes or so. If you are feeling too cold or shivering, get out of the water.

Snorkeling can be a great sport for the disabled





Waratah Anemone



Sea grass oxygenating

## **6. References**

**6.1. Marine Care Rickett's Point Inc.** This well established organisation of marine carer volunteers have a well developed [and Parks Victoria approved], summer snorkelling and diving programme. Beginners welcome. At around \$25 a year, have a look at [www.marinecare.org.au](http://www.marinecare.org.au) for details of how to join up.

**6.2. The Port Phillip Eco Centre** at St Kilda also run snorkeling classes. See [www.ecocentre.com](http://www.ecocentre.com)

**6.3. Various local professional dive shops** also run introductory classes.

**6.4. Tide Tables** . These can be important to Bayside snorkelling. Have a look at them so you are well informed before you visit. Visit the following site for the tides at your location. Middle to higher tides are generally better for snorkelling. <http://tides.willyweather.com.au/vic/melbourne.html>.

**6.5. EPA Water Quality.** <http://www.cleaneryarrabay.vic.gov.au/beach-report> will provide water quality reports during the main snorkelling season. In general don't swim 24 to 48 hours after local heavy rains which wash street water and more n to the bay via drains.

## **7. Acknowledgements:**

The advice and support of many people are required to put together even a modest local book such as this.

I would like to specially thank:

**Images:** Phil Watson, Kim Wright, Ray Lewis.

**Advice & more:** Sandy Webb, Kim Wright, David Langmead, Peter Dedrick, Terry Valentine and Fam Charko.

**Inspiration:** Mike Letch.

**Content:** All those I have listened to over the years.

**About the Author:** Ray Lewis is a local marine author. He lives Bayside and snorkels there most weeks throughout the year.

He is a member of Marine Care Ricketts Point Inc.

*Copies of this book may be obtained from the Beaumaris Bookshop in the West Concourse, Beaumaris, or by mailing the publisher via [ray@lewisfamily.com.au](mailto:ray@lewisfamily.com.au)*



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