

SCUBA News

SCUBA News (ISSN 1476-8011)

Issue 236 – February 2020

<https://www.scubatravel.co.uk>

Welcome to SCUBA News. You can download a [pdf version of the newsletter here](#).

Contents:

[What's new at SCUBA Travel?](#)

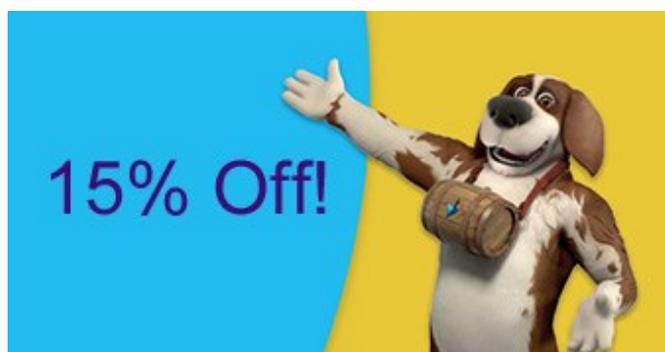
[Creature of the Month: *Flabellina affinis* nudibranch](#)

[Featured Liveaboard: Cayman Aggressor](#)

[Diving news from around the World](#)

15% off Scuba Travel Insurance - only for our Readers!

We've negotiated a special discount for *SCUBA Travel* and *SCUBA News* readers on diving travel insurance - get [15% off here](#).



What's New at SCUBA Travel?



Turkey from Below

Ten types of whale and dolphin, four seas and hundreds of wrecks - find out more about what Turkey has to offer underwater.

[LEARN MORE...](#)

Magical Madagascar



The country is famous for her unique land animals, but her seas are also full of life not found anywhere else. Humpback whales and whale sharks are also regular visitors.

[LEARN MORE...](#)



Spectacular Costa Rica

Discover the best scuba diving in Costa Rica, including the stunning Cocos Islands - guide to dive sites, operators and liveaboards.

[LEARN MORE...](#)

Creature of the Month: *Flabellina affinis* Nudibranch

Found in the Mediterranean, on the Atlantic coast of France, Spain and Portugal, and in the Canary Islands. This pretty purple nudibranch grows to 5 cm long and feeds on hydroids. Not just any hydroids but only those in the *Eudendrium* genus like the ones in the photo.



[Photo credit:](#) Tim Nicholson

Hydroids capture and eat plankton, and the nudibranchs prefer to feed when the hydroids have just captured their prey. This means they get energy both from the hydroid and from their newly captured meal. This could have the

result that they need to eat less hydroids to survive, so the hydroid colony lives longer and thus provides more food for the nudibranch.



[Photo credit:](#) Tim Nicholson

Hydroids have stinging cells. When they fire these nematocysts they should harm the nudibranch. How does *F. affinis* live and feed on the hydroids without any apparent discomfort? They release masses of chitin granules which surround the stinging nematocysts and defend the animal from the hydroids tentacles.



[Photo credit:](#) Tim Nicholson

The nudibranchs take things a stage further. They can incorporate unfired nematocysts into the projections along their skin (called cerata), protecting the nudibranch against predators. An extension of the nudibranch's digestive system, the animals store the nematocysts in sacs at the cerata tips. When irritated or threatened, the *Flabellina* will curl its body and when in contact with a predator, specialised muscles will squeeze the

nematocysts out of the cnidosacs.

These colourful outgrowths also make a big surface area for gas exchange in respiration.



Photo credit: Tim Nicholson

If you look closely at the photo above, you can see the nudibranch's eye - the black dot below the rhinophores (the sticky-up tentacles with a corkscrew pattern). They can't see very well though, just discerning light and dark.



Photo credit: Tim Nicholson

You can tell *Flabellina affinis* from other nudibranchs by the colour of its cerata. They have white tips and a violet band just below the tips which is opaque.

Animalia (Kingdom) > Mollusca (Phylum) > Gastropoda (Class) > Heterobranchia (Subclass) > Nudibranchia (Order) > Flabellinidae (Family) > *Flabellina* (Genus)

References and Further Reading

Trevor J. Willis et al. [Kleptopredation: a mechanism to facilitate planktivory in a benthic mollusc](#). 13 Biol. Lett. 2017

Sea Slug Forum, [Flabellina affinis](#)

[DAVISINVERTEBRATES](#)

Photos copyright Tim Nicholson.

Read more [Creatures of the Month](#).

Featured Liveaboard - Cayman Aggressor V

Save up to 25% on trips to the Cayman Islands

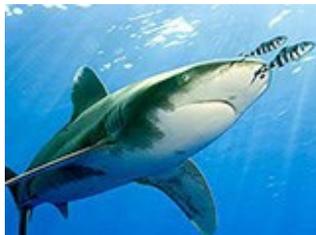


For sharks, turtles, stingrays, as well as famous Cayman wrecks like the Kittiwake and Doc Polson.

[Get Discount...](#)

Diving News From Around the World

Our round up of the best underwater news stories of the past month. For breaking news see our [Twitter page](#) or [RSS feed](#)



[Urgently needed protection granted to Oceanic Whitetip Shark, *Carcharhinus longimanus*](#)

Vital conservation win for the critically endangered Oceanic whitetip shark.



[Coronavirus Impacts Pacific Island Divers](#)

Diving island destinations are imposing new regulations on divers entering their countries who have visited anywhere else with confirmed incidents of coronavirus in the last fortnight.



[Asia Dive Expo Postponed](#)

Underwater360, the organiser of Asia Dive Expo (ADEX), has postponed the exhibition which was scheduled for April 17-19, 2020. This is due to the Coronavirus. New dates are 29-31 May.



Sex-changing fish recover more slowly from over-fishing

People eat a lot of fish. Different sex-changing fish can follow several signals that prompt them to change sex. Some change from female to male at a fixed size or age. Often, fisheries will only harvest fish over a certain size. This means catching more males because they are usually bigger, which then skews the population towards female. Not enough males are then available to fertilise all the eggs produced by the females.



Grey seals discovered clapping underwater to communicate

Marine mammals like whales and seals usually communicate vocally using calls and whistles. But a new study has discovered that wild grey seals can also clap their flippers underwater during the breeding season, as a show of strength that warns off competitors and advertises to potential mates.



Earthquakes can make it harder for whales to find food, first-ever study says

Earthquakes can disrupt sperm whales' ability to hunt for up to a year, according to the first-ever study to look at the effects of the tremors on marine mammals.



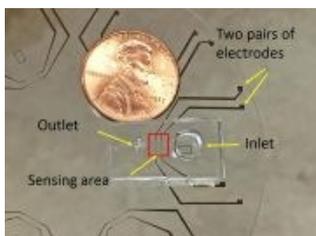
Study connects marine heat wave with spike in whale entanglements

Entanglements of humpback whales in fishing gear along the US West Coast increased dramatically during the 2014 to 2016 marine heat wave known as the warm blob



New study shows Deepwater Horizon oil spill larger than previously thought

Toxic and invisible oil spread well beyond the known satellite footprint of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, according to a new study



Mini device analyses ocean microbes

device that can swiftly analyse microbes in oceans, revealing the health of these organisms.



Microbes reflect the health of coral reefs

More microbes are found on healthier Cuban reefs than on human-impacted Florida reefs.



Microorganisms play important roles in the health and protection of coral reefs, but exploring these roles can be difficult because of the lack of unspoiled reef systems throughout the global ocean.

SCUBA News is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Unported License. This means we are happy for you to reuse our material for both commercial and non-commercial use as long as you: credit the name of the author, link back to the SCUBA Travel website and say if you have made any changes. Some of the photos though, might be copyright the photographer. If in doubt please get in touch.

Photo credits: Tim Nicholson, Jill Studholme, Kristin Riser, Jianye Sui

Previous editions of SCUBA News are archived at
<https://www.scubatravel.co.uk/news.html>

UNSUBSCRIBING

Visit [%%unsubscribeink%%](#) to remove yourself from the mailing list. Any problems contact news@scubatravel.co.uk.

ADVERTISING

Should you wish to advertise in SCUBA News, please see the special offers at

<https://www.scubatravel.co.uk/newsad.html>

Other advertising opportunities are at

<https://www.scubatravel.co.uk/advertising.html>

CONTACTING THE EDITOR

Please send your letters or press releases to:

Jill Studholme

SCUBA News

The Cliff

Upper Mayfield

DE6 2HR

UK

news@scubatravel.co.uk

PUBLISHER

SCUBA Travel Ltd, 5 Loxford Court, Hulme, Manchester, M15 6AF, UK