

# ZAVORA NEWSLETTER

a joined update from Zavora Marine Lab and Moz Divers

When we issued our first newsletter, we hoped and planned to send you both Zavora Lab and MozDivers updates on a regular basis. Unfortunately things don't always go as planned, and with diving and research stealing time away from settling down in front of the computer to give you the latest news, our Newsletters are way overdue. For that we apologise! Because MozDivers and Zavora Marine Lab are supporting each other and working closely together, we thought we'd issue a combined newsletter – we have pretty much done the same dives and seen the same things anyway!

Enjoy!



## discovering new sites

Operations are in full swing here at Mozdivers! With Easter holidays upon us, we have been busy with many divers experiencing the legendary diving that we have to offer. Even so, we've still made time to explore new sections of the reef. The two reef systems that we have here, inshore and offshore, still have many areas where no divers have ever been, and we are constantly looking for new sites that can contribute to the already large amount of sites in Zavora. Jon took two Tech divers to 48 meters at the recently discovered site of Sonho Profundo. They became the 3rd and 4th divers to ever drop down on this diverse section of the offshore reef. We have also been looking for another wreck that is supposedly submerged somewhere near the Klipfontein Wreck but so far without luck. The exploration continues, and we will keep you posted should we come across something!



Cassie and Sabrina enjoying the new pool. Photo by Juan Vega

## new look for the dive centre

Our dive centre is getting an upgrade. A small training pool was finished last month, which makes teaching all that much easier. Now workers have begun building a new wall surrounding the outside area, and we are hoping that before long we will have a new roof, and eventually larger pools for cleaning equipment. Inside, Juan, our PADI instructor, is in the process of painting a really cool reef scene on our front desk, with Manta Rays, Grey Reef Sharks, Humpbacks, and many other species found in the Zavora waters.

## tech stuff

We have a very special guest coming to join us in early May. Don Shirley, the world renowned IANTD Tech/Cave Diver, based out of Komati Springs in South Africa will be diving with us for a week. We are really excited to have him come and explore the Klipfontein and surrounding areas with us, and we are looking forward to picking up a thing or two from one of the most experienced IANTD instructors in the world.

## a very special visitor

We are used to spotting some amazing wildlife here in Zavora. The every day sightings include Manta Ray, Bull Sharks, Stingrays, Shovel Nose, Leopard Shark, Bow Mouth, Black/White Tip Sharks, and Sea Turtles. But around three weeks ago, we had a very special visitor on Yogi's Reef. The already impressive dive reached a whole new level when on the safety stop, one of the divers signaled that he was seeing a shark. BIG shark. The rest of the group turned to see a huge school of trevally swimming some meters below - and right there in the middle appeared a monster of a shark! It was a beautiful three-four meter long Great White! Swimming peacefully amongst the trevally, it was taking no interest in the delicious food, nor the amazed divers. The bravest of the divers swam down to get a closer look and a quick photo before the shark a few minutes later disappeared back in to the blue. Needless to say, this was the highlight of the day (and maybe even lifetime) for the four divers and divemaster who were there!



Great White Shark, Yogi's Reef. Photo by Juan Vega

## zavora lodge upgrade

There has been some changes around the lodge as well. The installation of a new 85 KVA generator has increased the output of the lodge, and also the reliability. 4 water tanks that total to 4,000 litres of safe drinkable water for the lodge is also a remarkable upgrade. There has also been done some painting and stonework around the lodge for a new updated look.



Jon at the Klipfontein. Photo by Yara Tibirica

## a new home

Zavora Marine Lab. is happy to announce that we have managed to purchase land here in Zavora – a wonderful spot 500 meters from the beach and close to the village. Hopefully, within the year (things take a lot of time in Mozambique!) we will start building our research and education centre here. The centre will be constructed from recycled, recyclable and environmentally friendly materials, and we are really looking forward to finally getting a proper office as well as a place to welcome school kids and other students of the environment. We have not yet made any decisions in regards of materials, building style and architecture – suggestions from people with more knowledge on the matter than we have (which would probably be most...) are most welcome!



Spanish Dancer. Photo by Juan Vega

## zavora lab projects

### manta rays

Good news for our beautiful mantas and whale sharks! The Mozambican Government, together with scientists and stakeholders, is now in the final steps to create national protection for reef mantas, giant mantas and whale sharks. We are proud and happy to have helped in this process. Our giant marine animals will be protected against commercial fishing and recreational fishing. By-catch must be reported to the authorities. The law also makes it illegal for divers/snorkelers to touch and disturb them. On the research side, we have now over 150 mantas in our database, and MID – The Manta ID software developed by the Zavora Marine Lab. team is working well and in its 2nd edition. We will present MID at the 7th WISOMA Symposium in Kenya.



Cleaning Manta. Photo by Yara Tibirica

### humpback whales

The Humpback Whale season is fast approaching, something we are super excited about. These graceful, gorgeous giants will be travelling through our waters between June and November, stopping off in Zavora Bay to mate and give birth to their calves! Previously we have been surveying their travelling patterns and observing pod sizes and behaviour whilst they are in the bay, but this year we will, in addition to observational surveying, also start a project involving photo id of individuals. This method will be able to tell us more about the migratory pattern of individuals, as we can share and compare photos with other research stations along the East African coast. This is something that we are obviously looking forward to – it'll be whale safari every day!

### nudis

We have been paying a lot of attention to our miniscule favourites lately - the slugs are everywhere! General 'nudi searches' are being performed on almost every dive, and we have also spent a fair bit of time in the tidal rock pool doing both searches and transects. And what a success we have had! In the month of April alone, 5 new species have been added to our data base, which now counts 115 (give or take as a few identifications has yet to be confirmed.)! There is no doubt in our minds that we will keep on finding new species, as our research proves that on the highest populated nudisites, the abundance is as high as 1 nudi per 2,1 square meters! Nudilovers – heaven is right here!

### klipfontein

The wreck of the Klipfontein is one of our favourite places to visit. Its sinking is still a mystery which we are hoping to one day find the answer to, hence we grab every opportunity we have to head out there to do some research! On our last few dives there, we have explored some new sections of the wreck hoping to find some clues or maybe some deepwater nudis! We twice saw the stunning *Hypsodoris maculosa*, raising its distribution to 51m! We also bumped into a 3 meter long serious looking Brindle Bass on our last dive. If people worry about sharks, it must be because they haven't seen one of these monsters yet!

### education

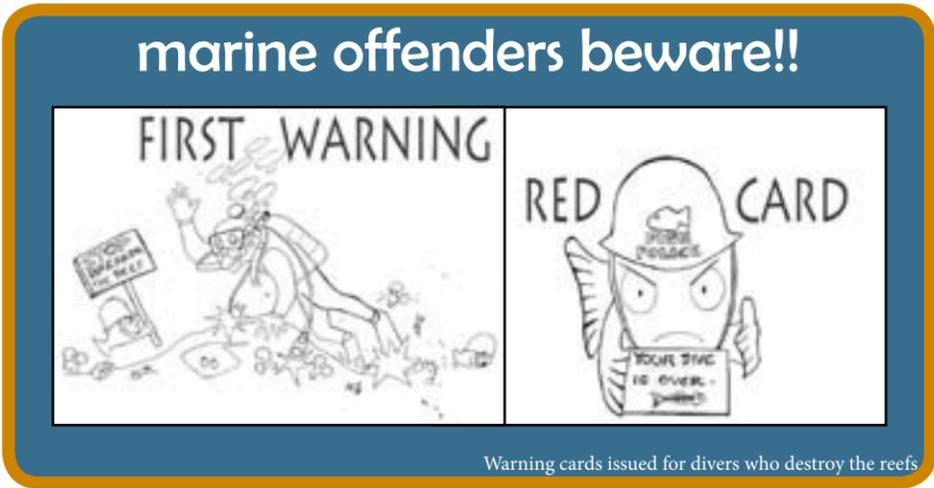
We are still working on educating and involving the local kids in environmental and marine conservation. Because we haven't received any funding to continue our weekly science workshops from last year, the education has mainly been done through the fortnightly EcoCineMar project, screening environmentally related movies. We are now getting more hands on involved again, with weekly English classes starting up, as well as regular recycling activities. We are also still keeping up the education for tourists with conservation talks at the local lodges. The talks are mainly about the marine life in Zavora, but we are also trying to emphasise the importance of conservation in the area. Unfortunately we see a lot of ignorance from some of the tourists – e.g. driving cars on the beach, collecting sea shells/corals, bad fishing habits – and we are trying to implement education on these matters in our talks as well. We are together with the ACCM (see next page) developing education/information material for the tourists, as well as the local community.



A project that has been keeping both Zavora Marine Lab. and MozDivers busy lately, is the founding of the Association of Coastal Conservation of Mozambique (ACCM). The ACCM is an NGO created to accommodate and enhance conservation primarily in the Zavora area, but might also slowly extend to cover other close by areas. The association is initiated by Iemanjá, but the members of the board are representatives from most of the businesses in and around Zavora, including MozDivers. With the ACCM we are, in the big picture, hoping to stand stronger when it comes to conservation and protective legislations, as well as in creating protective areas. On the smaller scale, we are hoping that working together we can enhance education, conservation and sustainable living in Zavora.

### Care for marine life statement

One of the first ACCM achievements is the newly enforced, strict diving policy in Zavora. The Care For Marine Life Statement was created on the basis of our 'diver impact' research which showed that a lot of damage to our pristine reefs were done by divers - as many as 74% make some kind of contact with the substrate. The research told us that divers wearing gloves and underwater photographers were the biggest culprits, as they were more likely to neglect the no touching rules or forget basic buoyancy control. With this in mind, we created some basic rules for diving in Zavora – No gloves, no touching, no collecting, no dangling gauges etc - hoping that this will put an end to the damage done to the reef. The divers will be monitored by Zavora Marine Lab, the dive centres and the fish police and breaking of the rules could, after an initial warning, result in the ending of the dive for offenders. All divers will have to sign an agreement to this policy, and we are hoping that the results from our next diver impact period will show some more uplifting results!



### from trash to treasure

One of the big projects on ACCM's agenda is waste management and reduction. There is no means of recycling in Zavora, as a matter of fact there is hardly any in the entire country, which means that almost everything that gets thrown ends up being burned. This is of course a big concern in regards to carbon emissions, and we are working to find ways to recycle, reuse and reduce! We have already started a small recycling project making crafts out of recyclable materials - a milk carton could become a little coin purse, a tin can could make a beautiful candle light holder and a couple of boxes could become a handy chest of drawers. With this we are hoping not only to reduce a bit of rubbish, we are also hoping it will become a popular and educational activity for the local kids – maybe even with the opportunity of making a few Mets on sales. Another step in waste reduction is the initiation of compost and veggie gardens. We have already started a small compost project, but have still a lot to learn when it comes to using the sandy soil in the area. A workshop will hopefully be organised in the near future, and we are really looking forward to fresh, homegrown tomatoes and basil!



### beach clean ups

Zavora Marine Lab has in the past organised several beach clean ups - the latest was in March where we with the help of young volunteers cleared the beach of a substantial amount of trash. Despite of our recent efforts, the beach is again looking a little scruffy, and we feel that beach clean ups should be done on a more regular basis. Together with the ACCM we have come to an agreement of organising monthly clean ups, the event taking place on the second Sunday of every month. The clean ups will be hosted by ZML, with the members of the association assisting and/or hosting clean ups in their area. The local community will be invited and encouraged to join, as will the tourists. Hopefully these clean ups will leave our beaches more inviting and the turtle-babies happier!



### support

Both Zavora Marine Lab. and ACCM are run by kind donations and support from individuals and companies. If you'd like to support us, please visit our website [www.zavoralab.com/support-us](http://www.zavoralab.com/support-us) for more information. All donations are appreciated - from used equipment to a helping hand! Thank you!



We hope you have enjoyed and appreciated the latest news from beautiful Zavora, and we hope that we won't keep you waiting as long for the next issue! If we do though, it's probably because we are out there busying ourselves discovering new dive sites or trying to save the blue planet, so please forgive us!

Should you have any questions or comments, please contact us!

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