

SCUBA News

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Welcome to SCUBA News. Our compliments of the season to you.

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What's New at SCUBA Travel?



Unique Sea Life in Madagascar

On the humpback whales migratory path, Madagascar has sea creatures not found anywhere else and one of the world's longest continuous coral reefs.

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Diving the Bay Islands of Honduras

Where you are almost guaranteed to see a whale shark between mid-Feb and April and the water is warm throughout the year. Which island to choose - Roatan, Utila or Guanaja?

[LEARN MORE...](#)



Dive somewhere different - Oman

The best diving areas? The Musandam peninsula, Daymaniyat Islands and Fahl Island.

[LEARN MORE...](#)

Featured Liveboards - 10% off Red Sea

10% off Red Sea Liveboard for 2020 Trips



Book now to visit the fabulous south of Egypt on the Longimanus liveboard and save 10% with early bird discount.

[Get Discount...](#)

Creature of the Month: Christmas Tree Worm

Colourful Christmas tree worms are captivating during any dive, adding a touch of festive magic to coral reefs around the world.

What are Christmas tree worms?

They might look like colourful Christmas trees but they're actually segmented worms. Most of their structure is hidden in tubes within the coral, with only their crowns or Christmas trees protruding. These creatures can live for 40 years!



Christmas Tree Worms by Nick Hobgood, CC BY-SA 3.0

Their scientific name is *Spirobranchus giganteus*, meaning Giant Spiral-Gills. Although the visible part is only 1.5 cm long, together with its hidden

part it is in fact one of the largest worms in its family. The branching crown is important for respiration, hence the "spiral-gills" name.



Photo credit: Tim Nicholson

Each worm has two crowns or Christmas Trees. The worms come in a myriad of colours, but an individual's two crowns are always the same colour. As well as being used in respiration, the feathery Christmas Tree gathers food, wafting it down to the worm's mouth.



Photo credit: Jill Studholme

On sensing danger, the worm quickly retracts its crown into its tube in the coral and closes the entrance with a trapdoor called an operculum. It will stay down there for about a minute, before re-emerging very slowly to check that the danger has gone.





Photo credit: Tim Nicholson

There are both male and female Christmas tree worms and they are choosy; spending their entire life on the same coral - often massive porites. They are important for the health of coral reefs and help protect corals from aggressive sea stars, whilst also stopping algae growing over the coral.

Where do they live?

The great thing about Christmas tree worms is that you can see them around the world on most tropical reefs. They're easy to find and very photogenic, making them great subjects for macro photography. As long as you have the patience to wait and not disturb them into shooting back into their tubes. You might see them down to depths of 30 m.

Animalia (Kingdom) > Annelida (Phylum) > Polichaeta (Class) > Sedentaria (Subclass) > Sabellidae (Order) > Serpulidae (Family) > Spirobranchus (Genus)

Further Reading

[The Wonderful World of Christmas Tree Worms](#)

[Coral Reef Guide Red Sea](#), Lieske and Myers

Red Sea Reef Guide, Helmut Debelius

[Age-estimation of the Christmas Tree Worm Spirobranchus giganteus](#)

(Pomlychaeta, Serpulidae) Living Buried in the Coral Skeleton from the Coral-growth Band of the Host Coral. Eijiroh Nishi, Moritaka Nishihira 2016

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](#)



[Divers visiting Solomon Islands need proof of measles vaccination](#)

If you are diving in the Solomon Islands, from 28 December 2019, you will need to show proof of vaccination against measles if you have travelled from or via: Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, the Philippines, American Samoa or Samoa.



Where to dive in January?

Last minute January trip? There are loads of fantastic places to go at the start of the year. Mexico scuba diving in January is all about huge megafauna. The small African nation of Djibouti is also at its best this month, offering the chance to snorkel with numerous whale sharks. For manta

rays go to the Maldives.



The Lionfish Takeover Could Get Worse

In warmer waters, the invasive predator eats more efficiently, gluttonously and frequently. In the past decade, lionfish have invaded the eastern Mediterranean Sea, which is warming up 20 percent faster than the rest of the ocean. The warming trend will only encourage the invasive species.



Living Museum of the Sea Established in Dominican Republic

Based around an existing shipwreck, the museum will allow divers to explore cannons, anchors and coral reefs. The museum aims to preserve archaeological and biological treasures in the underwater space



Boom in seahorse poaching spells bust for Italy's coastal habitats

Ocean species endangered as black market trade devastates marine life across Puglia region



Orca grandmothers help improve survival odds of their grandkids, study finds

The effect was particularly amplified when salmon populations, which resident pods rely on, were low, and less so when salmon was abundant. Since elderly females lead younger members of their group to salmon hotspots in the ocean, and salmon populations are declining in general - the grandmothers play a crucial role in the survival of the mammals.



Sea turtles continue to swim in troubled waters: report

TRAFFIC released new data about the prevalence of sea turtle trafficking in Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam. The group says at least 2,354 turtles were seized in the three countries from January 2015 to July 2019. Tens of thousands of turtle eggs were also seized, mostly in Malaysia.



EU Fisheries Management Improves but Still Lags Behind Scientific Advice

Assessment shows ministers must do more to end overfishing and comply with law



2018 saw record breaking greenhouse gas



concentrations

Newly published research of the Earth's atmosphere in 2018 has suggested that the year saw a record breaking amount of climate change causing greenhouse gases in the air despite efforts to reduce the burning of fossil fuels.

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