Nova Scotia Underwater Council Quarterly January 2026

January

Happy 2026 everyone! We hope you all had a great start to the New Year and it continues for the next 49 weeks. It was nice to see some intrepid members of the local clubs and groups closed out the old and ring in the new with a refreshing New Year's Day dive. What a wonderful way to say Hello Goodbye! But what a year it was – we saw oodles of new divers take to the sea, we were treated to a spectacular bounty of tropical fish this fall, and by extension a whole lot of beautiful pics from around the local dive sites. And who can forget the chance and rare encounter with Elysia chlorotica! We'll touch on that a bit more down below, but let's get started with NSUC updates.

NSUC News

Website Developments: We are adding an events page to our web site. Well, the page has always been there, but just empty. The new version is currently offline while Denis implements the finishing touches and we test it, but it will be online soon. Its design is similar to those of other websites: a scrollable list of events and their details. Denis is also working on a quick reference calendar view to accompany the page. Our intent is to not just include NSUC events, but also those other groups hosting activities of interest to the dive/snorkel community. More details to follow once the page is up and running.

Tropical Picture Contest: It took longer than expected to wrap this one up, but we are finally here. After the waters cooled down and the pics stopped rolling in, we collected all of the pictures from our Facebook group. To achieve some level of name/picture separation we assigned each a random number, then mapped those to the photographer's name in a spreadsheet. Once we all agree on the winning photo, we will cross reference it with the name in the spreadsheet to identify the photographer. We will announce the winner through our Facebook page and NSUC email. The lucky winner will receive a bit of NSUC SWAG.

Tuesday Night Talks: Be sure to set aside Tuesday, March 31, 2026 for another Tuesday Night Talk at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic (MMA). Our Regional Director, Alice Ortmann, will present "Spring Blooms in the Ocean – Exploring the Tiny Side of Nova Scotia Waters". She will tell the story of the microscopic life that visits Nova Scotia every year and how it is essential to supporting the larger organisms we see the rest of the time, connecting the tiny to the big.

We received just one other response for presenters, but unfortunately it did not meet the MMA's criteria. Topics can be related to the ocean and the underwater world but the MMA prefers they match the season and will be of interest to the general public. So, we submitted two topics and of the two, Alice's presentation was accepted.

Executive Member Change is Coming: We regret to announce our President, Jennifer Meisner, is no longer available to carry out her role on the executive and will be stepping down. Please join us in thanking Jennifer for all her work over the last few years, including (but not limited to!) organizing our cleanups and meetings, bringing in speakers and working with Ocean Day in support of our waterfront booths. We'll miss her at the executive, but she will still be around helping out and participating in our events. When Jenn finalizes her departure we will seek an interim president until elections at this year's AGM, in accordance with our by-laws.

NSUC Volunteers/Help

We are still looking for volunteers to contribute to the newsletter and anything else you would like to help with. If you would like to be a regular contributor or just want to write a one-off article let us know and we'll make it happen. Also, now that we know the MMA schedule fills up quickly, we will begin the search in the spring for fall presenters. In the meantime, start thinking of some ideas so you can get in on the fall action! What do you think about a presentation on our tropical visitors? (that was the alternate topic we submitted). Contact us through our Facebook page, website or send an email to our general NSUC email listed below.

Diving in Remote Areas

By DAN's Francois Burman, PE, MSc, and JoAnn Haack, MSE

The best way to deal with potential accidents or injuries in remote places is by having realistic, practical, and carefully tested emergency action plans in place.

Diving has inherent risks. The human body was not designed to be underwater, and drowning, decompression illness, barotrauma, hazardous marine life injuries, and preexisting health issues all require an emergency response. Diving in remote areas introduces additional risks, especially access to medical care.

Part of what makes a destination remote is how long it will take to get help if something goes wrong. A three-hour boat ride to an offshore site is already remote in terms of an urgent response to a medical emergency. A three-day sail on a liveaboard makes the challenge much more significant.

Some common critical questions that diligent operators, professionals, and divers should ask themselves include the following:

- Where is the nearest health care facility, and can it deal with dive emergencies?
- Is an emergency response service available that can reach us and get an injured diver to the nearest health care facility?
- How long will an evacuation take?
- What medical equipment do we need, and will our emergency oxygen supply last long enough?
- What emergency response training do the people on the boat have?
- How many divers are at the site, and can the available emergency response handle multiple injured divers?
- Can a diver get evacuated to advanced care considering issues such as distance, border crossings, and landing (especially at night)?

The answers to these questions will depend on the location; each place has its own risk factors. Divers, dive operators, dive professionals, and trip leaders should carefully assess a potential destination to determine whether it is safe enough for diving before planning a trip there. If there are concerns about safety, they should consider its unique challenges and determine what preparations are necessary.

The dive operator is responsible for understanding the risks and having plans in place to take care of their crew and clients. The trip leader represents the divers and needs to make sure that the operator

has practical plans. Divers should prepare themselves with important information, such as contact and insurance information and essential safety gear.

The best way to deal with potential accidents or injuries in remote places is by having realistic, practical, and carefully tested emergency action plans in place. These plans and procedures should account for long response times and the best use of internal resources, such as the centre of operations and the appointed medical officer. Any plan also must account for the availability of rescue transportation and access to health care and other emergency services.

"Part of what makes a destination remote is how long it will take to get help if something goes wrong."

DAN has handled challenges arising from dive accidents in remote areas since our inception. Our experiences have revealed that emergency planning is typically either nonexistent or too basic to be useful.



Consider the Cocos and Socorro islands, Raja Ampat, Kiribati or even the Marshall Islands. Calls come in for help, local rescue and medical resources are often nonexistent, and divers and dive operators are left feeling frustrated, angry, and perhaps even medically compromised.

One of DAN's e-learning modules is specifically designed to help dive operators and trip leaders know what questions to ask and offers suggestions on mitigating potential issues. A self-assessment survey pairs with the module to help evaluate a diver's risk exposure in a potential destination. Divers, dive operators, and dive professionals can implement applicable suggestions to help reduce the overall level of risk and ensure they feel comfortable handling any remaining potential risks.

While some dive sites may seem too risky, many are manageable with some preparation. You can lower the potential for negative experiences if you consider reasonable precautions and have an emergency action plan.

Visit World.DAN.org to access a vast range of free diving health and safety materials.

The Little Green Monster

(I couldn't come up with a better title!)

When Elli Ofthenorth suited up and entered the water at Rainbow Haven Provincial Park this past November, she couldn't have imagined the excitement she would create after posting a picture of a new to her sea slug. As it turned out, it was not only was it new her, but it was new to many and also extremely rare. So rare, in fact, that researchers from across North America were enquiring about it. By now most of you have likely heard about it, read the CBC news story, or saw the videos, or all three! It's a great article and if you have not seen it, check it out here on CBC news. It features interviews with Elli, Hunter Stevens and a few researchers. It also touches on its elusiveness, preferred habitat, potential for medical science and its sensitivity to habitat changes.



The 'Rotting Leaf', Elli's initial encounter with the sea slug. Photo by Elli Ofthenorth.



"How can this adorable underwater being that has presumably never seen a tree, look so much like a tree leaf? It's baffling!" – Elli OftheNorth. Photo by Elli Ofthenorth.

Elli's adventure with these little creatures doesn't end here. She has been visiting the little green community recently, observing them, making notes and capturing more photos. Elli is going to tell us all about it on the Snorkel Nova Scotia Facebook page so mum's the word from us until then! Keep an eye out for it!

What's Happening Out There?

Are there any events or activities taking place in the upcoming months you think might be of interest to the underwater community? If you would like get the news out there let us know and we can post it in our newsletter. Just send your idea to any of the email addresses below and we'll get in touch.

Contact Us

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