

Unidives policy on conserving the marine environment.

Code of conduct for scuba diving and snorkelling in the marine environment

Some members may be aware of a recent challenge Unidive has been asked to address in relation to the behavior of a few Unidive members regarding conservation of the aquatic environment. The Unidive Management Committee has reviewed the behaviour involved and wants to make very clear to all Unidive members that: a) the harassment of animals fish and invertebrates, b) illegal collection or catching of marine flora and fauna or c) unnecessary destruction of the marine environment is not condoned by Unidive and will not be tolerated by it.

The Unidive Management Committee has written a draft code of conduct for scuba diving and snorkeling in the marine environment. This code will help Unidive members to conserve the marine environment and it is expected that all members will follow the code. A copy of the draft code has been sent to the Qld Environmental Protection Agency for its comment. When the EPA informs Unidive of its comments, Unidive will adopt the comments and then publish a final version of the code of conduct in the next Wobbiegossip.

The draft code of conduct is published in full below:

How Unidive members will protect the marine environment:

1. Dive and snorkel carefully in fragile aquatic ecosystems (e.g. coral reefs). Many aquatic organisms are fragile and are damaged by the bump of a tank, knee or camera, a swipe of a fin or even the touch of a hand. Be aware of your body and equipment placement and control your buoyancy, taking care not to touch fragile organisms with your body or equipment. By being careful you can prevent devastating and long-lasting damage to magnificent dive sites.
2. Consider how your interactions affect aquatic life (e.g. dive in small groups when in grey nurse shark habitats). Resist the temptation to touch, handle, feed and even hitch rides on aquatic life (e.g. grey nurse, turtles, whales and crayfish). Your actions may cause stress to the animal, interrupt feeding and mating behaviour or provoke aggressive behaviour in normally non-aggressive species.
3. Understand and respect underwater life. Using them as toys or food for other animals can leave a trail of destruction, disrupt local ecosystems and rob other divers of experiencing these creatures. Touching or riding on marine animals (e.g. turtles) would most likely be harassment and illegal under Queensland law. Increase your knowledge by reading about the marine environment in dive magazines or by attending course in marine biology and conservation.
4. Do not collect souvenirs (e.g. grey nurse shark teeth) and obey local collection laws (e.g. permits needed to collect coral). Dive sites can be depleted of their resources and beauty in a short time. If you want to return from dives with souvenirs, consider underwater photography.
5. It is illegal to collect or hunt any marine life (e.g. crayfish, grouper, etc, etc) while scuba diving in Queensland and New South Wales waters. If you hunt and/or gather fish or invertebrates (e.g. groupers, abaloni, crayfish) on snorkel, obey all fish and game laws. Local laws are designed to ensure the reproduction and survival of these animals.

6. Report environmental disturbances or destruction of your dive sites. As a diver, you are in a unique position to monitor the health of marine environment. Report these observations to responsible authorities in the region you are scuba diving in (e.g. marine parks).
7. Keep your dive skills sharp with continuing education. If you have not dived for a while practise your dive skills in a pool or other environment that won't be damaged scuba diving. Alternatively refresh your skills and knowledge with a refresher or Advanced diver or marine conservation courses.
8. Be a role model for other scuba divers in diving and non-scuba diving interaction with the environment. As a scuba diver, you see the underwater results of carelessness and neglect. Set a good example in your own interactions and other scuba divers and non-divers will follow suit.

The draft code is based on the code of conduct in the marine environment, set by international diving organisations such as: BSAC, PADI and SSI. The code is purposely altered to suit Unidive club and local regulations.

Please also check local code of conduct such as the one for diving in Grey Nurse Shark habitats.

If you have any questions please contact a member of the executive committee.

Although the following sounds as a joke, just think about it:

You probably don't like it when somebody is going in your house without permission, touching your personal dive gear, eating your chocolate and drinking your beer, sleeping in your bed, not cleaning the dishes and on top of that harassing your partner.

Lets enjoy and conserve our beautiful marine environment and respect the code.

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