



**Dive Log, MV Plancius**  
**Antarctic Peninsula – Polar Circle**  
**28<sup>th</sup> Feb – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019**



Divers: Ashton Kinsey, Michael Heynes, Alena Strembergova, Daniel Mack, Robert John Leslie, Andrew Cooper, Mark Lavallie, Mark Garton, Margaret Lundberg, Gregg Pearce, Clinton Singh, Lauren Heier, Daniel Moreira, Maïke Turkner, Boris Schnitger, Daniel Killey & Grzegorz Wrobel

Dive Staff: Catherine Buckland (Dive Team Leader), Chris Booker & Will Gilbertson

### Dive 1: 3<sup>rd</sup> March AM, Orne Island S 64°39.832, W 062°40.167

After a remarkably smooth crossing of the Drake Passage, where we were able to use the time for briefings on the diving operation and checking gear etc., we arrived at our first dive site ready to go. All 17 of us assembled our gear on the forward deck for the first time in preparation for our initial check out dive. The weather was calm with patches of sunshine and it was only a short zodiac drive to the tip of Orne Island where a sheltered rocky coastline with very clear water was selected as our dive site. Penguins and seals watched as we geared up and rolled into the icy water. Whilst using this dive to iron out any kit issues, the excellent visibility and numerous starfish and anemones amongst the kelp made for a lovely first dive. A few weight belt retrieval dives were also very successful! With all divers back on board, some getting a taste of climbing back into a zodiac for the first time, we headed back to the ship for a well-earned lunch.



### Dive 2: 3<sup>rd</sup> March PM, Danco Island S 64°43.517, W 062°33.818



In the afternoon, we arrived at Danco Island where the other passengers were doing a landing. Eleven of our divers took a zodiac ride to a nearby low-lying island with a steep drop off on one side. Dropping into the shallow water, we were pleased to find that the visibility was again excellent at this site. Moving deeper, taken by a gentle current along the rocky slope, lots of small invertebrate life was spotted among the rocks and algae. On the surface, we also had a spectacular mountainous back drop to this dive and were basking in the Antarctic sunshine!



**Dive 3: 4th March AM, Petermann Island, S 65°10.090, W 064°07.340**

Today dawned much duller than the previous day, with low cloud and rain. However, we could see the wildlife was not deterred and there was almost no wind which made for an easy zodiac ride out to an iceberg near Petermann Island where we chose to make our dive. The iceberg in question was free-floating in deep water, with the usual penguins swimming around on the surface. Although the visibility wasn't quite as good as yesterday, nothing can detract from the amazing experience of seeing an iceberg underwater, especially for the very first time. We spent some time admiring the many textures and shapes in the ice and the berg dropping away below us into the deep water. Whilst some of us were waiting on the surface in the zodiacs we then saw a group of Minke whales cruise past us which was a real treat. After the dive, we also participated in a "divers only" Antarctic activity – climbing onto another small berg from the zodiacs for a photo opportunity! In the afternoon the wind had become strong with 30-35knot gusts, so after checking out a couple of other potential sites decided to push South towards the Polar Circle.





**Dive 4: 5th March AM, Crystal Sound - South of the Polar Circle, S 66°35.272, W 067°18.917**



It took all night for Plancius to steam South and cross the Polar Circle early in the morning. As the quantity of ice increased, we found that it was going to be impossible to reach our planned target of Detaille Island, so instead opted for one of the many icebergs filling Crystal Sound.

The weather was cold and calm with very little wind and a dense fog that came and went. It made for a very atmospheric view from the ship, but thankfully the fog mostly lifted whilst we went out for our dive. On arriving at the iceberg and dropping into the water, a large Crabeater

seal was quickly spotted swimming towards the berg. It then continued to spend the whole dive buzzing the divers and investigating the strange creatures in its habitat! Darting around the ice and showing off it's teeth it made for a fantastic and unexpected encounter. Eventually all 11 divers climbed back onto the zodiacs, many with cold hands after our coldest dive yet. Thankfully the hotel staff had prepared hot chocolate with rum on board Plancius which did a great job of warming us up!





**Dive 5: 6th March AM, Yalour Islands S 65°13.979, W 064°09.841**

We woke today to thick fog all and large amounts of ice all around the ship, although again there was very little wind. The morning operation got off to a slower start than normal as the logistics of getting everyone safely to the dive site without getting lost in the fog or ice were worked out. As we made our way out to the site it also started to snow, and continued all day. We arrived at an ice-scoured rocky island near the main landing site and dropped into the clear water to explore this completely unknown site. Some limpets and other molluscs, orange sea stars and echinoderms manage to survive in this very iceberg scoured site.







**Dive 6: 6<sup>th</sup> March PM, Vernadsky S 65°14.444, W 064°15.281**

During lunch we sailed to the Argentine Islands where the Vernadsky research base is located, as the snow continued to fall. Most of the group opted to use the time to enjoy this very interesting base and nearby historic hut. Five of the group however went to dive the wall across the channel from the base. Although no large animals were seen, this was a lovely site with plenty of invertebrate life on the steep rocky slope and great visibility. After the dive we just had time to wrestle out of our drysuits for a quick look round the base, including of course the famous bar. Finally, we made our way back to the ship through thick ice and heavy snow – perfect BBQ weather!



**Dive 7: 7<sup>th</sup> March AM, Casabianca Island (Damoy Point), S 64°48.618, W 063°30.660**

Another day dawned with atmospheric clouds over the mountains and again very light winds. This morning we took the Zodiacs to a small rocky island near Damoy Point. As with the most of the other dives, we were lucky to find good visibility and another steep slope with beautiful algae and beasties to be seen. In the shallows we also came across a Weddell seal which took an interest in some of the divers snorkelling on the surface. The water was slightly warmer (relatively speaking!) than some of our dives further South so we stayed in as long as we could to enjoy this wonderful place. Eventually it was time to head back to the ship for another hearty lunch.

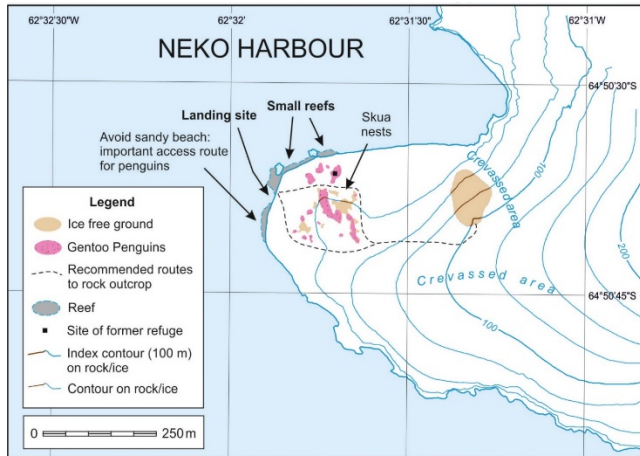


**Dive 8: 7<sup>th</sup> March PM, Neko Harbour S 64°51.000, W 062°32.000**

Over lunch, we sailed into the large enclosed bay of Neko Harbour. Aside from the small area of beach where we were to land, this bay is encircled by imposing glaciers and sheer rock faces. This is truly continental Antarctica! We made our dive a short distance from the landing beach where penguins swam back and forth. This site was rather flat and silty but there were a few nice things to see as we slowly drifted over the shelving sea bed. After the dive we of course went to the landing site to step foot on continental Antarctica for the first time.

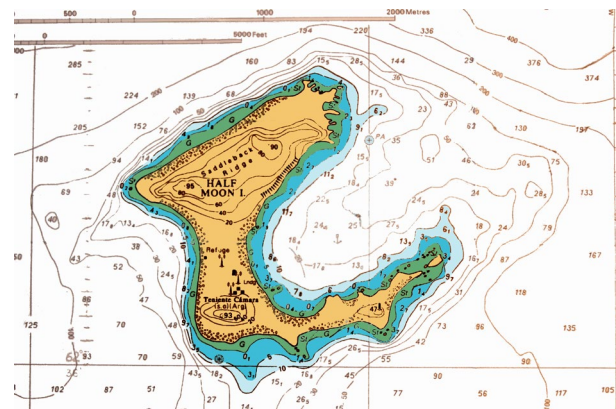






### Dive 9: 8<sup>th</sup> March AM, Half Moon Island S 62°35.878, W 059°53.689

For our final dive, we sailed north overnight to the South Shetland Islands to give us a northerly start point for our return voyage across the Drake Passage (which looked set to be a little lumpier than our journey south). The island in question is a small but striking rocky island named Half Moon due to its shape, inhabited by a colony of Chinstrap penguins and fur seals. Today felt very cold with a steady breeze blowing. We dropped into the water below a rocky cliff on the side of the island and once in the water found a pleasant bouldery slope shelving off into deeper water. At the end of the dive most of the group managed to spend some time with the inquisitive fur seals that were playing in the shallows close to the shore – a fantastic way to finish out Antarctic diving experience.







We would like to thank you for choosing Oceanwide and for diving with us on Plancius. We have really enjoyed helping you to experience this amazing and rarely seen underwater world and hope to see you again somewhere in the future.





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