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ENTRY

# The Ammo Jetty – Woodman Point, Western Australia



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The Ammo Jetty, Woodman Point, is one of those dive sites that you either love it or hate it as it is greatly affected by the weather conditions and in particular the visibility which at times is very poor. This site is at the top end for muck diving; however, the variety of marine life found in this small area has to be seen (pardon the pun) to be believed.

For the average Scuba diver who might find the conditions less than ideal may only ever dive this site once and put it on their never to do list; however, if you are an underwater photographer or really enjoy muck diving and finding those creatures that everyone else misses then this is the dive site for you.

The Ammo Jetty is located in the Woodman Point Regional Park about 10 minutes south of Fremantle, WA. Take the Nyerburp Cir entrance off of Cockburn Rd and follow the road in. There is a choice of two car parks to park in; however, if doing this as a night dive then the gates on the larger car park are locked after 9pm at night.

There is a large grassy area to gear up as well as toilets nearby. For the non divers in your group there are playgrounds, BBQs, shelters and a safe family beach to swim and play in to keep them occupied whilst you are diving. On arrival it is advisable to take a quick walk down to the beach along the path to check out the conditions before you gear up, the jetty is located directly at the end of the pathway about a three hundred meter walk from either of the two car parks.

On weekends and public holidays, in particular on sunny days, this area gets filled very early with families making use of the facilities so it is advisable to get there early to secure a good car park and shelter.

The jetty itself is about 75m long and is constructed of wooden pylons and has a cement surface. The maximum depth at the end is about nine meters and points in an almost directly westerly direction. There are about five rows of pylons for most of the length of the jetty except for the end which is the widest part of the

jetty.

Once you have geared up and you at the waters edge my advice is to enter the water on the southern (left hand) side where you can do your final checks before you begin the dive.

Starting from the shallow end swim down along the southern edge of the jetty slowly inspecting all of the pylons as you go. About halfway down there is an old shopping trolley



that is located about a meter out from the jetty. This is a good spot to find seahorses that have made this their home. After having a good look here continue onto the end of the jetty.

Be care full not to stir up the bottom to much as it is very soft and can turn very silty in seconds. This dive site really benefits from divers with good buoyancy and fining skills. If you do silt it up, stop and rest a while and the silt will soon settle and you can continue with your dive.

Once you have reached the end of the jetty you will find some old pylons and pieces of wood that are right on the end of the jetty. Normally for some strange reason the end of the jetty has the worst visibility; however, if you want to explore you will find something of interest. Once you have finished looking around here turn around and head back towards the shallow end down the next row of pylons.

Continue with this method up and down and you will get to cover most of the area underneath the jetty, taking your

time to explore each of the pylons as you go as this is where most of the life is located.

Take your time and look above, look below you, look everywhere and you will find some amazing creatures. There are different types of nudibranchs, flatworms, octopuses, seahorses, fish, hermit crabs, decorator crabs, tube worms, Christmas tree worms, the list just goes on. For the photographer you will be in macro heaven.

There is a noticeable difference between the northern and southern sides in regards to life due to the amount of sun light that filters in from the north. Therefore most of the animals that like the sun can be found on the northern side.

Also there is a difference between water levels as to what can be found. With the sea floor covered in various types of sea stars and crabs, whilst most of the fish are found in mid to upper water. Due to the amount of fishing that goes on here there is not a lot of the larger fish life to



be found, but there is still a good variety of the smaller fish that inhabit the waters underneath the jetty.

Once you have covered most of the area go back to the deeper water and explore along all of the cross member pylons. On these pylons you will find blennies, the odd crayfish and other invertebrates that like to inhabit this level.

If you are into octopus simply look out for piles of empty shells in one spot. Stop and look and soon you will see one of these inquisitive creatures come out of their den for a look. Take your time and move slowly and they will soon accept you and allow

you to photograph them and on the odd occasion they will extend one of their arms and cautiously touch you with their suckers. Spending time with these intelligent creatures really changes your attitude to the environment and the other animals that we share it with.

This site is also great for the nudibranchs lover and to date at least half dozen types of nudibranchs have been seen and photographed in this small area. So far I have been able to identify Chromodoris Reticulata and Ceratosoma Brevicaudatum; however, in the warm weather and with the Leeuwin current running you can also find a number of tropical species which have been washed down from the north.

On the pylons in the shallow water we have found a number of different nudibranchs, no more than 10mm in length that we have yet to identify. Each pylon seems to have its own distinctive colony so take your time and look.

If you head back along the northern side about a third of the way out from the shore in approximately the three to four meter mark on the first row of pylons in from the outer row you will find a family of four yellow coloured decorator crabs. These little fellas have made their home on a purple sponge that is growing around the pylon, approximately one meter up from the sea floor.

On occasions there is a seal that makes an appearance and buzzes the divers in the water as he checks them out. Also there is often the chance to watch the local Cormorants swoop down into the water and chase the fish as they look for a meal. This is quite a spectacular site to see, especially when one shoots past your face at less than an arms length.

Due to it's shallow depth the average dive here last for about 70 minutes which gives you plenty of time to explore and if you are a photographer to take lots of pictures so make sure your batteries are charged and you have a large capacity memory card.



The best times to dive this site is when there is little to no wind or swell as both will make the conditions uncomfortable and reduce the visibility even further. On a good day the visibility averages around the five meter

mark; however, this can drop very quickly if there are too many divers in the water or if the conditions change.

In Western Australia in summer the sea breeze comes in soon after lunch and sometimes it is more of a gale than a breeze, so if you are planning to dive this site at this time of the year it is advisable to do it as early as possible to beat the breeze.

Also the visibility can vary depending where you are at the time during the dive, often the end of the jetty is the worst but occasionally this shifts to the middle of the site so you can end up swimming through a cloud of murky water into reasonably clean water, so don't despair if at first it doesn't look too good to dive, give it a go and check out the whole site, you might be pleasantly surprised.

Also this jetty is very popular with the fishermen and therefore you need to be careful of fishing lines both those being used by the fishermen and the lines that have been discarded or broken off in the water as they have hooks attached to them which will cause a nasty injury if you are hooked.

There is also a lot of rubbish discarded by the fisherman from plastic bait bags to chairs and beer bottles. It is hoped that a clean up of the site will be organised in the near future; however, until then please do the right thing and remove the rubbish if you find any.

On a busy day the jetty and surrounding beach gets very busy and therefore another hazard to be aware of is people jumping on you from the jetty. It is therefore advisable that you don't venture too far out from the edge of the jetty during the dive and when coming into the shore at the end of your dive you remain underneath the jetty until you reach the shallow water before exiting.

After the dive there is a shower located on the right hand side of the pathway about 20 meters from the jetty that you can use to wash the sand off or you can wait until you get to the toilet block where there are full height or foot showers that you can use.

This site would also make an awesome night dive just make sure you park in the smaller carpark and that you secure your vehicle and don't leave any valuables in sight. Better still why not have a BBQ after the dive and get your non divers to watch your vehicle for you.

This is a very good, safe but under rated dive site, often maligned because of the poor visibility and the lack of the larger fish species but as the man said 'Do yourself a favour and try it at least a couple of times. Take your time, don't rush and you will enjoy it.'