

## Neptune Islands Information...

# Calypso Star CHARTERS SHARK CAGE DIVING

The Neptune Island Conservation Park is managed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Both the North and South Neptune Islands and two nautical miles of surrounding sea are protected areas. The Neptune Islands are located almost mid way between the Eyre Peninsula and Kangaroo Island in the Southern Ocean.

These islands are the only islands in Australia where Great White Shark Cage Diving is permitted to take place. The Conservation Park is home to a large colony of New Zealand Fur Seals and a small colony of Australian Sea Lions. This pinniped colony attracts Great White Sharks to the Island on their travels around the coast of Australia and beyond. The Neptune Islands are also home to large bush rats, brown snakes and a variety of sea birds including Silver Gulls, Pacific Gulls, Gannets, Southern Giant Petrels, Mutton Birds, Albatross, and the beautiful White Bellied Sea Eagle. Commercial Fishing for Southern Rock Lobster takes place around the island during November to May using small steel traps. These traps are marked using red and white surface floats.

**North Neptune Island:** consists of two islands with a navigable gap between the islands to the north. It is home to the largest breeding colony of New Zealand Fur Seals in Australian waters. Each year in late November approximately 3500 seal pups are born. The majority of the colony exists in the main bay of the Islands although seals can be seen on the rocks in other areas too.

**South Neptune Island:** also consists of two smaller islands with a gap to the West. The fur seal colony produces approximately 1300 pups each year. In 1901 a lighthouse was built on the southern island. The lighthouse was kept by three keepers who were housed in a building, which still remains on the Island today. The original lighthouse was removed in 1985 and is now located in Port Adelaide as part of the South Australian Maritime Museum. It was replaced by an automated electric light. The Island also houses an automatic weather station, supplying data to the Bureau of Meteorology. South Neptune Island is often the coldest place in South Australia during the summer.

**North Neptune Island:** is most commonly used by shark cage diving operators, as the large population of seals, coupled with the favourable anchorages make for the most desirable dive location and provides for the best chance of shark encounters. We always endeavour to anchor in the most comfortable location. The Island holds three main anchorages. Anchoring on the Western shore of the Island is often impossible due to the swell and steep drop off of the ocean floor. At times we do venture to the South Neptune, if shark sightings at North Neptune have been poor.



## Anchorage at North Neptune Islands

### Anchorage 1

Anchorage 1 is our winter anchorage. The anchorage provides protection from north through west to south west winds. Water depth is approximately 12 - 18 metres.

This anchorage has a sandy bottom and while diving you may see schools of Trevally, Spotted Warehou and the occasional King Fish.

This shallower water is also great for viewing huge sting rays and Blue Groper cruising along the bottom.

Often a pair of sea eagles can be seen at the head of the bay.

During winter (May to October) keep an eye out for Southern Right Whales and let the crew know if you see one. Rules apply to our approach distance but we will certainly try to get a closer look where possible.

### Anchorage 2

Anchorage 2 is a perfect location for north - north east wind directions.

This wind direction is not very common therefore this anchorage is seldom used.

Water depth is approximately 25 - 30 metres.

### Anchorage 3

Anchorage 3 is our main summer anchorage. Great protection from south - south east winds.

Water depth is approximately 25 - 35 metres. This anchorage provides good shelter from south easterly sea breezes common in summer. During the summer you are more likely to see a Mako Shark as they prefer the deeper water. Mako Sharks at first look much like Great White Sharks but they are blue in colour and have outward pointing teeth. Mako Sharks are very curious of the cage and often can be seen with their dorsal fin exposed (JAWS style!)

Small schools of King Fish often pass through during summer when the water temperature is higher.

Anchorage 3 holds the record for the most Great White Sharks seen in ONE day (16 Great White Sharks seen in January 2008!!).

During the month of January to May we often come across small schools of Southern Bluefin Tuna. The crew will keep an eye out for them, they are good fun to catch and certainly taste delicious!

### Encounter - 1802

Difficulties experienced on the long voyage to unknown waters included hazards such as gales, storms and dangers in unexplored seas. On 21 February 1802, Flinders' expedition suffered a loss of crew in South Australian waters when ship master John Thistle, midshipman William Taylor and six seamen were drowned when their cutter capsized while searching for fresh water. The seamen were J. Little, George Lewis, John Hopkins, William Smith, Thomas Grindall and Robert Williams. Flinders was deeply affected by this disaster and recorded place names including Thorny Passage, Memory Cove, Cape Catastrophe, and Thistle Island to commemorate the lives lost. In comparison to Baudin, Flinders selected his own officers, and seems to have enjoyed the respect of most of his crew.

