



Otter Aquatics Newsletter

No 38. July 2018

Dear swimmers

Welcome to the July 2018 edition of the Otter Aquatics newsletter. Look inside to find:

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- 🦫 Learn-to-swim instruction, stroke correction and swimfit coaching – all levels
- 🦫 Open water swimming instruction and training
- 🦫 Swimming as therapy
- 🦫 Swimming-based tourism – domestic and international

A new mid week swimfit and technique advice session

Redcliffe pool has offered us a mid-week timeslot for our Swimfit and Technique Advice sessions. The time will be **from 6.30pm to 7.30 pm on Thursdays** at Redcliffe pool. Please let me know if you would like to come along, either instead of or in addition to a Sunday session. Or perhaps you know swimmers who may be unable to come to our Sunday morning session but would appreciate a mid-week, after-work fitness and swimming improvement opportunity.

On the subject of our regular pool training sessions, if you would like a video analysis of your stroke, just let me know (perhaps give me overnight notice so I can charge up the camera).

A danger of OWS ... and an opportunity

At our weekly Saturday morning open water swim at Queens Beach North, Scarborough, on Saturday 9th June, two of our swimmers had a near miss with a tinny. We had both been observing the tinny for some time as it rounded the southern reef and headed towards the boat ramp. No matter what we did to avoid collision – swim faster, swim more slowly, alter our course or stay still – it all seemed to make no difference to the tinny skipper who seemed set on a course to intercept us, no doubt unintentionally. His course wavered constantly making it difficult for us to judge his intent, and all the time, he kept closing in directly on us. Just when a collision seemed imminent, one of us shouted out and the other put his arm up to fend off the expected blow from the tinny's bow. Not only would impact with the bow have been serious enough in itself but the prospect of being in contact with the outboard's propeller was much more frightening.

On hearing our shout, the skipper of the tinny cut his engine, looked over the side and apologised. One of us (the one who is well known for losing his cool on occasions such as this) let fly with a few choice expletives which translated to something like 'kind tinny person, would you be so kind as to keep a better lookout in future'. He was alone in his tinny so the bow was thrust up in the air making keeping a lookout ahead of him difficult; but he should have altered course decisively and frequently (not the erratic behaviour he did display) in order to see ahead of his boat.

There are probably two take-aways from this harrowing experience. The first is a suggestion to erect a notice at the boat ramp along the lines of 'We frequently swim in these waters. While we always try to keep a lookout for tinnies, jetskies, kayaks, SUPs, etc, we would be grateful if you could also do the same for us'. The other suggestion is that we should always bring a tow float with us. Although our hi-vis swimming caps are not bad, because of the low profile of a swimmer's head in the water, they are probably not enough. Inflatable tow floats attach to the waist, bob along behind the swimmer and cause negligible drag. They can also carry goodies for longer swims such as wallet, phone, car keys, food, water, jelly beans, a change of clothes, perhaps a small car for the return trip (well ...!), etc. Experience has shown that they are very visible from a distance, even when swimming caps are not. Three of us in the OWS group already have them and, if more would like to purchase one, I can make a bulk order with wiggles.com and so avoid shipping costs. The cost price is \$54. Please let me know if you would like one or more. Here is a pic of the one I have:



And, on the subject of buying stuff, if anyone would like a neoprene cap like mine below, please let me know. The cost price is \$37. Remember that the head is the most important part of the body to project from the cold. While you might look a bit like Snoopy with his Biggle's hat, it will certainly keep your head warm. Just remember the old adage 'any fool can be uncomfortable'. A yellow swimming cap over the top disguises the dorkiness a bit. And if more people wear them, I won't feel quite so much of a dill.



2019 European Swimming Holidays Update

Any updates to our swimming holiday offerings and their dates will be put on our website (<http://www.otteraquatics.com.au/swim-tours.html>) as soon as they are known.

We have an update for our planned 2019 Symi Island swimming holiday in Greece which is run by our partner organisation Strel Swimming Adventures. Borut Strel has advised that his dates for Symi Island in 2019 are all of the following:

7-13 September

14-20 September

21-27 September

28 September to 4 October

You may also be interested in a yoga and meditation retreat run by my yoga teacher and friend, Craig Smith, from 24 September to 1 October in nearby Amorgos Island (see:

<http://yogameditationbrisbane.com.au/yoga-meditation-retreats-queensland/greece-7-night-retreat/>).

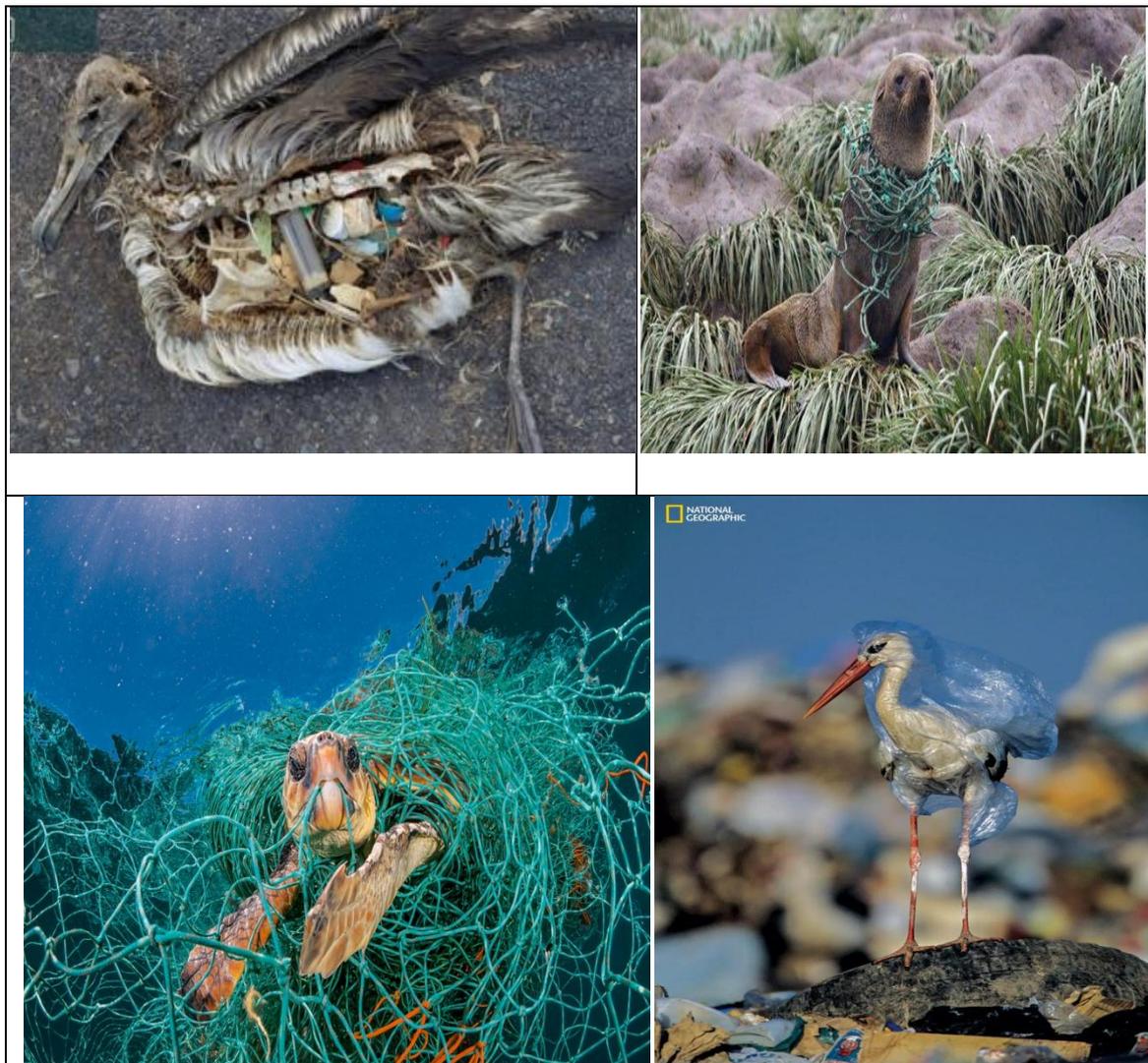
Please let me know soon-ish whether you are interested in the Symi Island trip and which dates would suit you best. I have a slight preference for 14-20 September to fit in with the yoga retreat but the main decision factor will be how many would like to do the trip and on what dates. I would need definite bookings and the payment of a deposit by **31 December 2018** at the latest.

More on plastics in our oceans: plastic contamination reaches Earth's last wilderness

Plastic and traces of hazardous chemicals have been found in Antarctica, the world's last great wildernesses. Researchers spent three months taking water and snow samples from remote areas of the continent earlier this year. The results have now been analysed and researchers have confirmed the majority contained persistent hazardous chemicals or microplastics. Researchers have found that seven of eight sea-surface water samples tested in the Antarctic contained microplastics such as microfibrils. Seven of the nine snow samples tested contained detectable concentrations of the persistent hazardous chemicals – polyfluorinated alkylated substances, or PFAS.

The findings come amid growing concern about the extent of the plastic pollution crisis which scientists have warned risks permanent contamination of the planet. Researchers said plastics chemicals are widely used in many industrial processes and consumer products and have been linked to reproductive and developmental issues in wildlife. They said the snow samples gathered included freshly fallen snow, suggesting the hazardous chemicals had come from contaminated rain or snowfall.

Earlier this month, the UN warned that plastics in our oceans is one of the world's biggest environmental threats. The big question now is what are the actual consequences of finding this stuff here? Many of these chemicals are pretty nasty and as they move up the food chain they may be having serious consequences for the health of wildlife and, ultimately, humans. The effects of microplastics on marine life, likewise, are largely not understood.



For more information, read *Our Common Future, Chapter 10: Managing The Commons* at <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-10.htm>.

Swimmer of the month – who?

No matter how hard I try to cajole or threaten swimmers to provide a few words about their swimming story, I still have received no more than the two already published. Despite my threat to write their story myself, I doubt that it would be worth the consequent threats on my life. So what to do? Write about myself, I suppose. OK, here goes, but only to provide encouragement to others to write their swimming story for future newsletters.

As I much too rapidly approach my 70th year, I can reflect on the fact that I've been a swimmer of sorts for about 65 years. I learned to swim at the age of about five (in my final 'test', I panicked so much I had to be rescued!); I was a completely unremarkable member of the swimming squad at school and, as a young adult, I was a keen body surfer on Sydney's fabulous beaches. But I was never an especially good swimmer; in fact, I doubt if I ever did any good in any race as a youngster, let alone win one. I guess I didn't have sufficient natural ability or the will to train

harder, or both. Probably I didn't see any point in mindlessly swimming up and down a pool. I continued to swim frequently as a young to middle aged adult but it was mostly as a training adjunct to running.

Then, 25 or so years ago, I was holidaying with my family at a small coastal town in northern New South Wales when I noticed a couple of people swimming out from one beach, around a headland, and in through the surf at the next beach along the coast, a relatively modest distance of not much more than one kilometre. I wanted to do just that. So I spent the rest of that holiday swimming out from the first beach in increasingly longer distances battling with a variety of anxieties: deep water, sharks and other nasties underneath, and distance off shore, telling myself that the only thing I had to fear was fear itself (misquoting FDR's famous words), or something like that. By the end of the holiday, I had done it! When I swam in through the surf at the second beach, I passed a surfer sitting on his board. 'Where did you come from?' he asked. 'New Zealand' was my jesting reply. But I was hooked. I was over the moon with this simple achievement and the sheer beauty of being 'out there' and I have never looked back. Stupidly, a couple of years later, I did this swim at night, using the navigation light at the end of the breakwater as my first sighting point, then a lighthouse as my second, then the lights of the surf club to guide me through the surf into the beach. It was also good but I wouldn't do it again nor would I recommend anyone else to do it.

About nine years ago, a faulty ticker forced me to retire from 'proper' work and I turned to doing what I love: swimming. For the next few years I earned a very modest income teaching and coaching swimming, training lifeguards and sometimes taking others on swimming tours to exotic parts of the world. I tell all my swimmers that real swimming is when you break the confines of a pool (breaking the 'tyranny of the wall' I tell them), rid yourself of the stench of chlorine on your body and in your hair and get into the open water. These days I swim twice or three times a week with a few mates at local beaches where the water temperature never drops below about 16 degrees C in the middle of winter (and that's quite cold enough thanks). I still conduct pool-based swimfit and technique advice training but at a less frenetic pace these days.

I have had some modest swimming success, not by the lapsed time measured on a stopwatch but in the simple achievement of getting to a destination, in a number of distance swims around the world. I have swum in many of the world's seas and oceans – all very gently and always taking the scenic route – including the Swedish, Finnish and German Baltic Sea coasts, the North Sea, the Irish Sea, the English Channel (no, not across it), the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Adriatic and, closer to home, various seas of the Pacific, Indian and Southern Oceans. I have also swum in lakes in Germany and Switzerland when I lived in Europe (one in Germany was too late in the swimming season which brought with it a dose of hypothermia!). In 2014 I did the Hellespont (aka the Dardanelles) – alas along it, not across it due to atrocious weather conditions that year – which gave me the idea to take like-minded aquaphiles on swimming-based holidays to Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia. And may there be many more! Swimming above the Arctic Circle in Finland (in summer!) is one goal as is swimming across the Straits of Gibraltar in a relay team. And I wouldn't mind actually getting across the Hellespont one day.

Why do I find open water swimming (OWS) so good? Without trying to be too lyrical, it is because in the open water I am at one with nature, embraced and supported by 'mother' water and with no need to follow a silly black line or having to turn every 25 or 50 metres. Once I am

warmed up and 'in the zone', I feel that I can swim forever ... almost. In fact, I joke with those new to OWS that I need to set the alarm on my watch to remind me to stop. Distance swimming in the open water is a real meditation; in fact, I often recite some mantras to myself, sometimes with my eyes closed (it's quite interesting to see where you end up after a spell of having your eyes closed!). OWS is also a good exercise in brain training – you really can teach yourself to swim in a straight(er) line using quite real brain training techniques. Of course, if conditions are cold and rough, it's not as good, but one needs the occasional bad day to appreciate the good ones ... probably. And nothing tastes quite as good as a post-OWS coffee.

Just remember that you don't stop swimming when you get old; you get old when you stop swimming.



Coogee Beach November 2017. I'm even forgetting my name these days, hence the need to put it on my cap

Stroke trip of the month – entry/glide/reach

Over recent months we have discussed in detail the role of the 'recovery' (especially the need for a high elbow) and the 'catch' (especially the need to achieve an 'early vertical forearm'). But what happens between the recovery and the catch? In this the final of the non-propulsive components of the freestyle stroke, we will discuss the 'entry', the 'glide' and the 'reach'.

The entry. Your hand should enter the water from a high elbow position (which you achieve with a good 'recovery', right?) with the hand at right angles to the direction of the body's movement and with fingers entering first and fingers held gently together. You should not enter the water with a flat hand on the water's surface and neither should you enter with thumbs entering first. To enter the water any other way is quite clearly inefficient at best and, if you enter with the heel of your hand, it would contribute to putting the brakes on and providing a force to push your body backwards. Seems obvious? You might be surprised at how many people do this. But what about that thumbs first entry? Weren't we taught to do that in learn-to-swim classes years ago? Some of us were indeed taught that way in the very much mistaken notion of following some sort of 'S' pattern underneath the body. All quite silly, certainly not hydrodynamically efficient, and no longer taught by swimming teacher accreditation bodies.

Your fingers/hand should enter the water with the body rotated (remember that our body should *always* be rotating – up to about 45° on each side), fingers pointing *directly ahead of the shoulder* (not to one side or the other) and pretty much as far as you can reach. In fact, the entry should occur about a hand's length (say 15cm) short of your full reach, with the full reach occurring under the water.

The glide. Your front hand/arm should glide for a short period of time (1-2 seconds) after your hand's entry to give forward effect to the propulsive force delivered by your other arm and hand. Most of us do not glide enough. The effect of an insufficient glide is to thrash through the water like a paddle wheeler. On the other hand, it is certainly true that some of us are over-gliders, in that you delay the catch so much that your body decelerates. So how much is enough? You can feel when you provide the right amount of glide as it makes the whole stroke smooth – but your coach or anyone else watching can also give you feedback. Also, ask me to video your stroke above and below the water.

The reach (sometimes called the extension). As mentioned above, the hand enters about a hand's length short of your full reach, with the full reach occurring under the water. How far under the surface? About 10 cms – any deeper will disrupt a good glide and any shallower will encourage you to do a poor catch with the possible result being a shoulder injury. Your arm transitions from a bent elbow in the recovery to a straight arm for the reach, and it pretty soon afterwards achieves a bent elbow again for the catch.

Remember to aim the middle finger of your outreached hand towards the end of the pool or your sighting point in the open water. In fact, in the open water, try aiming your middle finger at your 'sighting' point in your head with your eyes closed. It's a good indication of how good your level of concentration is and how balanced and symmetrical your stroke is.

For the whole of the entry/glide/reach process, remember:

-  Keep your fingers below your wrist
-  Keep your wrist below your elbow
-  Keep your elbow below your shoulder.

Quiz of the month – who are we?

This month's question/s:

Here are a few unattributed and possibly slanderous snippets describing some of our swimmers. Prizes will be given to match the swimmer with their idiosyncrasies.

Swimmer No 1. Almost perfect stroke in the pool and producing a quite respectable speed in that environment but, in the open water ... well, something happens. Stroke looks ok in the OW but doesn't seem to produce much forward propulsion, attracting comments like 'any slower and he/she would be going backwards'. But he/she never gives up. He/she tries ... and tries ... and makes up for it by providing nice après-swim goodies to eat.

Swimmer No 2. Always the last to get in the water when he/she tends to hold his/her nose. And always up for a chat with others at the far end of the pool where he/she thinks he/she can't be seen by the coach. But has made huge progress since starting as a complete non-swimmer more than six years ago, including swimming in the deep deep Lago d'Orta on the Italy swimming tour (as has Swimmer No 1 BTW). He/she is multi-skilled and holds a few honorary non-swimming positions in the swimming group.

Swimmer No 3. Similar to No 2, this swimmer began more than four years ago by not being able to swim at all and being quite fearful of the water. Now he/she is an open water swimmer of note who, after getting comfortable in local OW swims, made his/her big time debut at the Bold and Beautiful swim at Sydney's Manly Beach to Shelley Beach a couple of years ago.

Swimmer No 4. An experienced and accomplished swimmer both in the pool and in the open water. He/she has been on all European swimtours to date. But he/she has a tendency to procrastinate at the prospect of entering cold water preferring instead to discuss the conflict in Syria or somesuch. He/she has an unnerving habit of squirreling away jelly beans somewhere 'on his/her person' which, it must be said, he/she shares with his/her companions. The combination of salt (from the water) and sweet (from the JB's) is a unique taste sensation. He/she has been dubbed the Jelly Bean Man ('JBM') – even if it is a she.

Swimmer No 5. This one does not display much tolerance with the aforesaid procrastinations and is almost to the first rocks before the rest of us manage to get our toes wet. Has been known to shout 'Let's go, boys', confusing the water with a rugby league pitch and his swimming companions with his back line. This swimmer has a propensity to fall off things: his bike (often), the occasional cliff edge and the last time (at least hopefully his last), his house's roof. He/she seems to be hell bent on his ambition to break all the bones in his/her body. His/her spouse wins the tolerance award.

Swimmer No 6. Another accomplished swimmer who scored some fame in a tri at some western Queensland place that no one has ever heard of. But he/she is one whose gyro compass constantly topples in the open water and frequently has to be retrieved from halfway across Moreton Bay on a northerly journey or, on southerly passages, from scraping his/her belly on frequent encounters with the beach. On at least one occasion, this swimmer set off on a northerly transit of Queens Beach North but, after a little while, found him/herself doing a complete 180° and heading south – all completely unknowingly.

Swimmers No 7 & No 8. This is a swimming couple who started their swimming journey more than six years ago. While they haven't been able to join us lately due to a few health concerns, they hold the multiple distinctions of being the most enthusiastic, most tenacious, most delightful, most senior and, for the male member at least, to have the loudest holler in all of Brisbane when he got to the end of the pool having achieved his first lap. That feat is still talked about in our elite swimming circles.

Swimmer No 9. This one is a much more-than-reasonable swimmer but he/she has a fatal weakness – he/she is a tinny attractant which may deter others from swimming with him. He/she is also the person of choice to be around in our après-swim coffee sessions. One day, we will give him/her a microphone. He/she will be a natural in stand-up.

Swimmer No 10. While not quite being Brisbane based, this swimmer has made himself/herself an integral member of the mob by joining us on Sydney's Bold and Beautiful as well as on all of our international swimming trips to Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Italy. When one of our number was silly enough to try to keep up with a swimmer much faster than himself on a 4k swim in Slovenia's Lake Bled last year and ran into his own watery wall, this one came to his rescue with a nonchalant "just swim with me, Cuz, and we'll get there together". And we did.

Don't worry if you don't feature yet; there will be more to come next time ...

Last month's answer:

Our perennial quiz master, Marieta Hanaghan, has provided the following answer to last month's question which was 'Why do our swimfit sessions usually include interval training?':

"As everything to do with groups involving Otters includes eating and drinking, **interval training** is the means by which we all practise walking or swimming up and down carrying a tray full of eats and drinks, affixed by a strap around our neck. This is for those who remember going to the pictures in the 50s, this job was carried out by ushers during interval which was the break between the newsreel, a cartoon and a short feature film and the main picture. Ushers sometimes dressed in short flouncy skirts and wore a sweet little hat on their heads.

The trays were full of lollies and ice creams which patrons could purchase without leaving their seats. These lollies did not include Jaffas which were often rolled down the aisles by bored trouble makers. This was not the same as drunken, unwilling grooms being rolled down the aisle towards their fate. The only other option for snacks during intervals was a mad dash outside the picture theatre to a small dingy overcrowded local cafe which stayed open specifically for the picture patrons. **Intervals** were also used to empty one's bladder before the main picture.

One of our swimmers is well on the way to being usher of the year by carrying lollies during the swims and handing them around during breaks in the distance swims. I am not sure of the bladder emptying practices on these swims.

Guess I win the quiz again huh???"

Sorry ~~Mr Harvey~~ Ms Hanaghan, as much as we appreciate your monthly answers, we provide the correct quiz answers, you don't. Here is the correct, but much less entertaining, answer:

Interval training is a type of training that involves a series of low and high intensity workouts interspersed with rest periods. The high-intensity periods are typically at or close to the anaerobic threshold (as hard as you can go), while the recovery periods involve activity of lower intensity and rest. Interval training (or High Intensity Interval Training – HIIT) is particularly good for the heart and the lungs and may assist in weight loss. It increases fitness and burns more calories over a short period of time than 'steady as you go' exercise which is just swimming/cycling/running/walking at the same pace for the whole time. Remember that if you want to achieve an improved fitness outcome, there is no point in providing the same input over and over again.

Needless to say, Marieta does not get the Mars bar this month. It will jackpot next month.

Quote of the month

'Everyone needs to play a part. You can make a difference today – and every day – by doing simple things like carrying your own water bottle, coffee cup and shopping bags, recycling the plastic you buy, avoiding products that contain microplastics and volunteering for a local clean-up.'

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, on the occasion of
World Oceans Day 8 June 2018

Pics of the month

Two this month showing off the delights of OWS in a Brisbane winter when the winds are light, the sun warm and the water stunningly clear.



'JBM' swimming in the pristine, if a tad cool, waters off Scott's Point. 21 June. But, unlike Canberra or Hobart, this Winter's Solstice swim was clothed (it is Queensland after all!)



Mr Percival, Margate Beach 19 June

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As scintillating as this newsletter no doubt is to everyone, I have no wish to clog up people's inboxes if they have lost interest. If this is the case, please reply to this email with the word UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject line or body and I will unsubscribe you.

