

amazes local divers



The beautiful coelacanth recently spotted off Pumula.

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Some 81 years after coelacanths were rediscovered off the coast of South Africa, another one has been spotted.

This will be the third one sighted off the coastline of the KZN South Coast, and outside of a Marine Protected Area.

Local diver, Alan, fondly known as Moo, was diving on a

deep reef near Pumula with his father, Mike Fraser, and their good friend Bruce Henderson last Friday when they spotted another coelacanth at 67 metres. Coelacanths were thought to have become extinct in the Late Cretaceous period, around 66 million years ago, but were rediscovered in 1938 off the coast of South Africa, according to Wikipedia.

In November 2019, the trio along with dive buddy Mossie Carstens, stumbled across this rare fish at the depth of 72 metres off Pumula.

This time, the fish appeared smaller than the 2019 one. It was around 1.2m, weighed about 60kg and was in a beautiful condition.

"Luckily the visibility was good on our dive and Bruce appears to have some sort of magic when it comes to finding these ancient fish," said Mike.

Last year in January, Moo and Mike had the privilege of seeing one at a depth of 55 metres off Margate.

"Unfortunately my camera was in the cupboard at home on that dive," he added.



Bruce Henderson operating on coelacanth induced adrenaline at 67m.

The men find a rebreather very helpful when diving to such depths. A rebreather is a breathing apparatus that absorbs the carbon dioxide of a user's exhaled breath to permit the rebreathing (recycling) of the substantially unused oxygen.

Of course, back-up gas emergency tanks are carried as well.

Talking about their recent finding, Mike said he thinks his late father's (Denis Harvey Fraser) spirit was shining down on them that morning on what would have been his 96th birthday.

Co-incidentally, Bruce's late mother's (Ann Edwards Henderson) birthday was also on the 25th.

"I think their spirits aligned and smiled down on us that fortunate Friday," agreed Bruce.

"You'll recall the excitement around

the first specimen Bruce filmed back in November 2020. Fortunately both Bruce and I had housed Go-Pros and captured some reasonable video on the day," said Mike.

Interestingly, Mike explained that they love to dive on reefs that have never been dived on before by man.

"It's King Neptune's playground and the last great wilderness without any footprints that we are fortunate to explore," he said.



Alan Fraser and Bruce Henderson during the dive last Friday

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