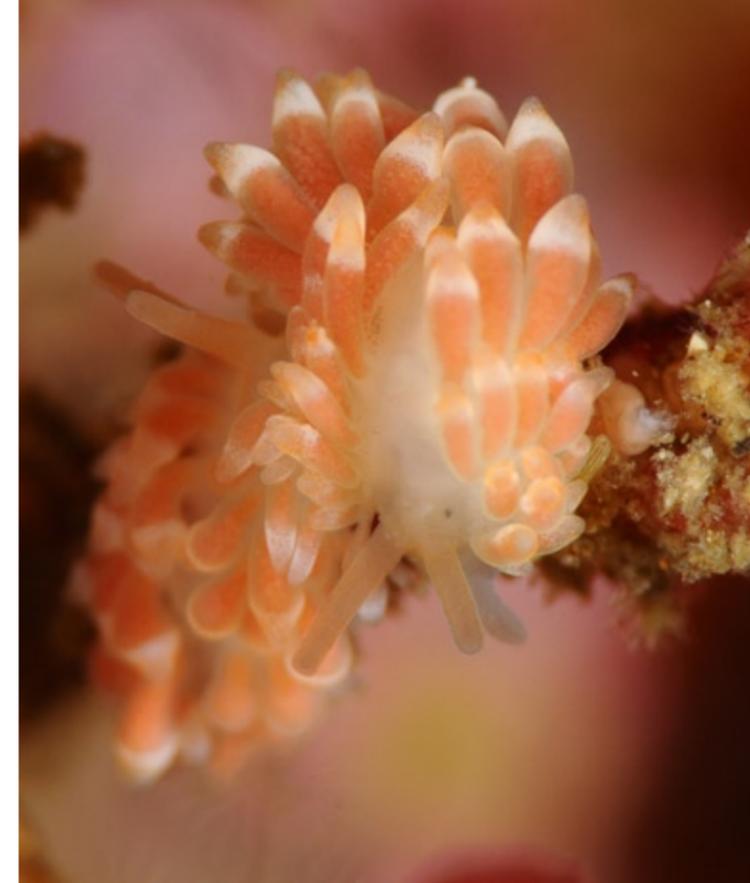




Nudibranch *Safari*



*Text and photos
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*—Cold water nudibranch world
record at Gulen Dive Resort?*

The 2012 Nudibranch Safari at Gulen Dive Resort was a phenomenal success. A staggering 49 species of nudibranchs and seven other ophistobranchs were identified during the weekend—on one divespot.

Expectations ran high as 16 participants from Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Faroe Islands gathered at Gulen Dive Resort north of Bergen in Norway to look for nudibranchs the last weekend in March.

Beforehand, the organizers doubted whether it would be possible to find more species than last year, when participants identified

what was at the time thought to be an almost unbeatable number of species: 36 nudibranchs and 4 other ophistobranchs. Their doubts were quickly put to shame as the Nudibranch Safari progressed – but even the most optimistic were surprised at the final outcome.

A scientific sensation

After diving the magnificent house reef at Gulen Dive Resort for four

days, a staggering 49 species of nudibranchs and 7 other ophistobranchs had been documented and collected – including two species never before observed in Norwegian waters.

Never before have so many species been documented in just one spot in Norway. The finding of two species never before seen in Norwegian waters and one that has not been documented for 140

years is no less than a scientific sensation.

Underwater photographers Thorbjørn Rusnes and Erling Svensen each found a new species – a *Goniodoris castanea* and an *Onchidoris oblonga*.

Apart from these spectacular observations, the rare *Tritonia lineata* was documented for the first time since 1878 in





Nudibranchs



Norway, and the rarely observed species *Onchidoris depressa* and *Colpodaspis pusilla* also made appearances. Several of the participating divers found other rare species.

Nudibranch Project

As was the case on last year's Nudibranch Safari, scientists Jussi Evertsen and Torkild Bakken from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) were responsible for the workshop. They were again duly impressed by the many species found on the Gulen Dive Resort house reef, and

brought back a number of species for DNA barcoding and classification.

The two scientists have since 1997 been running a project called "Nudibranchs of the Norwegian Coast" and are among the most experienced in the world in their field.

On their project website www.nudibranchia.no they have published a list of all the species so far documented after the Nudibranch Safari. The work is still in progress, and even more new species might turn up – several strange species were found that will have to be

investigated further.

The participants had access to stereoscopes and nudibranch literature all weekend to help identify and study the collected specimens in close-up detail. A steady stream of subjects was put under the scopes, and it was not long between excited outcries from the scientists – a rare species had turned up.

High level

The Nudibranch Safari is basically for everyone, regardless of experience or education. This year's gathering nevertheless held a very





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high standard – no less than four marine biologists and several of the best Norwegian underwater photographers turned up. Among the latter was Erling Svensen, known for photographing the excellent book *Marine Fish & Invertebrates of Northern Europe*, a must-have for all divers interested in marine biology.

The media were also interested in the Nudibranch Safari, and several local newspapers wrote about it both before and after. The Norwegian state broadcaster

NRK also published a story; so did even the Rumanian website www.mydive.ro!

A perfect habitat

The house reef at Gulen Dive Resort has proven itself to be a perfect habitat for nudibranchs, and the number of species observed so far is almost impossibly high: Norwegian waters harbour close to a hundred different nudibranchs, of which around 30 are deep-water species. The fact that the participants on the Nudibranch Safari

managed to find more than half of all known species and about ¾ of the ones found on diveable depths is nothing short of incredible – especially when considering that this was all done on one single divespot!

A new Nudibranch Safari has already been planned for 2012, and because of the great interest it will be extended to four days. Mark the dates 20.-25. of March in your calendar if you're interested! It will be very exciting to see if there are still more

species out there waiting to be discovered.

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