



All in a night's work: Staff from Abel Tasman Sea Shuttle bring the 10m launch Sounds Seeker into the Port Motueka Marina after an overnight mission to refloat the sunken vessel last week. A Golden Bay family of four were temporarily left stranded as a result of the incident, having gone ashore the previous day, only to discover the boat vanished from sight on their return. Photo: Heather Knapp.

## Local company helps salvage family holiday with boat refloat

TIM O'CONNELL

For the company tasked with bringing a stricken vessel back to a safer haven after rough seas caused it to sink at the northern end of Abel Tasman National Park, a long night of labour has brought about a satisfactory conclusion, despite an unfortunate excursion for a family of holidaymakers.

Heather Knapp, who runs Abel Tasman Sea Shuttle with husband Keith and a busy local crew, said they received a call for assistance from the Harbourmaster just after 12pm on January 5th.

The 10 metre, 6.5 tonne steel-hull vessel 'Sounds Seeker' went down 100 metres offshore in Anapai Bay where it had been anchored near the popular Abel Tasman Coastal Track between Totaranui and Separation Point.

After a marathon

overnight effort to resurface the launch from the sandy floor of the bay before towing it around the bay to Port Motueka, the boat arrived in the Marina just after 10am on the Wednesday morning - an almost 24 hour process.

Although some damage was observed, there appeared to be little inflicted on the hull by the incident, therefore making transportation easier for the salvage crew.

Any risk of pollution was negated by not losing any of the 300 litres of diesel on board, which was instead pumped out onto the ATSS barge, with water also pumped out to enable the boat to surface.

Heather said the timing of the call proved ideal in being available to respond quickly, with Keith having just finished a passenger drop off to Awaroa.

As well as tending to the high tour-

ism demands over summer, the team is also in the process of relocating their booth to the new complex at Kaiteriteri Beach, between the Shoreline Café and the upgraded shop facilities.

"There's no pause for us in this business and in this case it was a matter of right time, right place," Heather said.

While the incident was all in a day's- or night's- work for the company, Heather said there was plenty of sympathy for the Golden Bay family of four who had briefly left the boat earlier on the Monday prior to its sinking.

When they tried to return the weather was too rough and instead opted to stay in Totaranui overnight. On their return to Anapai Bay on Tuesday morning they found that the boat had gone.

"Keith felt really sorry for the family, just see-

ing them stood helpless on the shore like that," Heather said.

Although facilitating passengers' journey through the National Park is the bread and butter for Abel Tasman Sea Shuttles, the salvage aspect of the business provides an equally vital service to boaties in the vicinity.

With an estimated 2 to 3 callouts each summer to assist with retrieving fishing or recreational vessels who have come a cropper in local waters, recent jobs undertaken include a yacht washed on rocks as well as a boat wrecked near Mutton Cove.

"There's no mercy with the sea - it certainly doesn't take any prisoners," says Heather.

It is understood the boat was on anchor at the time with initial reports pointing to it being swamped by sea swells which subsequently caused it to sink.

With three incidents over the past fortnight involving anchor ropes giving way under pressure, boaties have been urged to make sure that their anchor ropes are in good condition before heading out onto the brine.

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