

THE REEF SEEKER



REEF SEEKERS DIVE CO.
P.O. Box 634
Beverly Hills, CA 90213
Phone & text: (310) 652-4990
web: www.reefseekers.com
e-mail: kenkurtis@aol.com

January - 2024



WELCOME TO 2024

I'm no longer sure if it should be "Happy New Year" or "Thank goodness we survived another one." But 2023 certainly wasn't anything like 2020, 2021, or even 2022. So hopefully we've got most of the pandemic troubles behind us – although there does seem to be a surge in COVID and RSV cases so stay vigilant – and here's also hoping that 2024 will be leading us to brighter days ahead. Fingers crossed and happy to take this journey with you.

LOCAL CLASSES & DIVES IN 2024

I've been a NAUI Scuba Instructor since August of 1980. (Top Candidate in my instructor class of 30, by the way.) I really enjoy teaching and get a kick when my former students get hold of me to tell me of their continuing diving adventures. I used to tell people when they got certified that I was going to be part of their life forever, because learning to dive can

definitely be a life-changing experience, especially if you keep at it.

But since we closed our physical store in 2007 – YIKES!!! – and we not only didn't have any rental gear or a compressor, but also lost easy access to a pool for training, teaching basic entry-level classes comes with too many barriers to make it a worthwhile endeavor without a brick-and-mortar store to use as home base.

But advanced classes are a different matter. (And by "advanced," I don't just mean the NAUI or PADI course that are called Advanced with a capital A, but anything that goes beyond an entry-level certification.)

With these types of classes, you already come in as a certified diver, most of them focus on knowledge-building with some practical application done during ocean dives, and they can just about all have the classroom work done via Zoom. (Zoom not only takes the worry out of being close, but also solves geographic problems since you don't have to drive to where the class is physically taking place.) And they're generally fun for us to teach.

To that end, we've come up with another combo of "advanced" classes for 2024, the list of which can be found as page 3 of this newsletter. And what we've tried

to do is concentrate on the things that are most useful in a practical matter to divers, both new or experienced. Four of these classes are single night, 3-hour, Zoom-based only: Nitrox, Fish ID, Tables & Computers, and Photo Workshop. (You can find descriptions of each on our website.)

Others are diving-focused and require no classroom time but are done at a local beach (usually Vets Park in Redondo) in a single 3-4 hour session. These include Navigation, Beach Diving, Taming Surf Entries (skin-dive gear only – no tanks), and Night/Squid diving (depending on what time of the year it is).

In general, except for Nitrox, these classes are \$35 each. But – and many of you know my mantra – because divers can't resist a FREE offering, all of them (except Nitrox) are offered at no charge at least once during the year to encourage you to get some more training under your belt.

Now you might be saying to yourself, "I dive regularly so why do I need more training?" Think of it like learning to play a musical instrument. It's not practice that makes perfect, it perfect practice that makes perfect. When you self-teach and don't get any outside evaluation, you are possibly just cementing/reinforcing bad habits

while perhaps thinking “This is what everyone does.” (Buoyancy immediately comes to mind.)

So take a look at the various offerings throughout the year, as well as the regular day trips to the Avalon Underwater Park (none of those are freebies, however), see what strikes your fancy and maybe even see if any of them are outside your comfort zone which would provide a good chance for growth as a diver. We generally hope to get at least two or three people for these but I’ve been known to be convinced to do them even if it’s only one person that signed up. I hope you’ll give them some serious thought this year.

CLIMATE CHANGE TAKES HOLD

2023 has gone down as the warmest year on record, according to the World Meteorological Association. 21 of the 24 warmest years ever recorded have occurred since 2000. If you’re still a climate change denier, you’ve got your head in the sand. The big question isn’t “Does it exist,” but “What can we do about it?” Can we make a difference and stem this tide? I think (and hope we can).

For obvious reasons, we talk about climate change and the warming oceans when we’re doing our public dive shows at the Aquarium of the Pacific. Don’t forget that 2023 saw water temperatures in the Florida Keys exceed 100°F. That’s unheard of. And it’s unhealthy for the reefs. That, in turn, becomes unhealthy for us because – despite what I (and probably you) was taught when I was growing up – trees do NOT produce the bulk of

the oxygen we breathe. We now know that the ocean produces 72% of our oxygen with 50% overall coming from phytoplankton alone. These are microscopic organisms that live on the surface of the ocean. (Trees account for 28% overall.) So if you like to breathe – and who doesn’t? – a healthy ocean is a critical thing for the well-being of any breathing creature, including us.

One individual won’t solve this problem. But if we all take little steps, the collective nature of eight billion people on the planet can have a positive effect. And little things like turning off lights around the house that aren’t being used, walk instead of drive (and think of a hybrid or electric car if it’s time to make a new purchase), and just generally be aware of reducing the amount of natural resources you use can be helpful. Now note, I’m not saying eliminate the use of all natural resources. That’s likely not going to happen. But we can certainly do better.

Reducing consumption of natural resources may help stem the rate at which we’re consuming all of this but then we also need to investigate how we can restore the health

of ecosystems that have been damaged. Trash in the ocean is always a concern. One thing we like to say is focus on the number three: Next time you’re diving, or even just down by the beach, find three pieces of trash and put them in a proper receptacle. Less trash in the ocean helps the ocean heal and that will be a good thing.

The other thing you can do, if you accept that this is a problem we can, if not solve immediately, at least turn things around, is to preach the gospel of climate change. You don’t have to become an evangelical climate activist, but talk about climate change with your family and friends. Suggest things that can be done to improve our situation. Lead by example.

Despite notions of colonizing Mars or moving to the moon, trying to do better and solve some of the problems here on Earth likely provides a more immediate and better way to tackle this. If we don’t change our ways, the metrics all seem to indicate a rather bleak future that may come to a sudden end. Maybe not in our lifetimes, but possibly in the lifetimes of our children or grandchildren. And

(continued on back page)

2024 DIVING VACATIONS

March 18-22 • San Ignacio

May 18-25 • Roatan

July 8-19 • Indonesia

September 9-21 • Yap

RESERVATIONS (310)652-4990



IMPORTANT STUFF YOU NEED TO KNOW

All diving must be done within recreational sport diving limits:
depths 130' or less,
no-deco bottom times,
standard compressed air or nitrox (<40%) as a breathing gas.

Limit one scuba tank per diver.
Pony bottles do not count as a second tank.

Specific start/finish times vary by event. Please confirm these when you sign up.

Directions to all landings & Veterans Park are on our website.

All dives are weather-dependent and may be changed or cancelled at our sole discretion.

You must show your certification card(s) if asked.
No c-card, no scuba diving.

A general briefing is conducted for each trip and is mandatory for all divers.

Avalon trips are generally 3 dives. Redondo dives are single-tank.

We may add an occasional boat trip to this schedule.

Day-of-dive problems?
Call Ken directly at (310)995-3639 or (310)652-4990
[you can text this last # too]



— REEF SEEKERS DIVE CO. — 2024 LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED ACTIVITY/DIVE	PRICE
Wed.	Jan. 3	--- CLASS ---	--- Photo Workshop ---	35
Thu.	11	Redondo/Vets	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE
Wed.	17	Catalina Express	Avalon Underwater Park	180
Sat.	27	Redondo/Vets	Beach Diving	35
Wed.	31	--- CLASS ---	--- NAUI Nitrox Diver ---	95
Thu.	Feb. 8	Redondo/Vets	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE
Wed.	21	Catalina Express	Avalon Underwater Park	180
Wed.	Mar. 6	--- CLASS ---	--- Secrets of Fish ID ---	35
Sat.	9	Redondo/Vets	Navigation Made Easy	35
Thu.	14	Redondo/Vets	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE
Wed.	27	Catalina Express	Avalon Underwater Park	180
Sat.	Apr. 13	Redondo/Vets	Taming Surf Entries	35
Wed.	17	--- CLASS ---	--- Tables & Computers ---	35
Wed.	24	Catalina Express	Avalon Underwater Park	180
Wed.	May 1	Boats/Aquarium	Chamber Day/Eve 2024	150
Thu.	9	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	35
Sat.	11	Redondo/Vets	Beach Diving	35
Wed.	15	--- CLASS ---	--- Photo Workshop ---	FREE
Wed.	June 12	Catalina Express	Avalon Underwater Park	180
Wed.	19	--- CLASS ---	--- NAUI Nitrox Diver ---	95
Sat.	22	Redondo/Vets	Navigation	35
Thu.	27	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	35
Sat.	July 6	Redondo/Vets	Taming Surf Entries	35
Thu.	25	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	35
Wed.	31	Catalina Express	Avalon Underwater Park	180
Sat.	Aug. 10	Redondo/Vets	Beach Diving	FREE
Wed.	14	--- CLASS ---	--- Secrets of Fish ID ---	35
Wed.	28	Catalina Express	Avalon Underwater Park	180
Thu.	Sept. 5	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	FREE
Sat.	7	Redondo/Vets	Navigation	35
Wed.	Oct. 9	--- CLASS ---	--- Tables & Computers ---	35
Sat.	12	Redondo/Vets	Taming Surf Entries	FREE
Wed.	16	Catalina Express	Avalon Underwater Park	180
Thu.	24	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	35
Wed.	Nov. 13	--- CLASS ---	--- Photo Workshop ---	35
Sat.	16	Redondo/Vets	Beach Diving	35
Wed.	20	Catalina Express	Avalon Underwater Park	180
Wed.	Dec. 4	--- CLASS ---	--- NAUI Nitrox Diver ---	95
Sat.	7	Redondo/Vets	Navigation	FREE
Thu.	12	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	35
Wed.	18	Catalina Express	Avalon Underwater Park	180

TRIPS & SPECIAL EVENTS 2024

March 18-22 • San Ignacio Lagoon • Gray Whale Hugging

Wed., May 1 • Chamber Day & Chamber Eve 2024

May 17-25 • Roatan • Experience Caribbean diving

Sat. & Sun., June 1 & 2 • Scuba Show • L.A. Conv. Ctr.

July 8-19 • Indonesia • Wonderful walls, robust reefs

Sept. 9-21 • Yap • Mantas, Mandarinfish, Sharks & more

Sat., Sept. 28 • Lobster season opens at 6:00AM

November 1-10 • Palau • On the Palau Aggressor II

Reservations: (310)652-4990

(If you get voicemail, please leave a message.)

since there's no spare planet in our back pocket (and colonizing Mars doesn't count), there really is no Plan B.

When I was living in Whittier as a kid from 1962-1966, I remember the sky being brown from smog and also suffering from "smog attacks" where you'd be going about your business but then your eyes would start to water and you'd cough, all from the smog. And look what happened in the ensuing 50-60 years. It got much better. A lot of credit goes to the Clean Air Act which gave government the authority to crack down on pollution and emissions, especially from vehicles.

We can take the same approach with improving the health of our oceans, and we've taken some

small steps in that direction. But more is needed. All it takes is some political will and people who are ready to open their eyes and honestly assess the issues and possible paths to a better solution.



ORCAS IN THE HOUSE!!!

It's no cause for alarm from a diving standpoint but for the last few weeks or so, there has been a pod or Orcas (aka Killer Whales) that have been plying our SoCal waters. Sometimes two or three have

been spotted, sometimes more. Needless to say, this has cetacean watchers very excited and active as they try to get out to observe. The sad part – but it's Mother Nature at work – is that these animals are on the hunt and have been observed targeting, chasing, and killing dolphins and even some sharks.

But it's also been somewhat of a boon to the local whale-watching industry as the boats, especially some out of the Newport Beach area, have been able to find these animals and spend some extended time observing them. So if you're looking for something to do to start the new year off with a bang, this might just be the adrenaline-filled activity to fit the bill. *(Photo above courtesy of Mike Couffer.)*

PICTURE PAGE - Fav shots of 2023

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2024)



**Aitzol blows air-rings
(Bonaire)**



**Best of Show
(Maldives)**



**Clownfish staredown
(Yap)**



**Whale Shark feeding
(Isla Mujeres)**



**Decorated Dartfish
(Maldives)**