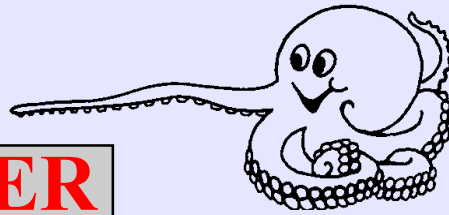


THE REEF SEEKER



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February - 2024



A FAIRLY SAFE YEAR

As many of you may know, since 2003, I've been the forensic consultant to the L.A. County Coroner for scuba fatalities. And each year, we compile info on any scuba deaths that happen with the county to present to the public at our annual "Why Divers Die" seminar at the Scuba Show.

We'll have our work cut out for us this coming Scuba Show because we're pleased to say we only had ONE scuba fatality in Los Angeles County in 2023. Yahoo!!! (Our historical average is five deaths per year.) So looking ahead to our seminar (June 1, 4-5PM), we'll brief you on the one fatality and maybe do some follow-up on others.

But it's also a good time to remind you that you can never be TOO safe. Overall diving is a relatively safe sport and when we look at accident causes, we can see many, many times that the ball gets rolling with diver errors that go uncorrected and then get out of hand.

These can be things like not watching air pressure, overweighting, not assessing conditions properly, ignoring medical issues, and more.

It sounds trite, but diving safety really does begin with you. And no one can be more responsible for your safety in the water than you. Every day before your first dive, review emergency procedures at least in your head if not with your buddy. Really assess the issues that could arise on a dive and how you'd deal with them. And take the old NAUI saying to heart: Plan Your Dive and Dive Your Plan.

SQUID RUN

This is the time of the year to start looking for the annual squid run and one of the best places to go search for them and their eggs is Veteran's Park in Redondo Beach.

If you're looking for the egg masses (sometimes described as "a carpet of eggs") you can do this dive during the day or at night. But if you want to see live squid and hopefully see some mating (and the demise that follows along with the scavenging) then you have to do the dive at night.

Either way, as you kick along the sandy bottom, you'll eventually - at a depth of about 30 feet - come to the slope that will lead you into Redondo Canyon. This is where

most of the action is. Cruise out to the 70-foot depth contour and make a choice to go left or right and hopefully, depending on when you do the dive, you may see squid burying their eggs inside the mass, mating, or see their carcasses (they die after they mate) littering the bottom. Either way, it's quite a sight to see.



THE ORCAS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

We wrote about them last month and here we are again: That pod of Orcas is still hanging around. Most of the time they seem to be down by La Jolla and Newport but they've come up as high as Palos Verdes. They seem to be following and feeding upon (nature at work) some schooling dolphins in the area. But whale watching boats, especially ones based in Orange County, have been having a field day and if you have an interest in seeing these magnificent creatures out in the wild, you've still got opportunity to do that. (Photo courtesy of Mike Couffer.)



WHO WANTS TO GO TO YAP???

The correct answer should be . . . EVERYONE!!!

We're going back to Yap in 2024. We will hope to avoid the rain-soaking that we got in 2023 but, as you know, it's the tropics so you're always going to get a little bit of rain. But September's a great time to visit because it's the start of some of the animal transitions, specifically the mantas as they move from one side of the island to the other. But no matter when you dive Yap, there's always something great to see on every dive.

As always, we'll be diving with our good friends Bill Acker and the crew of Manta Ray Bay. We'll actually be there for almost 12 days (arriving September 11 and leaving in the wee hours of September 22) and we'll get in 26 dives over the course of that time. Most days are 3-dive days with a cold pre-packed lunch served on the boat (lunch is included).

The lunches are surprisingly good. You pre-order the evening before and there are things like chicken or fish burritos, noodles, pizza, chicken, and a whole lot more to choose from. (And you can even somewhat order "off menu" to fit

your personal taste.) The usual plan is two dives, lunch on the boat, and then a third dive. The advantage of this is that you can stay at some of the more remote spots since you don't need to come all the way back to the resort to dine between dives.

I've already reserved our favorite Ocean View rooms in the aptly-named Ken Kurtis Wing (because I always take those rooms) up on the third floor providing great views of the bay. Breakfast daily is also included in our package so the only thing food-wise you need to worry about each day is dinner. You can have that on the Mnuw, their on-site sailing-vessel-turned-restaurant or there are a couple of places off-site that are within walking distance.

In addition to all of that, we'll schedule at least one Mandarinfish dive where we'll seek out these little dragonets who nightly at dusk come out of their hiding places to mate. It's quite a sight to see. And we'll finish the trip as we often do, with one of the most spectacular shark feeds you could ever hope for at a place called Vertigo.

So we've got mantas, sharks, Mandarinfish all lined up, and all

we need to add to this mix is you. Cost of this trip is \$3,895 and that covers the Ocean View room (double occupancy—single supplement may be available), both the Mandarinfish and shark feed dives, breakfast and lunch daily, airport transfers, generous crew tip, and all of the fun you can handle.

If you're interested in finding out more or in committing to going, you can either e-mail us at kenkurtis@aol.com or call us at 310/652-4990. We've been going to Yap almost every year since 2002 and we wouldn't keep going back if we didn't absolutely love what we experience there. Join us for this great experience!!!



2024 DIVING VACATIONS

March 18-22 • San Ignacio

May 18-25 • Roatan

July 8-19 • Indonesia

September 9-22 • Yap

NITROX CLASS RE-SCHEDULED

Due to my attack of laryngitis, the NAUI Nitrox class (via Zoom) has been pushed back one week and re-scheduled for Wednesday, February 7, starting at 7PM. If you'd like to join us, just give us a call at 310/652-4990.



HERE COMES THAT RAINY DAY FEELING AGAIN . . .

As a former radio disc jockey, I've got all kind of rain songs in my head: "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," "The Rain, the Park, & Other Things," "Don't Rain on My Parade," "I Wish It Would Rain," and more. And, of course, the classic by that notoriously liar Albert Hammond. Plus, I used to be the weekend weather guy for KABC-TV so I'm a forecast aficionado.

But the reality is that we're in what's known as an atmospheric river and that's going to affecting our rainfall totals in the near future and likely through the rest of winter. In El Niño years (and it appears 2024 is exactly that), the jet stream curves further south and that brings more rainfall to SoCal.

Specifically, we're going to get some rain on Thursday, get a break, and then prepare for the deluge.

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Wed.	Feb. 7	--- CLASS ---	--- NAUI Nitrox Diver ---	95
Thu.	8	Redondo/Vets	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE
Wed.	21	<i>Catalina Express</i>	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	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	180
Sat.	Apr. 13	Redondo/Vets	Taming Surf Entries	35

According to the forecasts, the second storm will arrive Sunday and then get ready for six days of sometimes torrential downpours. It looks like things will start back up Sunday afternoon or evening but Monday is the day we'll get walloped, with over 2" being predicted. Yikes!!!

From a diving standpoint, this will generally wipe things out. Wind usually accompanies rain and the predictions are that it will be swirling, alternating between coming from the east and then the west. That means there's a good chance of mucking up the beaches when it's out of the west and Catalina when it's out of the east.

On top of that for those of you who beach dive, regardless of the wave conditions, the runoff from the storms usually also brings elevated bacterial counts so that even if a place is diveable, it may not be a good idea to go in.

So the upcoming deluge offers a good chance to take a break, maybe get your gear service (call Robert at 310/947-8523 to schedule an appointment), or even get some more training (the postponed NAUI Nitrox class will be Wednesday, February 7). And if you need to be driving during the storm, pay attention to flooded areas and standing water. Don't try to drive through flooded areas as you may

suddenly find your car floating with you in it.

So hunker down and enjoy (or tolerate) Mother Nature's fury as best you can.



CHAMBER DAY IS COMING

As we hope you know, Chamber Day is the annual fundraiser for the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber that accounts for over 50% of the annual funds our Chamber needs. The date this year is May 1.

Although signups don't officially begin until March 1, Reef Seekers once again will be hosting a table of 10 at Chamber Eve (at the Aquarium of the Pacific) and we're happy to start taking names now so you can secure your spot. The overall event is limited to no more than 350 divers – other shops and clubs are also table sponsors – and it usually sells out. So don't get left behind.

You can send us an e-mail or call 310/652-4990 to reserve your spot. We'll get payment March once registration officially opens up.



CHECK YOUR PASSPORT

As people start traveling again, this is a good time to remind you that most countries now require that your passport be good for six months beyond your entry date into that country. If it's not, you might be refused boarding on the plane or – even worse – when you

land they lock you up and send you home on the first available flight. So make sure you know what's what.

The advice from the State Department is that if your passport is expiring sometime this year, renew it now. They've worked through the backlog so you can now get a renewed passport in 4-6 weeks (and you can pay for expedited service as well) So check your passport now, see when it expires, and decide if you should renew early.

Also give some thought when renewing to getting the larger 52-page passport instead of the standard one. There's no extra charge and, especially if you travel a lot, it'll come in handy. All you need to do is check the box.

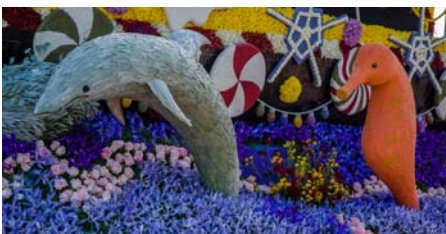


ROSE PARADE 2024

The Rose Parade usually has at least a few marine-themed floats and this year was no exception. In fact, it actually seemed like there were a few more this year than usual. It never fails to amaze me how realistic they can seem. As is my habit, I attended with my camera, and have some of those shots to share with you below.

PICTURE PAGE - Rose Parade marine animals

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2024)



Dolphin and Seahorse



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Cal Poly Moray Eels



A trio of flowerfish



Magnificent Manta Ray



Mom and calf Manatees