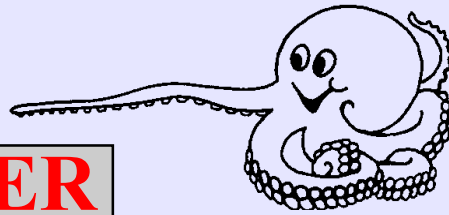


# THE REEF SEEKER



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February - 2025

## GOOD RIDDANCE JANUARY!!!

For a variety of reasons - some obvious, some more subtle - this has been a harrowing month to say the least. And I'm quite happy it's behind us. Let's hope this is as exciting as 2025 will get and that it wasn't a prelude to more outlandish things to come. Sheesh!!!



## AFTER THE FIRES

Again, our hearts go out to those of you who were directly affected by the January wildfires. (And it's tough on those indirectly affected as well.) The extent of the damage is simply astounding. And for those of you who don't live in SoCal, to see it in person is worse than what you've seen on TV. We can only imagine the turmoil, both mental and physical, that this must create for you. We know what a difficult time this must be for you and, while diving is likely not at the front of your concerns, we're here to help whenever you're ready.

Here are a couple of things to note:

- **REPLACING CERTIFICATION CARDS** – We've talked with both NAUI and PADI about this. For those of you certified in the mid-90s or later, your records were likely computerized and you can order replacement cards directly from either organization. For those certified earlier than that, there may not be an electronic record. In those cases, if you have a local instructor or shop who can vouch for you, both NAUI and PADI have said they can work with that to issue a replacement card. If you have an issues with this, or if we certified you and you can't remember if your instructor was NAUI or PADI (we taught both but you got one or the other, not both), give us a call at 310/652-4990 and we'll try to help you sort it out.

- **GEAR LOST IN THE FIRE** – If you need to replace gear that burned up in the fires, we'll do our best to help. We still deal with a number of manufacturers and will try to get you a good deal if you have to replace things. Just give us a call, let us know what you need, and we'll go from there.

- **GEAR ONLY DAMAGED IN THE FIRE** – If your gear survived the fires, it's a good idea to have it bench-checked before using it again. We are happy to do

that free of charge. Contact repair guru Robert Stark – his direct number is 310/947-8523 – and he can take a look at your reg, computer, or BC. We can also advise you about rubber products like mask, fins, wetsuits, and the like. Some or even all of it may still be good to use. If gear was exposed to ash and soot, it may only require a good rinse. Robert will let you know what's what.

- **IF YOU HAVE A TANK THAT WAS SURVIVED THE FIRE** – Anytime a scuba cylinder is exposed to extreme heat, it **MUST** be hydro-statically tested before being returned to service. So if you have any tanks that survived the fire and you want to use them again, even if they look OK externally, they still **MUST** be tested to see if they're safe to use. If they still have air in them, you can drain the air out (slowly) yourself. We can certainly take a quick look inside the emptied tank but will need to send it out for hydro. Unfortunately, we'll need to charge for this because we don't do the hydros ourselves and use an outside service. But we'll only charge you what it costs us.

If you have any questions about any of this as it pertains to scuba, please feel free to give us a call at 310/652-4990 and we'll do the best we can to advise you on how to safely proceed.



## **FREE IMAX FEBRUARY 3-9**

To help all of us recover from the mental anguish of the fires, and just to give you something to take your mind off of the aftermath, the California Science Center is offering all of their IMAX movies free of charge for a week. Here's the info from their press release:

“As the impact of the devastating wildfires continues to be felt across Southern California, from Monday, February 3 through Sunday, February 9, 2025, all movie showings at the California Science Center IMAX Theater will be free of charge for all guests, thanks to a collaboration with IMAX Corporation. Advanced reservations online are strongly recommended. For more information on showtimes and to make a complimentary reservation, please visit our website. Groups of 15 or more people should call (213) 744-2019 for reservations.”

Among the shows being offered are “Blue Whales – Return of the Giants – in 3-D.” There's also a show about the Blue Angels Navy flight squad, and one about deep space that looks pretty interesting. IMAX movies generally run around 45 minutes each and shows at the California Science Center run from 9:30AM-4:30PM with shows starting on the half hour.

## **FIRE AFTERMATH MAY AFFECT OCEAN HEALTH**

The long-term effects of the fires are still unknown but one thing that's come to the forefront is the question of how this will affect ocean health off of the coast.

During the height of the fires, there was an ocean research vessel on a routine mission and they were already noticing ash on the ocean surface. That in turn can affect the amount of light that's penetrating the water, as well as affect the water visibility itself. Those things may in turn affect kelp growth and fish health as well.

There's also concern about how much of what has burned may end up washing into the ocean when/if we get any rain. There's about an inch of rain being forecast for this coming Tuesday and Wednesday and that will create some runoff in the burn areas, some of which may wash down into the ocean itself. Over time, whatever washes into the water may then spread further throughout the ecosystem.

This past Thursday (January 30), the *L.A. Times* has a good front-

page article dealing with this issue. You can access it on-line at the *L.A. Times* website ( although it may be behind a paywall). But there are definitely concerns about the long-term effects of all of this, even to the point of wondering whether some toxins will leech into our beach sand over time.

As always, we'll share with you whatever we learn over time.

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## **THAR SHE BLOWS!!!**

We're still getting reports of lots of whales in the area. So if you've ever given some thought to do a whale-watching trip, now might be an ideal time. There are boats that leave out of all the major ports, including San Pedro and Long Beach, as well as Huntington and Newport Harbors. Give it some thought as a fun activity for half of a day.

The species that are being mentioned are mostly Humpbacks, with an occasional Fin Whale thrown in as well. And we should start getting some Grays. And if you're REALLY lucky... maybe an Orca or two or three.

## **2025 DIVING VACATIONS**

**March 1-9 • Easter Island #1**

**March 8-15 • Easter Island #2**

**June 28 - July 5 • Roatan**

**September 19-28 • Maldives**



## CHAMBER DAY 2025 IS COMING

The date of the event is Wednesday, May 7, and the website goes live on March 1. As you may know, this is a critical fund-raiser for our Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber, perhaps even more so this year.

Even during the height of the pandemic, your Chamber remained open and operational. So while other businesses may have been able to cut expenses during COVID, that's NOT the case with your Chamber. But, like any other business, our expenses continue to grow each year.

A quick case in point are solar-powered battery backup units that we need to buy for volunteer quarters and the Chamber itself in our big hanger. These generators are an unplanned expense and will likely run \$10,000-15,000.

Through the help of a grant from Los Angeles County, our Chamber opened on October 5, 1974, and had the first treatment a week later. But by the mid-80s there was regular talk of L.A. County removing their funding, which might have caused our Chamber to close. In 1988, loss of this funding seemed imminent. Roger Hess, owner of Charisma Charters, came up with the idea of all of the local

## UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	\$\$\$
Sat.	Feb 8	Veterans Park	Beach Diving Made Easy	35
Wed.	12	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180
Wed.	19	--- CLASS ---	--- TABLES/COMPUTERS ---	FREE!!!
Thu.	27	Veterans Park	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE!!!
Wed.	Mar 26	--- CLASS ---	--- PHOTO WORKSHOP ---	35
Sat.	Apr 5	Veterans Park	Navigation Made Easy	35
Wed.	9	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180
Thu.	24	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	35

boats getting together on a single specified day to go diving over at Catalina and tour the Chamber, with all the proceeds donated to the operating account of our Chamber. Thus, Chamber Day was born. (This is why we always refer to Roger as the Father of Chamber Day.) The first event was held in June of 1988 and raised a little over \$15,000.

In the years since, the event has grown tremendously, both in scope and participation. The financial success of the event has increased over the years as well. From our humble beginnings, we passed \$50,000 raised during the 90s. We made it past \$100,000 for the first time in 2006. We passed \$150,000 in 2021. As mentioned earlier, we are now within striking distance of the event raising \$200,000 for our Chamber. We can do it with your help.

Here's what we have planned for 2025:

- **CHAMBER DAY** – 2 dives and a walking tour of our Chamber and you'll get to be pressurized to a depth of 1-foot (yes, you'll have to clear your ears – makes no sense to us either)
- **THE FLYING DUTCHMAN** – Our FAKE BOAT for land-lubbers and those who can't take the day off or who no longer dive cold water
- **THE CHAMBER CHAL-**

**LENGE** – Direct donations to our Chamber

• **CHAMBER EVENING** – Sit-down dinner at the Aquarium of the Pacific in the Great Hall. The culmination of the entire event and has also earned the nickname "Scuba Prom."

• **JOIN US FOR VIRTUAL CHAMBER EVENING** – Watch from the comfort of your own home.

We'll have more specific details for you next month.

## GoPro 13

I've been playing with my new GoPro Hero13. The initial results are promising. It has better stabilization – a big plus when doing handheld shots underwater – and the overall videos look pretty good. The color looks pretty good, too. I did some shots with a reddish color-correcting filter and didn't like the result. Too red. So we shall see. I've also been using a fancy-schmancy close-focus wide-angle lens I got from Backscatter that helps make things look good. Very sharp and brings the closest focus point down to only a couple of inches, if that, in front of the add-on lens. My first chance to do extensive shooting with it will likely be on our Easter Island trip in March so we shall see. Keep an eye out for new videos.



## **AVALON UNDERWATER CLEANUP**

It's happening again and this year will be on Saturday, February 22. Once again, you're invited to join hundreds of other divers in this annual event that benefits both the Avalon Rotary (they're heading up a project to improve and beautify the Underwater Park) and the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber. The two groups split the net proceeds equally. It's also the only time of

the year that we're allowed to dive in Avalon Harbor itself.

Reef Seekers is officially one of the Green Pier dive sponsors so if you're interested in doing this event, you can sign up as affiliated with us. If you've never done this before, it's a 1-dive event and you'll also need to book your own Catalina Express ticket. (Unlike previous years, we are not offering a complete package for the event.) After the dive, you can either have your gear stored and attend the awards ceremony (1-3PM - I'll be MCing again) or you can go to the Underwater park and do some more diving.

To sign up, go to their website ([www.avalonharborcleanup.org](http://www.avalonharborcleanup.org)), tell them who you are, list your

Reef Seekers affiliation, choose a t-shirt size, pay, and you're good to go. And then we'll see you in Avalon on February 22.

## **WINTER DIVING**

Some people hang up their gear for the "winter" (January-March) in California but if you do that, you're missing some great dives.

The biggest thing to deal with is the cold. If you have a drysuit, use it. If you don't, get out of your wetsuit between dives, drink hot liquids, stay out of the wind, and do your best to prevent further loss of heat from your body core.

Winter diving has a lot to offer but you won't know what you're missing if you don't give it a try.

# **PICTURE PAGE - CLEANUPS PAST (2006)**

*(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2025)*



**Off they go at the Green Pier**



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**A less-than-graceful entry**



**The Kayak Patrol at the ready**



**Finding treasure!!!**



**The crowd awaits the awarding of raffle prizes**