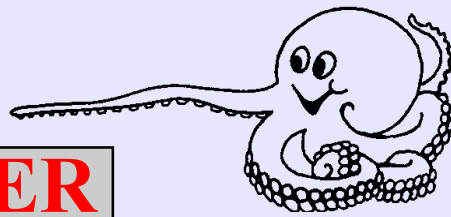


# THE REEF SEEKER



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May - 2023



## CHAMBER DAY 2023 IS THIS WEDNESDAY

We've been going at this for two months now and then end is in sight. We have closed off ticket sales for in-person Chamber Evening but there are still plenty of ways you can get involved if you haven't already. Best of all, we may even have an outside shot at exceeding last year's record amount for our Chamber. Here's what what:

### CHAMBER DAY

We've got spots left only on the Sundiver and Sundiver Express. You'll do two dives as well as a walking tour of our Chamber. Sundiver will do the tour first and then dive. Express will do their dives and then come in for the tour. All participating divers will receive a Chamber Day 2023 t-shirt, ten daytime raffle tickets, food and an airfill on the boat, and a walking tour of our Chamber facilities, which will include a chance to talk with various rescue and first-responders. The cost this year is again \$150. Both boats will leave at 7AM with Express back around 3:30PM and Sundiver around 5:30PM.

### THE FLYING DUTCHMAN – FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T TAKE THE DAY OFF

We've held the price for the Dutchman at \$95. You'll get the unique Flying Dutchman t-shirt (only available to those who sign up for the Dutchman) along with 10 daytime raffle tickets as well as a ticket for the "on-board" boat raffle as well. When you sign up, give us your "pirate" name and also indicate your regular shop/club affiliation (we'll post a running tally – there's also an "unaffiliated" option) and you're good to go.

### CHAMBER CHALLENGE

As of this writing, we're just a bit over \$123,000 for the Challenge alone, just shy of last year's record-setting amount. Can we set a new record? We can with your help. Every Challenge donation – big, small, and in-between – makes a difference. Please contribute whatever you can. We absolutely appreciate – and need – the help. Sign up on the event website: [www.chamberday.org](http://www.chamberday.org).

### ATTEND VIRTUAL CHAMBER EVENING AND TAKE THE WORRY OUT OF BEING CLOSE

As we have done for the past two years, we're offering a virtual version of Chamber Evening. This is perfect for those of you who either can't spend the evening in Long

Beach or who still aren't comfortable with this type of an indoor event.

Cost for the virtual version of the event is the same as the Flying Dutchman - \$95. Virtual attendees will get ten raffle tickets and will also be entered in the drawing for the Yap grand prize. Plus, you'll get a Chamber Evening t-shirt mailed to you (after the event) as part of your package. And because we want you to feel connected to what's happening at the Aquarium, you'll receive a private link to our live-stream of the event. So you can observe and enjoy from the comfort of your own home. Reef Seekers is sponsoring a virtual table.

So there you have it. Both in-person and virtual options for both the Day and Eve events. All the monies raised go to benefit our Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber, which in turn benefits our diving community. Think of this as your annual subscription fee to keep diving in SoCal safe. For more information about all of this, open your browser and visit our website at [www.chamberday.org](http://www.chamberday.org). You can sign up there using our secure server, or you can call Chamber Day HQ at (310)652-4990.

Mark your calendar for this Wednesday, May 3 and Chamber Day & Eve 2023.

## **STONY CORAL TISSUE LOSS DISEASE IS IN BONAIRE**

From the trip report . . .

The second wrinkle is a bit more serious and is likely to be on-going. That is the presence of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD) on some of the Bonaire reefs. SCTLD, also known as Wasting Disease, is a malady that's affecting many areas of the Caribbean. The effects are similar to the sea-star wasting disease that's affected many species of west coast stars like Sunflower stars and others.

Essentially, the coral looks bleached. But bleached coral, which happens when the host coral ejects the algae that gives it nourishment and color, can recover, SCTLD is thought to be fatal. Rather than white, the corals turn a white-ish shade of gray. So it's apparently visually distinguishable from bleaching.

I say "apparently" because we didn't see any coral affected by SCTLD. That's because the entity that oversees the Bonaire marine Park (STINAPA) has taken proactive steps to limit the spread of the disease. They've closed a number of central sites from Somethin' Special down to Bachelor's Beach by the airport. Reefs north and south of that, as well as the reefs on Klein Bonaire, are all still open. (This info is accurate as of 4/15/23. Because this is an evolving situation, you'll need to find out current status when you arrive in Bonaire if you have a trip planned.) They're keeping an eagle eye on things and have developed a color-

coding system of green/orange/red to indicate open/caution/closed.

The other proactive protocol they've instituted is mandatory gear dunking after every dive day and generally between dives as well. Whether it really helps or not is certainly debatable but it definitely doesn't hurt. You dunk (and soak for a bit if you can) first in water that's got chlorine bleach tablet added and then rinse everything off in regular fresh water. For our 2-tank boats dives each day, this meant your BC, regulator, weight belt or weights, mask, and fins got dunked. (Buddy Dive has small dunk buckets on each of their boats.) When you got back to the resort, you did those items plus your wetsuit, booties, and hood.

The other thing they ask you to try to do is only dive one area each day. So if you started north, stay north. If you go south, stay south. For Klein it gets complicated because Klein is only accessible by boat. And many times we followed our Klein dives with a Buddy house reef dive (which technically is north).

At this time, there's no known way to stop the disease from spreading on its own. So the goal of all of this

is to avoid cross-contamination. This is a lesson that was learned years ago with things like abalone wasting disease, where it was discovered that live wells and bilge water discharges helped the disease spread. It's also a technique used in many public aquariums, including here in L.A., where divers are required to rinse off and disinfect gear between dives so as to not take a disease in Tank A and transfer it to Tank B.

What SCTLD disease means for the future of Bonaire is unknown. If you are planning a trip there anytime soon – maybe in the next six months or so – you should find out what the situation is and determine how it might affect your diving. Since the prevailing current in Bonaire moves north to south, there's a school of thought that the southern areas might be most vulnerable to infection as Somethin' Special – which is in the middle of the island just south of Buddy Dive – is the northernmost of the affected sites. But there's a lot that's simply unknown about this at the time as this disease was first detected only a few months ago, in late March. Fingers crossed that this situation does not become worse and spread out of control.

### **2023 DIVING VACATIONS**

**July 10-23 • Yap**

**August 19-26 - Isla Mujeres**

**November 15-29 • Maldives**

**Where to in 2024???**



## SCUBA SHOW IN JUNE

June 3-4 to be specific. And it'll be held once again at the Long Beach Convention Center. If you've never gone before, you'll be amazed because it's pretty much the entire scuba industry under one roof, and with a focus on the consumer. And if you've gone before, there's always something new to see, whether it's new gear or a new destination to discover.

As usual, I'll be there and teaming up with L.A. Coroner Captain John Kades and Chamber Director Karl Huggins as we present our annual review of actual scuba fatalities that happened within L.A. County. (In case you didn't know, I'm the forensic consultant to the L.A. County Coroner for scuba fatalities.) The seminar is Saturday at 4PM and is called "Why Divers Die." We review real cases from the previous calendar year – there were two in 2022 – and give you the basic facts, what the Chamber did or didn't do, analyze it from a scuba gear and training standpoint, and then give the official results including the official cause of death. (Hint: It's not always just "drowning.")

There are plenty of other seminars held during the two days of the show as well. I think I'm scheduled to give two other talks – one on Fish ID and one on Tables & Computers – on Sunday but they're still finalizing the final schedule

## UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Wed.	May 10	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	<b>175</b>
Sat.	13	Redondo/Vets	Navigation Made Easy	<b>35</b>
Wed.	17	--- CLASS ---	--- Secrets of Fish ID ---	<b>35</b>
Wed.	June 7	--- CLASS ---	--- Photo Workshop ---	<b>35</b>
Wed.	21	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	<b>175</b>
Sat.	26	Redondo/Vets	Taming Surf Entirees	<b>35</b>
Thu.	29	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	<b>35</b>
Wed.	July 5	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	<b>175</b>

so I'm not sure exactly when or in what room(s).

But overall, it's a fun two days and there's a lot to see as well as a lot to learn. You can go for one day or do both. And as I mentioned, with pretty much the entire industry under one roof, you'll get a view of scuba diving unlike anything you've had before.

So make plans to join us in Long Beach in a little over a month. This is one dive you won't want to miss.



## GEAR SERVICE

Many of you take a break from diving over the cooler winter months and are just now ready to start getting back into the water. That means your gear took a break too. And it may not be as ready as you are to resume enjoying our sport.

Some people think that gear sitting around is no big deal because if it's not getting used, it's not wearing out. But sometimes NOT

using gear is actually worse for it than using it regularly because rubber tends to dry out, seats flatten, and the reg simply can go out of tune.

So this is as good a time as any to remind you that smart divers have their gear checked regularly. This doesn't mean you need to necessarily have a full service. But you should at least get a bench check done so a qualified repair tech can tell you either that everything's good-to-go or that your stuff needs some TLC.

Fortunately, Reef Seekers has a qualified repair tech in the personage of Robert Stark. Robert's been our guy since 2004 and knows his stuff. After we closed the store at the end of 2006, we liked what he was doing so much that we simply (and quite literally) took our entire repair room at 8612 Wilshire and moved it into his garage. Robert services just about every make of gear around and will give you a good rundown on the state of your gear, if it needs repair, and if so what needs to be replaced and why.

We're also very proud of the fact that we're one of the few operations in town that actually does repairs ourselves on-site. A lot of stores these days actually ship their repairs out to a consolidator who does the work and then returns it to them to give back to you. Now there's nothing wrong with that.

But the point is that if you were getting your gear done at store A and weren't satisfied, and switched to store B, if they use the same consolidator, you didn't really make a change or improve the quality of your repair service. With Robert, what you see is what you get. Plus, if we need to do a full service, we're happy to return the old parts to you, so you can see what was done and that we really didn't just put the old stuff back in your stuff.

The other advantage is that, since he works out of his home (just north of LAX near Lincoln/Manchester) you can arrange to pick up or drop off at odd hours. And if he's not there, we have a way for you to leave your stuff as well. So in the long run, it's actu-

ally more convenient for you as well as more convenient for him. And that's another reason why we can generally promise 7-day turnaround with faster service available for an extra charge. (And be sure to ask Robert about our "Concierge" service where he will come to you for pick-up and bring your stuff back when completed.)

So, whether or not you think your gear needs some attention, a session with Robert might do you some good. We've got a dedicated service number which is 310/947-8523. If he's not there, there's voice-mail as well.

So consider what your dive plans are and set up a session with Robert for at least a bench check. Your gear and your diving enjoyment will also thank you.

## AVALON TRIPS

My personal sked has been a little nuts lately, and Chamber Day certainly doesn't help. Because of all of that, I've bailed on a number of our monthly mid-week Avalon day trips as well as some of the beach dives that we have scheduled. I hope to do better with those in the coming months.

The Avalon trips are really nice if you have a Wednesday free. We usually leave from San Pedro and get in three dives with a break for lunch (we bring our own) after the second dive. If we time it right, we even have time for a 6PM snack at the little deli by the Express.

So keep an eye on the sked and I really, really will try to make these happen over the summer.

# PICTURE PAGE - From Chamber Day 2022

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2023)



**Talking to Baywatch**



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**Inside the Chamber hangar**



**USCG helicopter on the pad**



**Dinner at the Aquarium of the Pacific**



**The end result Wow!!!**