

THE REEF SEEKER



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June - 2017



CHAMBER DAY 2017 RESULTS

The short version: \$105,825.

We want to thank everyone for again pitching in to make Chamber Day a success. We had some pretty good participation this year with around 150 people diving during the day, another 100 signed up for the *Dutchman*, 125 people donating to the Chamber Challenge, and 400 people showing up at the Aquarium of the Pacific for Chamber Evening.

Interestingly, we've had a lot of donations come in after May 3. (We usually get some, but this year seems heavier.) We'll announce a final audited tally of everything by the end of June, but right now the total looks like it might be as much as \$5,000 higher due to some last-minute Challenge contributions.

And the bottom line is still that every dollar counts and every dollar helps keep our Chamber available to us 24/7/365. Thankfully, it doesn't get constant use (we average about 25-30 treatments per year as well as people who are brought to the Chamber who are "non-

treats" for various reasons) but that doesn't mean things aren't hopping. Because the only way they stand at the ready to respond to a diving emergency is to train regularly. Just this past weekend, they were doing a number of training runs, housing volunteers, and transporting them over and back. That all costs money so just because the Chamber isn't treating someone, that doesn't mean that it's a "free" weekend.

So thanks again for all of your support and remember to mark your calendars next year for Chamber Day #30 and Chamber Eve #20 - May 2, 2018.

DUTCHMAN SHIRTS

Just a reminder that we don't order the shirts for the Lost Crew of the *Flying Dutchman* until well after Chamber Day is over, which means we're usually placing the order sometime around the beginning of June. Then, allowing for time to get the shirts laid out and get proofs to us to approve, that takes some more time. Finally, the shirts are shipped to the Chamber on the island and each shirt is then individually packed and shipped.

The point is, this all takes time and the hope is to have your shirt to you no later than the middle of July. Thanks for your patience.



OIL SPILL AFFECTS BONAIRE

An oil spill in Trinidad is affecting the shoreline of Bonaire, mostly around the Sorobon/Lac Bay area it seems. Although there's not much diving there, that's the area known as the "Wild Side" so this might have some affect on a few sites. There are also reports that there's oil along the shores northward as well. But to be clear, this does NOT affect the prime Bonaire dive sites, which are all on the western side of the island, including Klein Bonaire.

The spill seems to have happened in late April in Trinidad, which is about 500 miles ESE of Bonaire. It's taken a month for ocean currents to move the remnants to the eastern shore areas of Bonaire. Initial reports said the spill was

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“only” 20 barrels, but that was then upgraded to 300 barrels (a little under 13,000 gallons). The Bonairean government on their STINAPA Facebook page says they’ve already disposed of close to 16,000 pounds of contaminated oil and debris. A special area for this has been prepared by the government, but also bear in mind that this is an island that asks you to take your used batteries home with you because they lack recycling facilities. A cleanup using volunteers is planned for this Saturday.

Given that this is also a time when the U.S. is considering pulling out of the Paris climate agreement, this relatively small problem illustrates how all of this is not simply confined to one nation or area. Everything’s intertwined through climate, weather, and other factors. As has been shown with the Fukushima nuclear accident, which was six years ago, traces of radiation from that can be detected along some parts of the western shores of the United States.

Nothing stands alone and we’re either all in this together or we’re not. Pollution knows not geographic boundaries nor political expediency. And while it seems that this is relatively minor in the overall scheme of the world, it could potentially be a wake-up call.

It’s also a good reminder of how easy it is to ignore things until something bad happens to something that we love, which prompts us to act. I can quote you shark bite statistics that say that only 5-6 people worldwide each year die from shark bites, but when it’s YOUR leg that the shark is chomping down on, that statistic becomes rather meaningless.



BLACK SEA BASS IN THE U/W PARK

It’s been quite wonderful to hear regular reports of Black Sea Bass sightings coming from the Avalon Underwater Park. There have always been two or three - and big ones at that - who seem to hang around, but lately there have been reports of as many as seven. Best of all, they seem to be unfazed by divers and a number of people have been able to do close approaches and get some nice pix or video.

You’ve got to wonder if they “know” they’re protected or “know” that the Underwater Park is an MPA. There are plenty of stories over the years of animals seemingly seeking refuge inside the boundaries of protected areas. I remember years ago in Florida, shortly after they’d established the first manatee sanctuaries in Crystal River, of marveling at how

these wonderful animals, when they had decided they’d had enough human interaction, would move just barely inside the float line, as if they “knew” that we were not supposed to come inside.

I’m in the process of reading an interesting book called “What a Fish Knows” which deals with perceptions that have been measured in various fish. (You can actually train them do things and to respond to certain stimuli.) And there may be a much higher awareness level than we would think.

In fact, during my weekly stints at the Aquarium of the Pacific, we regularly talk about how you can train, or perhaps “condition” is a better word, the fish to do something. In our case, it’s feeding at certain spots throughout the exhibit. But the reverse seems true as well.

We’ve got this one Golden Spadefish in the Tropical Reef exhibit who we call “Bubbles.” I call him (I assume it’s a he - I really don’t know) my “psychotic Spadefish.” Bubbles basically LOVES hanging in diver’s bubbles. In fact, with me (and I’m sure with others as well), he will hang right in front of

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2017 DIVING VACATIONS

July 7-19 • Yap Immersion #1

July 21 - Aug 2 • Yap #2

Sept. 1-6 • Isla Guadalupe

November 2-12 • Fiji

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me at a 45° angle to the exhaust of the Guardian mask. He'll stare me in the eye as if to say, "Exhale NOW!!!". When I comply, he darts through the exhaled bubble stream. If I don't react quickly enough, he nips me on the head. Of course, when I see him in front of me, I tilt my head slightly, he moves in, I exhale, he circles around and comes back. Who's training who?

But back to where we started, it's really nice to see big animals in the Park. If you've never experienced a BSB (aka Giant Sea Bass), it's something you really should do. The thing to remember is that if you approach them slowly, and don't make any sudden movements, they'll hang around. In fact, if you can get relatively close so they're aware of you but not so close that they feel threatened by you, and then you settle down, you may find in a minute or two that the BSB is the one moving in for a closer look at YOU.

Pretty cool. But when could you possibly have such an experience? Hmmmm . . .



DIVE THE PARK ON JUNE 24

Although this was originally scheduled for June 3, a personal schedule conflict has caused me to

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Sat.	June 24	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	\$150

JULY - in Yap the entire month

AUGUST - Might be able to sked something

SEPTEMBER - Gone the first week but good after that

I will get a sked together in a few weeks

change it to Saturday, June 24. We'll get in up to three dives, take a break for lunch, and hopefully see some of those fabled Black Sea Bass.

The plan will be to go over on the 8:45AM Catalina Express boat out of San Pedro (less crowded than leaving out of LB) and then will have a taxi take us over to the Park. We'll have tanks (included) waiting there for us so we'll be able to start diving right away. We'll make a choice between going to the left (open, sandy area) or to the right (the Pinnacles and a good spot to spot the BSBs) on the first dive, and then figure out what to do from there. We'll likely take a lunch break after dive #2 (the fuel dock restaurant should be open if the repairs have been completed) and then have time for dive #3. After that, it's pack up, call a cab, and make the 5:30PM boat heading back to San Pedro.

\$150 covers you for the boat, the taxis, the diving (with tanks included), and all the fun you can handle. Give us a call at 310/652-4990 to get signed up.



SHARKS ANYONE???

We've still got ONE (preferably male-share) opening on our September 1-6 Great White Shark trip out to Isla Guadalupe, 200+ miles SSW of Ensenada. Once again, we'll be diving on the fabulous *Nautilus Belle Amie*, which has to be the largest, most-spacious dive boat I've ever been on, and is the perfect platform for this diving, with FIVE cages available to view these magnificent beasts.

Obviously you'll can't predict what's going to happen but this will be our fourth trip out there and the last three have all been very good, with last year's trip being absolutely amazing, with numerous close encounters, lots of sharks, and plenty of smiling faces on the divers who went.

For those of you who have to count vacation days, the good news is that this is over the Labor Day Weekend, which saves you one vacation day. The bad news is that, because the trip starts on Friday

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and leaves from San Diego, you will have to brave pre-Labor Day traffic from L.A. to San Diego on that Friday. We don't need to be in SD until 7PM (a chartered coach then takes us to Ensenada) and I'm planning on leaving around Noon so the traffic won't be an issue.

Once we're on-board Friday evening, we'll leave around midnight and then it's a 20-hour ride out, which means we've got all day Saturday to deal with photo gear, plot strategy, see what the submerged-cage schedules are, and do everything we need to do to start diving Sunday morning at 8AM. We'll get in full days (cages are open basically 8-6PM each day) Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday with plenty of opportunities for

submerged cage dives (usually 9-12 over the course of the trip - each one around 40 minutes underwater) plus unlimited opportunities for the two surface cages with up to four divers per cage. With the ability to have as many as 20 divers in the water at once if all the cages are full, you'll have plenty of chances to observe sharks.

This is certainly not a cheap trip but it's justified when you realize the permits needed, equipment involved, and the extra personnel the boat has to make sure things run smoothly. Cost for the final spot is \$3,250 which covers you once you're in San Diego for the bus ride down, double-occupancy room on the boat and diving with meals, and then the bus ride back up. Port fee (\$65) and crew tip is

in addition to that.

If you're interested, give us a call at 310/652-4990. This is a fabulous trip and one of those once-in-a-lifetime ones that you should do.

LAPTOPS ON PLANES

We're watching very closely (and nervously) comments coming out of the administration about banning laptops in the passenger cabins on international flights. But they would be allowed in checked bags. Which begs the question: If you don't want them in the main cabin because a bomb could be concealed in one, why is it OK to let the same bomb ride in the cargo hold? Some of these "security" measures simply make no sense.

PICTURE PAGE - Favorite pix

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2017)



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Blue Ribbon Eel
Indonesia



Goregous corals
Isla Mujeres



White Cuttlefish
Yap



Pilot fish & Oceanic Whitetip
Red Sea