

# THE REEF SEEKER



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

June - 2021



## DARWIN ARCH COLLAPSES

Although we're all familiar with the saying, "All good things come to an end," I don't think anyone expected this.

On May 17 at 11:20AM local time, ironically while a dive boat was on-site as a coincidental witness (and certainly not the cause), Darwin Arch in the Galapagos had its middle section collapse into rubble. The presumed cause is natural erosion over time. That anyone was there to see it – and testify that it was natural, not human-caused – truly is an amazing coincidence. But time and wind take their toll, even on rock. So an iconic symbol of the Galapagos is no more.

What's left standing are the two pillars that held up the middle and because of that, there's a move afoot to now refer to the formation as "Pillars of Evolution," which

seems to us like a good choice for a new name.

We visited the Galapagos in 1996 and spent two days at Darwin. It was not only good diving, but a very impressive rock formation as you approached and, in fact, IS the dive site there. There's a shelf about 40 feet deep in front of the Arch/Pillars and at the edge of that shelf, you sit and watch the Hammerhead parade go by.

This shouldn't affect the diving at all, but it's a tremendous cultural loss for the Galapagos.



## CHAMBER DAY 2021 RESULTS

Simply amazing. We set a new record this year, in fact blasted last year's new record to smithereens, with an announced total on May 5 of \$167,757!!! (That number will likely increase slightly with after-

event donations. We'll release a final, audited total in a few weeks.)

We ended up with 62 "divers" on our virtual daytime boats, 134 people on the Dutchman, 231 "diners" for Chamber Eve, 183 t-shirts sold, and an astounding Challenge amount of \$113,493.

Both Karl Huggins and I thank you quite sincerely as we not only appreciate your continued support, but this year's total exceeded our wildest expectations.

Mark your calendars for next year when hopefully everything is back to normal, even if it's the new normal. Chamber Day 2022 will be Wednesday, May 4.

## READY TO GET WET?

As summer gets going, you will naturally be eager to get back into the water after such a prolonged layoff. But this is your gentle reminder that – regardless of your certification level or the numbers of dives you've made – being out of the water for so long takes its toll. Treat your first day back (or even two) as a refresher course. Take it easy. Review and practice skills. Maybe even dive with an Instructor or Divemaster. But take note of the fact that it's likely been a year or more since you last dove and respect that.

## **GUADALUPE ANYONE???**

Although the world is slowly opening back up, it's still hard to find places to go. One of the most reliable has been Mexico. And although the Mexican government had initially announced that they would not re-open Guadalupe Island in 2021, they changed their minds and, as of July 1, it's all systems go. That means that if you've got a hankering to go nose-to-nose with a Great White Shark – from inside a cage of course – the opportunity is there once again.

We've made four previous trips to Guadalupe and would love to do a fifth. We would once again be on the *Nautilus Belle Amie*, which is simply the nicest dive boat I've ever been on. And it's PERFECT for Guadalupe with not only a lot of room, but FIVE cages from which to do the dives.

These are 6-day trips. Day 1 we get down to San Diego, park, and then a luxury coach shuttles us down to Ensenada, where we board the boat and depart. It's about 20 hours to get to Guadalupe, so Day 2 is an at-sea day, which is actually quite relaxing. Days 3, 4, and 5 are all full-day caged shark dives. You're guaranteed at least three submerged cage dives each day and I think one day I actually did six. At the end of day 5, we pull anchor and start heading home. Day 6 is partially at sea (arriving Ensenada early afternoon), and then the luxury coach takes us back up to San Diego and we head for home.

This is a very unique kind of trip and generally a bucket list one for most people. While we can't "guarantee" sharks, I've never been

skunked. And many times the sharks come within a foot or so of the cage. It's really an amazing opportunity to get a close-up view of this top predator and I can promise you'll come away with a different perspective on Great Whites than you had before the trip.

It ain't cheap but the pricing makes sense. Unlike most dive trips you've been on, where the crew actually gets a bit of a break when we go off to dive, the crews for these trips are working non-stop. Because they have to keep a DM in each submerged cage, plus have someone running the winches, as well as deck support, galley support, and relief crew, it's a very labor-intensive trip (and this doesn't even factor in the bus ride down from San Diego, which is also included).

Cost for the trip payable to me will be \$3,945, which includes the boat (with food and air), the round-trip luxury coach from San Diego and back, and the crew tip. The room is the standard lower-deck stateroom (very stable ride), double-occupancy. If you'd like to upgrade to a Superior room (second deck, bigger room, nice view - based on availability), add \$525. On top of

this, there's usually a \$65 port fee as well as a national park fee. Mexico tripled this park fee January 1 from \$25/day to \$75/day. Because of this, on Guadalupe trips, Nautilus is eating the port tax so you only pay the \$225 park fee in addition to what you'll pay me.

The other nice thing about this trip is that because the diving in all the cages is on hookah (unlimited air supply), you don't need your full complement of gear. Wetsuit (3mm or 5mm) and booties, maybe a hood, and your mask. No need for BC, reg, or fins. Weight harnesses with plenty of weight – to really hold you firmly on the floor of the cage – are also included.

I need at least five people to make this trip happen. I'm looking at two different dates: July 17-22 or November 4-9. (And if there are enough people for each, I'm happy to run two trips.) If you're interested, let me know as soon as you can so I can have them set aside spots for us. Either e-mail me at [kenkurtis@aol.com](mailto:kenkurtis@aol.com) or call 310/652-4990. And if you decide to go, get ready for an adventure that you'll remember for the rest of your life.

### **2021-22 DIVING VACATIONS**

**July &/or Nov • Guadalupe?**

**March 11-20 • Socorro**

**May 20-28 • Bonaire**

**July • Indonesia or Yap ??**

## BONAIRE IS OPEN AGAIN

Bonaire has announced they're now open to tourists. Arriving passengers will have to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 NAAT test taken within 24 hours of your departure. Vaccination alone doesn't cut it, since you could be an asymptomatic carrier. (And since Bonaire apparently only has five ICU beds, you can understand why they're being cautious.) No quarantine is required. The curfew has been lifted and it seems like most places are getting back to "new normal" with some COVID mitigation measures (social distancing and the like) still in place. Obviously, that will all change – hopefully for the better – over time.

Although the island is open now, airline flights from the United States don't resume until next weekend (June 5). Even then, only Delta (from Atlanta) and American (from Miami) will be running. United has said it will not resume service until November (Houston and Newark).

If anything changes in a major fashion, we'll let you know.



### OUR BONAIRE TRIP RE-SKEDDED . . . AGAIN

But this one we think will work.

We originally were going in May of 2020. That got pushed back to

## UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Wed.	June 9	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	<b>\$160</b>
Wed.	23	-- CLASS --	TABLES & COMPUTERS	<b>FREE</b>
Sat.	26	Redondo (Vets)	Navigation (single dive)	<b>\$25</b>
Thu.	July 1	Redondo (Vets)	••• Night Dive •••	<b>\$25</b>
Wed.	7	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	<b>\$160</b>
Sat.	24	Redondo (Vets)	Beach dive (single dive)	<b>\$25</b>
Wed.	28	-- CLASS --	PHOTO WORKSHOP	<b>\$25</b>
Thu.	Aug. 12	Redondo (Vets)	••• Night Dive •••	<b>\$25</b>

August, which got pushed to May of this year, and now we've decided to push it to May of next year. The exact dates are May 21-28. (From LAX, it probably means leaving the evening of May 20.) We're still staying at Buddy Dive in their lovely 2-bedroom apartments which also means we'll have a vehicle for each unit. We're planning on 9 boat dives and as much shore diving as you can handle. Plus, we'll do our dusk dive each night on Buddy Reef prior to dinner.

Best of all, we're able to keep the pricing at the same rate as it was for the initial trip in 2020: just \$2,250/person. That includes the room with breakfast daily, the diving (with tanks & weights – nitrox if you're certified), crew tip, and Bonaire airport transfers.

Most of the people who signed up for the initial trip in 2020 are still going but we generally keep these groups small, no more than 10-12 divers, and often fewer than that. If you're interested, let us know. And if it's been a while since you've been wet, Bonaire is a great place to get your gills back.



## CDC APPROVES AT-HOME COVID TEST FOR TRAVEL

So the good news is that the CDC has just (early May) approved the use of a self-test/home-test for any passengers coming into the United States. But don't start jumping up and down yet because it gets a bit more complicated.

The major complication is that the test must be done during a telehealth call with a medical professional authorized by the manufacturer to supervise the test.

So I think the problem here is going to be that if you're somewhere remote where telephone calls to the U.S. can't easily be placed (Socorro, Guadalupe, or places many time zones away), this may not be of much help. And some of the authorized tests have to be mailed to a U.S. laboratory. On top of that, there's no guarantee that the country you're visiting will accept this type of test for your in-bound flight.

The point is all of this is that if you're travelling internationally – this requirement doesn't apply domestically – be sure you clearly understand the test requirements for the country you're visiting, and make sure you can get the correct and proper test to come back into the U.S. so you can get home.

# ZOOM SEEKERS JUNE 15 MARTY SNYDERMAN

Marty will be our Zoom Seekers guest speaker on June 15 (one week later than we normally do it) and he'll be talking about "Finding & Photographing Fishes & Their Behaviors," starting at 7:30PM. (We'll send out the specific Zoom link a few days before the talk.)

No doubt about it, the amazing diversity in the world of fishes is a feature that brings many people to diving. But there is a lot more to enjoying the world of fishes than just seeing them and moving on. Learning where and when to look for different species, watching fishes go about their daily lives, gaining some understanding of

their nuanced behaviors, and photographing them can add a lot of fun to your diving. Certainly, photographing fishes well is an endeavor filled with challenges. But it is also very educational in terms of getting to know Mother Ocean, and it is a lot of fun and extremely rewarding when you capture the images you have in mind. In this "Zoominar," Marty will share insights into how to find various fish species in the reef communities and in the muck at the Atlantis resorts at Dumaguete and Puerto Galera in the Philippines. He'll also delve into behaviors, and give his thoughts and techniques about what he does to try to capture his fish photographs. He's been trying to get those perfect shots for almost 50 years. There will be Q & A. In addition, Marty will tell us

about his latest endeavor, teaching one-on-one, customized classes in underwater photography using Zoom software.

Marty was born in landlocked Little Rock, Arkansas, and decided to pursue his dream of chasing fish with a camera during while at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. He got his scuba industry start working at the legendary Dive Locker in San Diego. Marty was honored with the 2018 NOGI Award in the Arts by the Underwater Academy of Arts and Sciences, won an EMMY for cinematography, is the 2008 recipient of DEMA's prestigious Reaching Out Award, and is the Marine Life Editor for *Dive Training* magazine as well as serving as Senior Editor for *California Diving News*.

## PICTURE PAGE - Guadalupe

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2021)



**Our greeter**



P.O. Box 634  
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

[WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM](http://WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM)



**Close enough for you?**



**Lowering the middle submersible cage**



**Our underwater viewing home**



**Topside action as well as underwater**