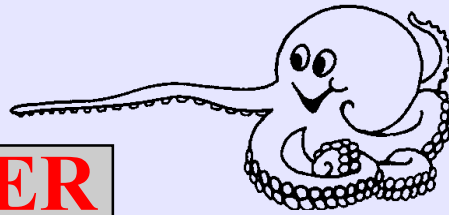


THE REEF SEEKER



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June - 2026



THE LONG BEACH SCUBA SHOW

I have just returned from Day 2 of the annual Scuba Show at the Long Beach Convention Center where I was one of the panelists for our annual "Why Divers Die" discussion. Usually I'm asked to give two or three other individual talks as well but this year – the show's under new ownership – I wasn't asked for anything more. All of that is a caveat to admit that my ego's a bit bruised and that may color my perspective of the show. That being said . . .

Hopefully you had a chance to make it to the Long Beach Convention Center over the weekend and took in the annual Scuba Show, which was held Saturday and Sunday. There were definitely some changes that those of us who exhibit or speak noticed and changes that the general public noticed as well. (One of which was the strict enforcement, at least on Saturday, of "No outside food and no outside beverages can be brought in.")

One big change was that there was a steep increase in the admission price, which was \$33/day. But that

was offset by the fact that now all the seminars and speaker presentations were included, whereas previously you had to buy a separate admission for those.

By the same token, I didn't feel the seminars were as well-publicized as in the past. I fully understand that this is an exhibitor-driven show and people going to seminars aren't going to be browsing the show floor. But it's also supposed to be a consumer-oriented show and the seminars offer a really good opportunity, from a diverse group of speakers, to educate yourself about other aspects of diving and just in general improve your diving perspectives.

There were two speaker stages located within the exhibit hall area, and three more upstairs at the end of the Promenade. We gave our annual "Why Divers Die" talk on Saturday (it was well-attended with over 100 people in our Promenade room) but you had to make an effort to see the talks that weren't in the main exhibit hall as (IMHO) the signage was a bit sparse.

The two stages in the main hall seemed well-attended on Saturday, not so much on Sunday (as far as I could tell). The best-attended talk Saturday was from Chris Lemmons. He's the UK commercial diver whose surface-supplied air hose was accidentally cut while

330 feet deep on a 2012 dive, and who miraculously survived despite the fact that the ship he was working from was blown off the dive site and he was without breathing gas for over half an hour. This riveting tale was made into both a documentary and movie called "Last Breath." (I've seen the Woody Harrelson movie and it was quite good and realistic.)

But an issue with anyone speaking on the main stage was that they had to compete with the general din and noise of the exhibit floor. And for someone like Chris, who attracted a standing-room-only crowd, the extra people were blocking the aisles. Not good for those who wanted to browse the booths. Plus I thought it was difficult to hear the main stage speaker unless you were fairly close.

There were a number of dive shops and manufacturers there showing off their wares, the training agencies were represented, but the travel industry definitely dominates the landscape. You had numerous individual operations there as well as some regional representation as well. And if you wanted to book a trip or just get some great info about a destination, there was plenty of information available.

The show this year was in the larger of the three exhibit halls and the new owners, who are from the UK

and run two other international dive shows, mixed things up a bit with a different set of speakers, and even the booth layout was a bit different. You used to have long aisles with maybe one perpendicular cut-thru aisle. This year, there were three or four cut-through aisles and the overall space was bigger. Saturday was certainly very well-attended but Sunday seemed to be about half as busy. Historically, Sunday is always a little less busy than Saturday but this seemed like a steeper drop-off than usual.

My personal gripe, which is out of the control of the show, was the parking. If you parked by the Hyatt Hotel and show entrance, that was going to set you back \$46. I parked on an uncovered lot adjacent to the convention center but even that was \$24. There used to be some city-controlled parking for \$10 but I didn't investigate to see if that was still the case. I did see one "Event Special" rate of \$16. And a few people told me they even managed to find some street parking which was free.

But overall, it seemed like another successful show. The Scuba Show has always billed itself as the largest consumer-oriented dive show west of the Mississippi and it certainly seems likely to hold that title. But there will be change in the wind as it seems the Long Beach Convention Center will not be available to host next year's show, due to the start of various construction projects in Long Beach for the 2028 Olympics. Word is that the show next year (and I would guess 2028 as well) is going to move to Anaheim. The dates are slightly earlier in the month with May 15-16 being what I was told.

DIVING SEASON IS UNDERWAY

The problem with the headline is that we can (and do) dive California all year round. But many people still think of Memorial Day as the "start" of the summer diving season so here we are. And if that's your mindset, there's nothing wrong with that but there are a couple of things to think about:

- When was your last dive? If it's been a while, you might want to think of doing a quick formal refresher class (just about every dive shop in the area offer them) or joining us on one of our escorted and guided Avalon day trips.
- Your gear needs to be in tip-top shape too. If you haven't had it serviced lately, take it our repair guru Robert Stark and he'll get your equipment working the way it should be. Robert can also do bench checks to get an idea of whether or not your gear needs full servicing. But the peace of mind this will give you on that first dive is worth whatever time and money is involved.
- Will you be diving new places? Talk to someone who's been there

to get a feel for things. Maybe it's a new beach or maybe you've never dove the Avalon Underwater Park. Don't just rush into this blindly.

- Along that same line of thinking, Reef Seekers offers numerous half-day beach experiences (usually at Redondo's Vets Park) which can include dealing with surf entries, navigation, night dives, and more. Give some thought to doing one of these classes to improve your diving knowledge and increase your comfort level.
- The final thought is an easy but perhaps not as obvious one: Read. There are plenty of dive publications out there (including this monthly newsletter and the weekly TWARS) and by staying up on what they're saying, you're keeping your brain engaged and in "diving" mode. That's a good thing. Because the more mentally tuned-in you are, the less likely it is that something might go wrong and, if it does, the more likely it is that you'll be prepared to deal with it.

If you have questions or need guidance, we always happy to help. Just give us a call at 310/652-4990 and let us know what's on your mind.

2026-2027 DIVING VACATIONS

July 1-13, 2026 • Indonesia

Sept. 1-26, 2026 • Philippines

February (?) 2027 • Saba

July/Aug, 2027 • Dive & eclipse



LEAVING FOR INDONESIA JULY 1

We're really looking forward to going back to see our friends at Murex in Manado, Indonesia July 1-13. Other than that we've loved diving there since 2001, we're also looking forward to seeing all the improvements they've made since we were last there in 2024. They've added new bungalows, re-done some of the public areas, and even built an entirely new camera room. (Yay!!! No more little camera closet by the pool. Although the bathroom was convenient.)

Be sure to follow us on FaceBook as we'll be posting our daily Top 10 Pix during the entire trip as well as giving you brief updates on what we're seeing and experiencing. Remember that any time you can't join us in person, we hope to have you with us vicariously.

2027 TRAVEL SKED

I've been woefully remiss in laying out our travel plans for 2027. One issue, totally on me, is that I've been working on this idea of the around-the-world diving trip that culminates in Luxor, Egypt, on August 2 to experience the total solar eclipse that will sweep through there.

My hope is to deal with our 2027 sked during the month of June and

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED ACTIVITY	\$\$\$
Sat.	June 6	Veterans Park	Beach Diving Made Easy	25
Wed.	10	--- CLASS ---	--- PHOTO WORKSHOP ---	25
Thu.	18	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	25
Wed.	24	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180
Sat.	July 18	Veterans Park	Navigation Made Easy	25
Wed.	22	--- CLASS ---	--- NAUI Nitrox ---	75
Sat.	Aug. 1	Veterans Park	Surf Entries Made Easy	FREE!!!
Wed.	5	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180

have it all laid out for you – but likely not the Egypt stuff yet because we still can't get hotel commitments – by the end of this month. I'm generally thinking we'll sked a couple of 7-day Caribbean trips. Because some Pacific destinations are on the radar for the massive eclipse trip, I may not do any Pacific-only trips next year. But . . . ya never know. My general plan is that we go where you want us to go.

So apologies for dragging my fins on this. My excuse is that Chamber Day required more time than usually this year but the bottom line is that we need to get this stuff in place so you can plan as well. So hopefully over the next weeks, we'll roll all of this out for you.



SHARKS HELP METEOROLOGISTS

Well, maybe that's a bit of a stretch but it's true that sharks are being

used for better weather predictions. It's small-scale right now but shows potential.

As you may know, the oceans are a major driver of weather all around the world. But getting data from the oceans, needed to provide accurate weather predictions, can be difficult. So scientists, in a relatively small-scale experiment, have tagged 18 blue sharks and one mako off of Long Island (NY) and Cape Cod (Mass.) and are collecting water temperature data as the sharks meander and roam and go about their normal daily routines. They've recorded 8,200 observations which have resulted in reducing forecast error rates by as much as 40%. (I used to do the weather for KABC-TV in the 80s and I can tell you that that is a significant improvement.)

Forecasters get significant info from satellites and buoys but the shark data fills in knowledge gaps, especially from these specific sharks who tend to travel longer and deeper, giving a fuller picture of ocean temps and currents.

This is all considered “proof of concept” at the moment so the next thing to do would be to scale it up significantly. But it's certainly an interesting notion and yet another example of how sharks can be good guys (and gals) and quite helpful in giving us a better understanding of our planet.

UNUSUAL CRITTERS ARE COMING

We've written a number of times about the likelihood of an El Niño this year and what that might do to kelp and the overall health of the SoCal ecosystem. But there's an unintended benefit to El Niños sometimes and that's that you start to see critters you don't normally encounter in our waters.

The most notable of these is the Scythe Butterfly. As best we can tell, they migrated north in the early 80s and a number of them established themselves around Crane Point at Catalina (slightly below the Isthmus area). Obviously, the fish that came here over 40 years ago have long since died so the ones we see now are their

offspring as these animals settled in and adapted to California waters, even when it got a bit chillier. But there have also been sightings reported at Ship Rock and around Blue Cavern as well.

There was an Aquarium team out last week diving that area and they decided to specifically look to see if they could find any of the Scythes and were quite pleased to find a number of them. They said they were able to count 16 individuals flitting about.

In addition to that, they also spotted some Guadalupe Cardinalfish, a small (1-inch long) reddish fish that normally hangs out under overhangs and in crevices or caverns. During another El Niño in the mid-90s, we started seeing them at the southern end of San Clemente Is-

land and then were able to track their migration as they moved up Clemente and eventually made it over to Catalina as well.

A third visitor we've spotted in the past are Arrow Crabs. These spindly little guys (only a couple of inches long) hang out on corals or sea fans and try to grab whatever morsel is passing by. And they're definitely not native to California.

So keep an eye out for these guys next time you're diving. I've seen both the Guadalupe Cardinalfish and the Arrow Crabs in the Avalon Underwater Park. One technique to spot them is to mentally decide to ignore everything else and just focus on looking for these animals and check the places where they might be. It makes for a fun scavenger hunt.

PICTURE PAGE - Fish Faces

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2026)



Boxfish
(Easter Island)

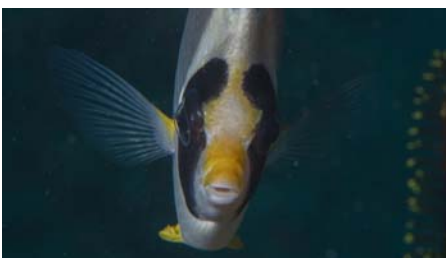


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Manta Ray
(Maldives)



Butterflyfish
(Philippines)



Elegant Dartfish
(Palau)



Curious Grouper
(Roatan)