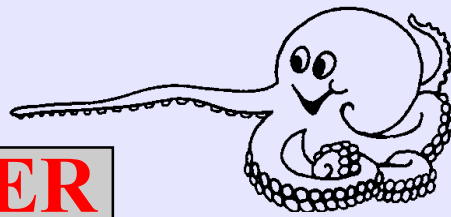


# THE REEF SEEKER



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)

July - 2024



## **BERYL BARRELS TOWARDS CARIBBEAN**

Hurricane Beryl is churning in the Atlantic and is poised to start wrecking havoc within the next few hours. Not only is this a major storm – projected to eventually become a Category 4 – but it’s also the earliest major hurricane in many years. Usually, storms of this magnitude don’t appear until mid-August but warmer water surface temperatures have apparently created a situation that encourages earlier formation.

It looks like Tuesday and Wednesday will be the most dangerous days. After it crosses the Windward Islands and heads into the Caribbean basin, it will pick up strength and looks to be skirting just south of Jamaica and then south of the Cayman Islands. Bonaire and Roatan may be on the fringes of the wind field. But then it takes aim at the Yucatan Peninsula and is projected to come ashore somewhere between

Cozumel and Belize Friday morning.

Some of the extended models, which can be highly inaccurate, then have it potentially turning north, crossing the Gulf of Mexico, and making landfall again in the U.S. somewhere between Houston and New Orleans.

Meteorologists were already predicting an overly-active hurricane season and are pointing to Beryl as an indicator that those predictions may come true. NOAA has predicted 8-13 hurricanes this year compared to an average of 5-7 during hurricane season, which runs June 1 – November 30.

Keep an eye on this but the bottom line is that if you’re planning a Caribbean trip this week or next, check the forecast for your destination to see if you’re literally flying into the heart of the storm. Better safe than sorry.

## **MPAs NEED YOUR INPUT**

As many of you know, I’ve been involved in the MPA process here in California for close to 15 years now, serving on a couple of state committees that have made recommendations to the CADF&W. Now it’s your turn to have some say, as it’s decadal review time,

which means that every ten years, F&W takes a look at the MPAs to see what’s working, what’s not, and listen to what changes are being proposed.

The draft proposals will go under discussion at a public meeting on July 17 and there are documents you can review as well. Since these require links to a URL, consider this your heads-up. Next week in TWARS, I’ll give you the specific URLs if you’d like to participate.



## **MANATEE STAMPS**

I’m always on the lookout for marine-related U.S. commemorative stamps so was quite happy to go into the Beverly Hills Post Office the other day and see that one of the options were manatee stamps, pictured above. Manatees are mainly found in Florida, on both the Atlantic and Gulf sides of the state, and are probably most famously known as being the official animal of Crystal River (where we used to run regular trips). Pick up a sheet the next time you need stamps. (Also be aware the USPS is raising postal rates to \$0.73/ounce starting July 14.)

## **FLORIDA SHARK BITES SPIKE**

Although we usually talk about the rarity of shark bites, three bites in Florida in the last week undermine that narrative. The most recent was this weekend, when a boater who had been bitten on his arm radioed a distress call. He's in critical condition but is expected to survive. There were no details on how someone in a boat got bitten by an animal in the water. (My guess – pure speculation – is that he was either fishing and reached down to grab his catch, or perhaps hooked a shark and was trying to release it when he got the bite.)

Although this happened on the Atlantic side slightly north of Jacksonville, earlier this month three people on the Gulf side of Florida were bitten within hours of each other. These incidents occurred on the western part of the Florida panhandle, near Panama City. All of these folks are expected to survive as well, although one woman had her arm amputated.

Scientists have expressed the opinion that this is not due to a lack of food in the waters but is a result of increases in tourism and more people in the water. I really hate to use the word “attack” since most of the time this is a case of mistaken identity that results in a single bite and then the shark leaves once it realizes the mistake. That being said, Florida accounts for more bites/attacks than any other place in the world with 16 of them in 2023. That represents almost 50% of the total for the U.S. and almost 25% of the worldwide total.

In case you were wondering where California stands in all of this,

here are the stats from 2023:

Florida – 16  
Hawaii – 8 (1 fatal)  
New York – 4  
North Carolina – 3  
California – 2 (1 fatal)  
South Carolina – 2  
New Jersey – 1

The fatal California attack occurred on October 1 at Point Reyes, north of San Francisco. The victim was in chest-deep water when a shark (apparently a Great White) breached and grabbed him. It should also be noted that Point Reyes is within what's called the Red Triangle – Bodega Bay to the Farallon Islands then down to Big Sur – which has a high concentration of Great Whites due to an abundance of marine mammal prey in that same area.

And this leads to . . .

---

### **SHARK WEEK IS JULY 7-13**

I've become quite disillusioned with Discovery Channel's Shark Week over the past few years. It started out with what seemed to be sensationalized sharks-are-evil programs but then took a much

more reasonable approach to sharks and stopped portraying them as mindless eating machines. But in the past few years, they've veered back to sensationalism, as evidenced by these titles from their 2024 schedule:

“Deadliest Bite”  
“Monster of Oz”  
“When Sharks Attack”  
“Mothersharker: Hammer Time”  
“Makozilla”  
“Great White Serial Killer: Sea of Blood”  
“Monster Hammerheads: Species X”  
“Great White Danger Zone”  
“Shark Attack Island”

Perhaps the weirdest title is this one, airing on July 10:

“Sharks vs. Nazis in Paradise”

National Geographic Channel (and their affiliates) seem to take a slightly more reasoned approach with their annual “Sharkfest” shows, which begins tonight (Sunday, June 30) and runs at various times through August.



### **2024-25 DIVING VACATIONS**

**July 8-19 • Indonesia**

**September 9-21 • Yap**

**November 3-10 • Palau**

**WHERE TO IN 2025?????**

## LEAVING FOR INDONESIA NEXT WEEK

We're putting the finishing touches on our Indonesia trip, which is officially July 8-19. I say "officially" because this has become one of the most logistically complicated trips we've ever done.

The trip itself is fairly easy: LAX-Singapore non-stop, short layover, then SIN-Manado non-stop, end up at the resort about two hours later. It's a lot of travel – about 24 all told – but relatively straightforward. We've got 17 people on this trip. However . . .

Two of the people are going into Manado four days early, two others are going in two days early, one guy's already in Indo and will meet us at the resort, two others will be in Singapore five days early. And this is just at the beginning of the trip. At the end, two people are going to a different Murex resort (Bangka), three are doing a land tour and then ending up at the Lembeh Resort, and another is forgoing the land tour and also going to Lembeh but will catch up with the other three. Oh yeah: And while all this is happening, eleven of us are flying back to Singapore and then heading in three different directions once we land. Yikes!!!

But all of this underscores why, when you decide you want to travel, you want to do it with Reef Seekers. We've been able to coordinate just about all of this "extra" stuff and make sure that people are picked up, met early, have trip extensions, and more. It's simply part of how we think trips ought to be run. We'll tell you what the general plan is and, if you need to

## UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Sat.	July 6	Redondo/Vets	Taming Surf Entries	<b>35</b>
Thu.	25	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	<b>35</b>
Wed.	31	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	<b>180</b>
Sat.	Aug. 10	Redondo/Vets	Beach Diving	<b>FREE</b>
Wed.	14	--- CLASS ---	--- Secrets of Fish ID ---	<b>35</b>
Wed.	28	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	<b>180</b>
Thu.	Sept. 5	Redondo/Vets	••• Night Dive •••	<b>FREE</b>
Sat.	7	Redondo/Vets	Navigation	<b>35</b>

modify that, you let us know what you want to do and we'll figure out a way to get it done.

So the next time you're thinking about dive travel, make sure you take a good look at whatever we have planned and see if it fits into your wants and desires.

## WORDS I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SAY

Both of our Maldives trips for 2025 are sold out.

Say what????? Yup. Surprised me as much as it might surprise you. (But again, bragging a little bit here, it underscores how much fun it is to travel with Reef Seekers.)

We've got the Manthiri booked for back-to-back trips on September 19-28 and then September 29 – October 8, all next year (2025). The Manthiri only takes 12 divers total and it's not a cheap trip (\$5,990 all in). Sometimes price, plus the fact that the trip is two weeks with the travel factored in, tends to reduce the pool of people available to go.

Not this time. In fact, we have eight people (including me) who are going to do BOTH trips. And that makes sense. The airfare should be somewhere around \$2,000 so when you're spending that kind of money on the flights,

you'd like to get the most diving bang for your buck as you possibly can.

The bottom line on all of this is that while we're full, we're also happy to take a waiting list in case someone has to drop out. So if this Maldives trip was something on your list, give us a call and we'll see what's what.

By the same token, I'm now starting to think about other 2025 trips. We generally sked these for the odd-numbered months – January, March, May, July, and we're already set for September (and will skip November because of the double Maldives) – so if there are places you've been thinking about, let us know. It only takes a couple of people to say "I'd like to go here" to get us going. E-mail us at [kenkurtis@aol.com](mailto:kenkurtis@aol.com) or call 310/652-4990.



## SPEAKING OF TRAVEL – YAP

This has been a banner year for travel with Reef Seekers. We sold

out our San Ignacio Lagoon trip in March. We sold out Roatan in May. We sold out Indonesia in July. We sold out Palau in November. However, we've got spots available for Yap in September. The exact travel dates are September 9-22.

Yap has a ton of things to offer underwater: Sharks, Mandarinfish, walls, sloping reefs, macro critters, large pelagics, and (of course) Manta Rays. They speak English, the U.S. dollar is the local currency, and Manta Bay Resort is the nicest dive-dedicated resort that I've ever been to. On top of that, they bend over backwards to take good care of us. "No" is a foreign word to them.

On top of the diving, we'll take half a day to do a land tour, highlighting the role Yap played in

WW2 and visiting a Stone Money bank, as well as a local village. And there's an option to kayak the mangroves as well.

Lots to do and all that's missing is you. If you're interested in finding out more or joining us, call us at 310/652-4990 or shoot an e-mail at [kenkurtis@aol.com](mailto:kenkurtis@aol.com).

---

## **AVALON DIVES THIS SUMMER**

Give some thought to joining us for our Wednesday trips to the Avalon Underwater Park this summer and fall. Reports are that the Giant Sea Bass are out in force and curious about divers. We generally leave out of San Pedro, get in three dives, and return by 8PM.



## **HAPPY JULY 4TH**

Hard to believe that half the year has gone by already, but it has. (Time flies when you're having fun, and we certainly do.) It's a bit weird with the 4th being on a Thursday but I guess that's a good excuse to make it into a 4-day weekend. (Or should that be a 4th-day weekend???) Anyhow, hope you have a fun, safe 4th. And get out there and do some diving while you're at it.

---

# **PICTURE PAGE - Red, white, & blue fish**

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2024)



**Tiger Grouper  
(Roatan)**



P.O. Box 634  
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

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



**Goatfish  
(Maldives)**



**Blue Tang  
(Isla Mujeres)**



**Leaf Scorpionfish  
(Yap)**



**Blue Chromis  
(Bonaire)**