

THE REEF SEEKER



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HURRICANE HARVEY & DIVING

Let me be clear from the outset that I'm not making some joke out of this about diving flooded areas of Houston. As with all natural disasters, this is a tragedy that words cannot adequately encompass. But since Houston's George Bush Intercontinental Airport (aka IAH) is a major hub for United and flights heading to the Caribbean, that's the connection to diving to which I'm referring.

Remember that Harvey came ashore on Friday night and into Saturday at Corpus Christi. Houston is to the NE of that area and didn't start getting the brunt of the storm until Saturday. United Airlines said they cancelled all flights at IAH on Sunday, and it looks like they cancelled some of the Saturday flights too.

If you're heading to Cozumel or Roatan or Belize or Bonaire, Saturday and Sunday are the main travel days so this definitely would be having an impact on divers either starting their trips, or wrap-

ping their trips up from those island destinations.

To use Bonaire as an example, the flight normally leaves Houston Saturday early afternoon, sits on the ground overnight in Bonaire, and leaves early Sunday morning to go back to IAH. According to FlightAware, both the IAH-BON Saturday flight and the BON-IAH Sunday flight were cancelled. That means that people who were starting their Bonaire vacation couldn't get down there, and people who were wrapping up couldn't get out. I got a note from Buddy Dive and they had some departing passengers stranded in Bonaire for a few extra days until they could get a flight out, and they had seven inbound guests who never arrived.

This underscores a number of things. One is how dependent these smaller islands are on the airlines to provide access. When you've only got one or two flights a week, losing them can create a tremendous hardship.

The second thing it underscores is the value of travel insurance. Many policies will cover you for added expenses (like more hotel nights) when you can't get out as scheduled. Or they'll cover you for having to miss your vacation entirely due to something not your fault (like a hurricane). So good things to keep in mind when planning

any future trips, either on your own or as part of a group.

As I mentioned last month in the Yap trip report, weather is something we can't control. We may have a general idea of what things should be like but, especially when you remember that as group organizers we book these trips a year or more in advance, predicting the specific weather for a specific week with any accuracy is impossible.

By the same token, if you're booking a Caribbean dive vacation, don't forget that while hurricane season is officially June 1 - November 30, August and September are usually the two most-likely months for hurricanes to form. In fact, we had to dodge Hurricane Dean in August, 2007, trying to get out of Bonaire. Just something else to keep in mind.

Our hearts go out to Houston and all the other areas devastated by the storm and the flooding. As I sit here and write this on Wednesday, Houston may be over the heavy rain as the center of Harvey has moved on to Louisiana, and is now predicted to drift NE over the next few days, ending up in Kentucky on Saturday. And while the story will unfold over the next few days as to the aftermath, this is all a good reminder of just how powerful and unforgiving Mother Nature can be.



FAKE AIRPORT FLOODED PIX

BTW, if you've been seeing this picture online, it's a fake. It's alleged to be the Houston Airport (IAH) but it's actually LaGuardia in New York (that's the Manhattan skyline in the background) and it's actually a computer-enhanced simulation done by a climate change group to show what a 12-foot rise in sea level would do to LaGuardia. But it's NOT a picture of the recent conditions in Houston at IAH.

On top of that, if they really were expecting this type of a flood, you wouldn't see a billion dollars worth of airplanes underwater as you do here. When disaster is impending, the airlines fly all of their planes out of the airport in the path of disaster to safety, as well as that's how they evacuate people before the storm hits the fan. We saw this in the aforementioned Hurricane Dean experience when we were on the last plane out of Jamaica as Dean bore down.

But bottom line on the picture: FAKE, FAKE, FAKE!!!

LOCAL DIVING WITH REEF SEEKERS

You'll note on page 3 in the box on the top right, I've now got listed dives and classes for September and October. We've got some beach and night dives at Redondo's

Veterans Park, as well as day trips over to Avalon to dive the Underwater Park and hopefully run into some of the Black Sea Bass who have been there all summer. Class-wise, there's a Photo Workshop, a Fish ID (both taught in Westwood at Reef Seekers West - and you'll get to sit on my NEW couch), and a Navigation which will be taught in conjunction with a single-tank dive at Vets Park.

All of these dives/classes are usually small (anywhere from 1-6 people) and very informal. But you also need to remember to sign up for them ahead of time. If I don't have anyone signed up by 6PM the day before, I usually make other plans (or sleep in late in the case of the weekend dives). But all you need to do to sign up is either e-mail us at kenkurtis@aol.com or call us at 310/652-4990.

So check your schedule and **LET'S GO DIVING!!!**

PEAK DIVING COMING

It's been a weird summer. The water temps have been up, so people have been happy about that.

But the vis has generally been not very good, at least not until the last week or so. That's a bit unusual for the summer when we at least get fair-to-middling visibility.

But the good thing is that although many of you may be sad to realize summer is coming to a close (fall officially starts at 1:02PM PDT on September 22), fall also usually marks some of the warmest waters and best visibility up and down the SoCal coast. It's not unusual to get 100-foot vis, especially when you get into October and November, and especially if you can get out to some of the outer islands.

So the point of this is that it's a really good time to dive and should stay that way for the next 3-4 months. A number of people think of diving only as a Memorial Day to Labor Day sport but when you do that, you miss out on some of the best experiences. Go get wet.



2017-18 DIVING VACATIONS

Sept. 1-6 • Isla Guadalupe

November 2-12 • Fiji

August 2018 • Isla Mujeres???

November 2018 • Cocos???



LOBSTER SEASON OPENS SEPTEMBER 30

California Spiny lobster season officially opens this year on Saturday, September 30 at 6:00AM. Although the Saturday date is not new (it's always the Saturday preceding the first Wednesday in October), the 6AM start is.

This new time was adopted by the Fish & Wildlife Commission in June as a safety precaution to avoid having divers who have worked a full day Friday hop on a boat and start hunting just after midnight and all night, only to find themselves exhausted in the wee morning hours which may then precipitate a diving accident. You can still jump in the water prior to 6AM to scout out locations if you want, but you can't take anything until the appointed hour. (And yes, DF&W is out there watching for early takers, aka poachers.)

Remember that you also need a lobster report card for the season. The card used to be an annual card - so it spanned two seasons - but it now covers a single season, which bridges two years. (In this case, end of 2017 and beginning of 2018.) The cards cost just under \$10 each and MUST be in your possession any time you're out lobster hunting. Remember that the daily bag limit is seven and no one can be in possession of more

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES				
DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Tue.	Sept. 12	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	FREE!!!
Sat.	16	Veterans Park	Beach Dive (1-tank)	FREE!!!
Sat.	23	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	\$150
Thu.	28	Westwood	CLASS - Fish ID	\$25
Sat.	30	EVERYWHERE	LOBSTER SEASON BEGINS @ 6AM	
Sat.	Oct. 7	Veterans Park	Navigation (w/one dive)	\$25
Thu.	12	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	FREE!!!
Wed.	18	Westwood	Photo Workshop	\$25
Sat.	28	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	\$150

than one bag limit at any given time. So if you got seven the first weekend and throw them in the freezer, you can't get more until you start winnowing your original catch.

Also bear in mind that if you catch a lobster, under-sized or legal-sized, that is tagged, you are not allowed to keep it. However, it is asked that you record date, location (GPS if you can), length, and tag number. More info on this can be had at www.taggedlobster.com. (Not a joke - that's really the web-site.)

Finally, remember that NO lobster is worth your life. Pay attention to your dive, especially to your air supply, and don't take any undue chances. Live to dive another day.

WHO WANTS TO GO TO COCOS?

I'm about 90% committed to putting together a Cocos trip for next year on the *Okeanos Aggressor* and I'm leaning towards November 10-20 as it includes Veterans Day (for those of you who get that off) and you get home just before Thanksgiving.

This is by no means a cheap trip. You're looking at \$5,499/person to start, double-occupancy. (You

can save \$400 if you go into the quad.) Then there's a park fee of \$490, airfare (\$1,000), hotel overnight on the way in (\$150-ish/person), crew tip (\$500-ish), evacuation program fee (\$30), and I usually add in \$100 for incidentals along the way. So figure around \$7,500/person to be safe.

The great thing is that you get in seven days of diving in Cocos. I've been there twice, and both times, it was spectacular. We saw the schooling Hammerheads at Alcyone, there were huge Marble Rays all over the place, we dove inside a baitball one trip, and one both trips we experienced the amazing night dive at Manuelita Inside, where every night, hundreds of Whitetip sharks form small packs and are constantly on the move around the reef looking for something to eat. (They pay absolutely no attention to the divers so it's safe as well as exhilarating.) Amazing dive that we did two or three times on each trip.

My magic number is 10 (the boat holds 22 so I can take more than 10) and right now, I've got eight people (interestingly, all women) who have expressed an interest in going. If I can hit my magic number in the next week or so, I can get a deal from *Aggressor* that drops the price by a few hundred bucks per person. Plus, you'll have over

a year to pay this off so that if you want to do \$600 or so each month, it takes a little of the sting out of the pricing.

The best air sked I saw was on Alaska Airlines, which has a morning non-stop to San Jose (Costa Rica, not California) and then an afternoon non-stop on the way back. Other airlines fly there from LAX but they require a stop somewhere along the way.

If you're interested - and men are allowed as well - let me know. (For the record, those interested so far are Susy Horowitz, Sharon DePriester, Cecilia & Donna Groman, Tamar Toister, Laurie Kasper, and Patti Wey.) If we can pull this together, I'll make the arrangements as soon as I get back from Guadalupe.

GUADALUPE SHARKS

We leave Friday afternoon for our fourth trip to Isla Guadalupe and the Great White sharks. While I'm dreading driving down to San Diego on the start of the Labor Day weekend, I'm really looking forward to this trip. The water is a bit colder (68°) than we've had in the past but the visibility looks spectacular and in the last week or so, they're saying it's more sharks than they've seen in one day (as many as 20 individuals) than ever before. Hopefully that holds for us (although I wouldn't mind it if the water could warm up a bit). However . . .

There's a storm system - which shouldn't become a hurricane - that's currently off the western side

of central Mexico and is moving NW. It's predicted to go up the western coast of Baja and then turn out to sea, passing south of Guadalupe. If the timing of the prediction holds, we should get there ahead of the storm and anchor, the storm will pass south of us while we're there diving, and when we leave Tuesday evening it should be well west of us for the ride home. But you never know how this will affect diving conditions once we are there.

We may be able to get an Internet signal on-board and if so, I will not only send you TWARS Sunday evening from Guadalupe, but will also post pix to the Reef Seekers and Ken Kurtis Facebook pages whenever I can each day. So be sure to check us out.

PICTURE PAGE - Eclipse pix

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2017)



Pre-eclipse toast with Wendy's eclipse glasses



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WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



The proper eclipse glasses in place



Partial phase (through a filter)



Totality & corona



Diamond ring & prominences