

# THE REEF SEEKER



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## HURRICANE DORIAN

Call this “The Hurricane That Couldn’t Make Up Its Mind.”

When I was first thinking about writing this Friday morning, the projected path of Dorian was going to take it across the northern islands of the Bahamas and then head due west (tracking slightly southwest) to Florida, where it would then make a right turn and head up the middle of the Sunshine State. 24 hours later, much of that is out the window.

The storm is still going to hit the Bahamas (more on that in a moment) as a major hurricane, which means Cat 4 or Cat 5, but will make its right turn much earlier than previously predicted and looks like it will now parallel the Florida coastline, drift a bit more seaward off of Georgia and South Carolina, and then perhaps make landfall as it starts to hit around the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Huge difference if this holds and essentially takes Florida out of the crosshairs - they’ll likely get heavy rain - but now makes South

& North Carolina new targets.

From a diving perspective, expect some major impacts.

Both models have the storm cutting across the northern part of Abaco. Earlier models showed it churning down the middle of Grand Bahama (Freeport is the major city). The newer models have the center of the storm starting its turn northward as it approaches Grand Bahama, but it’s still going to do lots of damage at its current strength. In addition to vulnerable reefs, Freeport has a very large harbor area that serves both commercial and recreational purposes and that could suffer.

Adding to all of this is that these are times of “king tides” which are generally the highest high tides based on the phases of the moon. Timing is everything and the timing here pretty much stinks.

If you have a Bahamas trip on your schedule in the near future - Nassau is much further south and should not be impacted by the storm - check with your providers to see if the trip is still feasible. The way the timing looks now, the storm should hit Abaco Sunday afternoon and then spend Monday torturing Grand Bahama. You can track the storm (updated every 3 hours) through the National Hurricane Center’s website: <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/cyclones/>.

## LOCAL CONDITIONS - LESS THAN STELLAR

I freely admit that much of my info is second-hand but we have yet to have the stellar summer conditions that many of us had hoped for. Although we get sporadic reports of decent - though not spectacular - visibility, most of the times we’re hearing of 20-40 feet out at the islands and 20’ or less for shore sites. We even saw one report on ScubaBoard from someone who dove Begg Rock for the first time - an area where, due to its remoteness, we usually count on pretty good conditions - and the viz was 30’ or so and the sealife so-so.

One thing is that the water has been relatively cool, and certainly nothing like it was last year, when temps in the mid-70s were routinely being recorded. But the cooler water has an upside as well, as it seems to have sparked a resurgence of anchovy populations which may be what’s attracting an unusually large number of whales down to this area, as they are likely following the food.

As we move towards fall, even though the summer hasn’t been great, expect conditions to improve. Traditionally, we get some of our best visibility and water conditions in September/October/November and hopefully that will be the case this year as well.

## **TIMING IS EVERYTHING**

I miss the “good old days” when booking airfare was easier and when we could get group bulk fares where the price didn’t fluctuate every hour. Not so today.

Most of you now have to book airfare for trips on your own. So it pays to be aware of what’s what and how timing plays into finding the best fare for the itinerary you want. For instance, on our upcoming Maldives trip in October, when we first started looking at airfare, Economy was running around \$1,200 or so, and required a connection through Tokyo as well as an 8-hour layover in Singapore. But by jockeying the schedule a bit and looking at different flight options, we were able to book many people on Premium Economy (upgraded seat, better meals and selection, more legroom) for \$1,300. And it was non-stop to Singapore with only a short layover.

One trap that people fall into is booking too far ahead. Generally you can book 11 months ahead of most websites. But a lot of times, that first price they post is their pie-in-the-sky price and anyone who books that far ahead is going to pay top dollar. There’s a personal trip I’m doing in June of next year and the first price we saw for a coach ticket was \$900. A month later, that same ticket was down to \$700 and shortly after that dipped down to just under \$600. Today, it’s back up to \$776. But by using their scheduling calendar and seeing what the prices are for a month from today, some itineraries are as little as \$452. So that gives me an idea of what their bottom-line price is likely to be and I can keep an eye

on things and pounce when the time is right.

It also sometimes is worth your while not to lock yourself into a specific flight sked if you can. On our Maldives trip, one option was to leave shortly after midnight and arrive in the Maldives at 11AM. The other option was to leave 11 hours later than that, but arrive at 10PM. The advantage of arriving at 11AM was that we could check into the hotel, relax in the afternoon, acclimate to the time change, have a nice dinner, and get a full night’s sleep before boarding the *Manthiri* the next day.

The advantage of the 10PM arrival was we didn’t have a true redeye flight and the Premium Economy fare dropped from around \$2,500 to the afore-mentioned \$1,300. We lost that relaxing afternoon and may not get the best sleep, but we cut the price of the ticket basically in half. So there are trade-offs.

Another option is to go through a consolidator who may have some deals or some airlines and routings you hadn’t through of. Again on our Maldives trip, one of our group wanted to be on our same flights but wanted Business. On the Singapore website, that came in at

\$5,500. Through a consolidator, that came down to \$4,950 and then further to \$3,950 through use of miles. That same airfare today on the Singapore website is \$8,500.

Consolidators may offer an airline you hadn’t thought about for a better class of seat and a good price. On this very same Maldives trip, three of our folks are leaving LAX and not flying west, but heading east. They’re on Qatar Airlines, flying no-stop to Doha, Qatar, and then arrive in Male, Maldives in the morning (so they’ll check into the hotel, relax in the afternoon, etc.). On the way back, they fly to Doha, have an 18-hour layover that includes a hotel and some tours, and then back to LAX. All of this is in Business class (which is Qatar is REALLY nice - you’ve got a private cubicle and they ever give you pajamas for the overnight portions) and, through the consolidator and using some miles, the fare came in at \$3,500.

So it pays to shop, it pays to be patient, it pays to finagle. And anytime you’d like some help with all of this, even when not traveling on a Reef Seekers trip, feel free to call us (310/652-4990) to get some advice and help on navigating the morass of airfares.

### **2019-20 DIVING VACATIONS**

**October 12-24 • Maldives**

**December 4-10 • Cabo Pulmo**

**March 2020 - maybe Yap??**

**May 2020 - maybe Bonaire??**



## HOW ABOUT SOME AVALON ON THE 21ST??

Despite what I said on page 1 . . .

We plan on heading to the Avalon Underwater Park on Saturday, September 21, for three dives. The park is a great place to go for a number of reasons. These include (1) Easy entry, (2) Lots of stuff to see, (3) Resident Giant Sea Bass, (4) Do it all in a day, (5) Good-to-great visibility, (6) Flexibility in choosing depths to dive, (7) Wrecks, (8) Kelp, (9) Abundant fish life, (10) Pleasant way to spend the day.

So whaddya say? The general plan will be to take the morning ferry over from San Pedro (as opposed to Long Beach - easier parking access IMHO), get a taxi to take us to the park, pick up some tanks, and off we go. We'll do two dives, take a short break for lunch, do dive #3, and then head back to the Mole to go home around 5PM.

When you book this with us, the \$150 we'll get from you covers the boat, the taxi, tanks rental, escorted dives, and all the fun you can handle. We usually bring a lunch and eat right there in the staging area. Its really a nice, relaxing, and pleasant day and it's perfect if you haven't been in the water in a while or if you've just got a desire to get wet. Give us a phone call at

## UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Thu.	Sept. 5	Redondo	••• Night Dive •••	\$25
Sat.	14	Redondo	Beach dive (single tank)	\$25
Sat.	21	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Wed.	25	- CLASS -	- FISH ID -	\$25
Sat.	Oct. 6	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Wed.	30	- CLASS -	- Tables & Computers -	FREE!!!
Sat.	Nov. 9	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150

310/652-4990 and we'll get you all squared away.

We've got one person committed to going already and, since I haven't been there in a while, I think it's time to go regardless of how many we end up with. So if this is of interest, give us a call and let's get you signed up.



## ATOMIC SWIVEL HOSE PROBLEMS

Officially, Atomic calls it a "Quality Alert" but the bottom line is that if you have an Atomic regulator second stage hose that has a swivel on it, you may be affected. It's important to note these hoses were produced in July of 2017, and will be stamped at the crimp below the swivel "D0717". the problem is that the hose can come un-crimped which will result in a

loss of air supply to the regulator and that's not good.

Important to know: If your Atomic reg does NOT have a swivel at the second stage, you are NOT affected by this. If the stamp on the crimp is NOT D0717 you are NOT affected by this. Atomic says it's a range of regulators produced between August 2017 and July 2018. If you purchased your reg with a swivel before or after those dates, you are NOT affected.

The date stamp can be found on the hose crimp that is under the rubber sleeve just below the second stage swivel. It's a pain to slide it down as there's a ridge that "locks" it into place. If you are unsure if your reg is affected, you can call Repair Guru Robert Stark and he can tell you in 30 seconds if you're affected or not. It doesn't matter if you got the reg or the hose from us. We're happy to help out.

If you ARE affected, the hose with the swivel will be replaced free of charge. It's not something we can do when you show up because we have to order the replacement hose from Atomic but the main things to take away are that (1) This is a serious problem, (2) If you have an affected reg, you should stop diving with it immediately, and (3) It's a fairly easy fix.

If you have questions, you can call Robert directly at 310/947-8523.



## UPCOMING REDONDO DIVES

We've got two useful and fun ones on the schedule for this month. (Weather-permitting of course, and now I'm covered with the disclaimer.)

This Thursday we've got one of our Night Dives scheduled. It's too early for the squid to be running so you shouldn't expect that. But I saw a post on FB again today

that a Prickly Shark, which can grow to be as much as 13 feet, has been spotted again at depth (80 feet or so) at Vets in Redondo on a night dive. This guy certainly doesn't appear to be 13 feet - that would put him in Great White territory - but seems to be 5-7 feet and ambling about without a care in the world. So one possible objective of the dive would be to see if we can spot him. The other objective would just to be to have a good time.

On Saturday, September 14, we've got a daytime beach dive scheduled. For those who have either never done one or if you're a little unsure of your surf-entry skills, this is a great opportunity to do this dive under supervision.

Each of these dives are a whop-

ping \$25 and each is a single-tank dive. For the night dive, the start time can be somewhat variable as I'm coming back from a day at the LB Aquarium of the Pacific. So we can make it a dusk dive and start early or wait a bit until the sun goes down. For the daytime dive on the 14th, we usually meet at the quite civilized time of 9AM (none of the O'Dark Thirty stuff for me) and are usually in the water by 10AM after we do a briefing. In both cases, dives are around 40 minutes or so, so it's basically an hour from the time we leave our cars until we're back up in the parking lot. (Bring quarters for the parking meters.)

If you're interested in either or both, e-mail us or call 310/652-4990 to get signed up.

## PICTURE PAGE - Redondo creatures

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2019)



**Spider  
Crab**



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