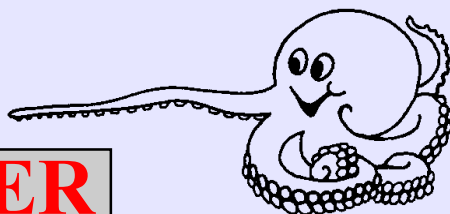


THE REEF SEEKER



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September - 2025



START OF THE BEST SoCAL DIVING

A lot of times, it seems like Labor Day marks the “end” of summer and, therefore, the “end” of diving for the year. Nothing could be further from the truth. (FTR, fall doesn’t officially begin until September 22.) I say this every year, but diving in September, October, and November (and even into December) offers some of the best conditions SoCal diving can muster.

First of all, water temps peak later than land temps do and cools off later than the land does. So a lot of times, we get peak water temps – approaching 70° - in late September and October.

If we get some Santa Anas blowing, the offshore wind flattens out the waves which increases visibility. Especially if you can get out to the places like San Clemente Island or Santa Barbara Island, 100-

foot visibility is not uncommon. Even along the shore, we can get 50-foot viz days. Santa Anas also sometimes cause what’s called an overturn, where the upper waters are blown out to sea and deep nutrient-rich waters rotate in and take their place which, in turn, sometimes brings in animals you don’t usually see.

Finally, post-Labor Day beaches are usually less crowded (for those of you that shore dive) and even the dive boats that may have been full this summer have spots available. Don’t want to go on a boat? Take the ferry over to Avalon and do a day of diving in the Underwater Park. (This is a great time of the year to encounter the resident Giant Sea Bass there.)

So don’t hang up that dive gear yet. There’s plenty of opportunities awaiting you.



SUNFLOWER STAR REPORT

Sunflower stars are the multi-armed starfish that used to be quite

prevalent, especially at places like Santa Barbara Island. But in 2013, they started dying off mysteriously – along with other species of starfish – succumbing to what came to be known as Sea Star Wasting Disease. It’s estimated that 90% of the Sunflower Stars died and in some areas, they’re considered functionally extinct.

But scientists who have been studying this just last month were able to identify a common bacteria found in seawater that seems to be the cause of the disease. This is not a cure but now tells them where to look and how to protect the few remaining stars that exist either in the wild or in captivity.

The reason this becomes so critical is that Sunflower Stars love to prey on sea urchins, especially purple urchins. As you may know, urchins, especially the purple ones, love to eat kelp and more specifically, kelp holdfasts. No holdfast, no kelp forest. No kelp forest due to this, and you get what’s known as an urchin barren. It’s basically a field of kelp stumps. And without the kelp, there go the fish and other creatures who make the kelp forest home.

So if we can solve the Wasting Disease issue and help the Sunflower Star, we can make for healthier kelp forests which mean healthier oceans.



DIN TANK VALVE ADAPTERS

You may not be aware of this, but there are very specific regulations concerning scuba tank valves. The short version is that up to 3,500psi, you can use a yoke valve, which most of you would consider being the “standard” scuba tank valve. And most of you likely dive with yoke-style regulators, which means you knock the dust cap out of the way, seat the open part of the first stage against the o-ring on the tank valve, screw down the back part so the reg sits against the valve, and then turn on the gas.

Tanks above 3,500psi require a DIN fitting. DIN is a first stage that doesn't just clamp on to the valve like a yoke, but actually screws into the valve itself, providing better resistance against the higher pressure. DIN valves and 4,500psi tanks are generally what you will find in tech-diving situations where you're going to need more gas available for longer dives &/or decompression requirements.

What a number of tank valve manufacturers have done in the past few years – and personally, I think this is rather clever – is create a convertible valve that can be used for either DIN or yoke. What it really is is a DIN valve but there's a screw-in yoke adapter that looks like a little plug. You literally screw this into the DIN valve, tighten it with an Allen wrench,

and now the DIN valve will accommodate a yoke regulator.

While this is a great idea, it can present some problems for the average diver who shows up at a site or to dive with an operator. Some operators, especially European and some Asian ops, assume people are showing up with DIN fittings and that's how their tanks are set up. So if you show up with a yoke fitting, there's an issue. If they have an adapter handy, no problem. And if they don't, many of these ops will offer to lend you a DIN first stage, but that means you (or they) need to undo your entire reg and re-assemble it on the DIN first stage.

But there's an easy solution to this and it's cheap insurance. Just get a DIN adapter of your own and bring it with you on every trip you take. This has a number of advantages.

For one, it assures you that your yoke reg will work on a DIN valve. And it also means you've got a solution if you should find out that there's a DIN valve with an adapter in place, but it's leaking because the o-ring at the bottom of the DIN adapter, like any o-ring on a tank or valve or whatever, isn't sealing as it should. And if they don't have

another adapter handy, what do you do?

The great thing about carrying your own adapter (or multiples – I'm usually carrying three or four) is they're relatively cheap, running around \$25 + tax. And because they're small and relatively lightweight, you can throw them in your Save-A-Dive kit or your mask box or strap bag or wherever you keep extra goodies.

And we'll even make you a special deal, good for the entire month of September.

Since we think this is something every diver should carry “just in case,” we'll put one of these in your hands for a flat \$20, tax included. All you have to do is give our repair guru Robert Stark a call (310/947-8523) and he'll get you squared away. You can either swing by Robert's place to pick it up or we'll even ship it to you (including if you live out of the area) but we will add in whatever the shipping charges are.

So give it some thought, give Robert a call, and carry one of these with you to help save a dive (and trip) that might otherwise go wrong.

2026-2027 DIVING VACATIONS

March 9-22, 2026 • Yap

July 1-14, 2026 • Indonesia

Sept. 2026 • Philippines

August, 2027 • Eclipse & dive



PALOS VERDES REEF GOOD & BAD NEWS

Let's start with the good news.

In 2020, some 53,000 tons of quarry rock from Catalina was dumped off of PV in hopes of creating new reef and new habitat. One of the requirements was that there was to be an annual survey done every year for the first five years to see how things were going. The news is good.

The general area where the rock was off-loaded is roughly between Bunker Point (just south of Portuguese Bend) and Point Fermin. The project was designed by and is monitored by the Vantuna Research Group, which is based out of Occidental College. This is their fourth year doing a monitoring report and they say that results continue to exceed their expectations.

The short version of the report is that fish biomass in the area has roughly tripled since the reef was put in. On top of that, they're reporting that fish that normally live deeper than where the reef is as well as fish that would reside shallower, all seem to be grouping together and hanging out along the reef structure. That's good news.

They do also report that red tides have had a negative effect on things but the upside of that is that those episodes are relatively brief in duration so the area has a chance to come back. They also report

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	\$\$\$
Wed.	Sep 3	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon UW Park	180
Sat.	6	Veterans Park	Beach Diving Made Easy	35
Wed.	Oct 15	--- CLASS ---	--- NITROX ---	95
Sat.	18	Veterans Park	Navigation Made Easy	35
Wed.	22	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon UW Park	180
Thu.	30	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	35
Sat.	Nov 8	Veterans Park	Surf Entries Made Easy	FREE!!!
Wed.	12	--- CLASS ---	--- FISH I.D. ---	35

that the landslides in the PV are don't seem to have affected the reef areas themselves, although it's wiped out visibility in some area making surveys difficult to complete.

That's the upside. The downside is DDT.

It was being legally dumped in the ocean off of PV as recently as 1982. However, the DDT was supposed to be contained in barrels before being submerged. That was not always the case. Some of the DDT was dumped directly into the ocean. Studies have shown that the DDT levels in fish in general in that area has not higher than in other areas but the thought of the un-contained (or un-containerized) DDT is still a bit troubling. Rosanna Xia of the *L.A. Times* had an excellent article on this in 2022 which you can find with a Google search.

But the overall impression here is that human interaction CAN have a positive effect on the health of the ocean we all love so much, when it's carefully thought out and planned. While this PV reef is on a smaller scale and was also intended to promote healthy, it underscores how the overall approach to create Marine Protected Areas in California, as well as artificial reefs, can work. All it takes is the foresight to envision it and the ability to make the vision a reality.



MEXICO ORDERS DOLPHINS SET FREE

On July 1 of this year, the Mexican Senate unanimously passed legislation requiring dolphins being held in captivity for entertainment purposes to be set free in the wild. This will affect about 30 Mexican facilities that house roughly 350 dolphins. (Pix above is that of a wild dolphin at Socorro in 2022.)

Businesses with captive dolphins have 90 days to submit plans as to how to accomplish this (the deadline should be October 1 if I'm calculating this correctly) and then 18 months to implement their plan. That would be December 31, 2026.

This isn't as simple as opening the gates and off they go. Many were born in captivity and others have lost their "wild" hunting skills. So there will be a transition period to get them adjusted to doing things for themselves. There also is talk of setting up large dolphin sanctuaries where they could live without being required to perform.

Enforcement and compliance will be key so it will be interesting to see how this all plays out.



ECLIPSE DIVE TRIP IN 2027

As many of you know, I'm an eclipse-chaser. And there's a whopper coming up on August 2, 2027. The path of totality cuts across Africa and goes right through Luxor, Egypt, which is in and of itself a magical place to visit with temples and tombs of the ancient Egyptians.

What makes this eclipse so special is the length of totality: 6½ minutes. To put it in perspective, the 2017 eclipse (I was in Nashville) lasted a little over 2 minutes. The eclipse of 2024 (I was in Dallas)

lasted a little over 4 minutes. 6½ minutes is about the longest period of totality you can possibly get. (My first eclipse, in La Paz, Mexico, in 1991, was about that length and was spectacular.)

So part of the plan here is that we'll spend some time in Luxor but we'll definitely be there on August 2. We'll also want to schedule some "regular" touristy tours to the tombs and museums while we're there as well, just not on August 2. The trick is how we'll tack on some diving to this and where we'll go.

That part is still a work-in-progress. (By the same token, if anyone wants to do this as an eclipse-only trip, we can work that out.) The tricky part if that most dive trips on liveaboards are Sat-

urday-Saturday or Sunday-Sunday. The eclipse happens on a Monday.

In theory, we could do a Saturday-Saturday trip before the eclipse and arrive in Luxor either Saturday or Sunday. By the same token, we could front-load the eclipse part of the trip, arrive in Luxor, see the eclipse, spend a few more days in Luxor touring, and leave Luxor Friday or Saturday to go somewhere else for the dive trip. (There's no diving in Luxor.)

So it's a work-in-progress. Some of you already told me you're interested but if I don't already have your name, shoot me a note. No matter what we end up doing or how we end up doing it, this will be a very special vacation for those who choose to join us.

PICTURE PAGE - September in SoCal

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2025)



**Giant
Kelpfish**

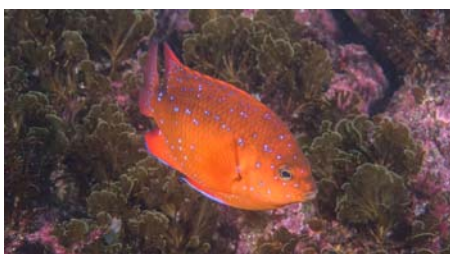


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**Male
Sheephead**



**Juvy
Garibaldi**



**Giant
Sea Bass**



**Male
Rock Wrasse**