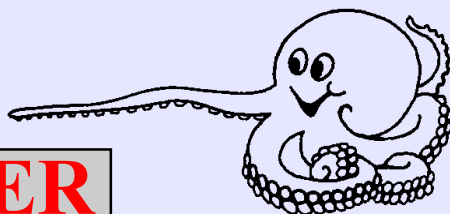


THE REEF SEEKER



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September - 2026



NEPAL TRAGEDY

You have doubtless seen the horrifying videos that have come out of Nepal regarding the devastation caused by the avalanche and resulting flash flooding last Wednesday. The scale of the destruction is almost unimaginable: villages literally wiped off the map, bridges ripped from the banks like they were matchsticks, 800 dead, and 3,000 missing. And these numbers could go higher.

So what does this have to do with diving since this is generally a diving-themed newsletter? Two words: Global warming.

A lot of times when we talk of global warming, especially lately since this is an El Niño year, we think of it in terms of ocean temperatures rising and the various effects that this can have on the marine environment that we love so much. We think of it as a fragile ecosystem where small changes in things like water temperature can sometimes have huge effects.

So it's sometimes easy to forget that global warming affects the

land portion of our planet too. Yes, we all know it's been hotter lately but it goes beyond that.

There's an interesting analysis put out by the Weather Channel that starts to give perspective on much of this. And it all starts up in the Himalayas where some months ago, the glacier that eventually collapsed was covered in snow. All good. But this summer, that area has experienced the warmest summer on record. So that snow began to melt, revealing the rock-filled glacier underneath. The melting may also produce cracks and fissures in that glacier. And eventually, that part of the glacier can calve or give way. And that appears to be what happened in this instance.

And the part that gave way is massive, estimated to be as much as a mile across, which then went down into the nearby narrow canyons as gravity pulled it along, creating a wave that at times satellite images estimate to have been as much as 300 feet high (that's a 30-story building) and moving at very high speed. The China/Nepal border checkpoint that was obliterated is 13 miles downstream and was hit roughly 8 minutes after the initial avalanche. If you do the math, that's a speed of over 100mph of moving rock, mud, and debris. And that's part of the reason it looks like the wave is exploding as it hit

structures and simply picks them up and carries them along. And it's also moving so fast because of the steepness of the terrain as the checkpoint sits some 10,000 feet lower than where it all started.

What we saw in Nepal happened quickly. The changes we see in the ocean happen much more slowly but can be equally devastating. That just move at a much slower pace so are easier to ignore or even deny. Think of doing a video of a field of sea stars. At normal speed, it seems like there's nothing going on. But when you take that same video and speed it up, you can see plenty of movement and activity. It just takes place at a pace our minds don't comprehend.

I always used to like going out to Begg Rock and would stay 20 or 30 feet off of that rock and marvel at how every inch of available space was occupied by something. And, like with the sea stars, if you took a video of that and sped it up, you'd see a massive battle for survival and space dominance going on.

Just because our oceans are under slow assault by global warming doesn't mean there aren't things we can do to mitigate the process. We won't solve the crisis today. But certainly many of you in your diving lifetime have seen these changes when you reflect on the

“good old days” compared to today.

The two most obvious examples are abalone and Sunflower stars. When I started diving here in 1981, abalone were everywhere and could be legally taken. And while Wasting Disease didn't help, neither did environmental factors that eventually shut down the take of abalone. The good news is that, through some fairly aggressive conservation measures, abalone are making a comeback. Greens are being spotted with some regularity and there was even recently a White ab spotted at Catalina which is somewhat the equivalent saying, “I saw a living dinosaur.”

Sunflower Stars used to be all over the place, especially at Santa Barbara Island. But in just a few short years, they were pretty much wiped out. Again, conservation methods are being attempted to re-establish them. But even though we can lose species quickly, they can't be restored as quickly. As with the floods in Nepal, quick to destroy, time-consuming and hard to re-establish.

I wish I could end this with an easy solution but that's simply not the case. We will likely see the adverse effects of El Niño when the rains start coming and with them, higher surf and localized flooding. In the 1983 El Niño, I remember seeing a hotel wing in Redondo fall into the ocean after getting battered by the waves.

The point of this is to simply remind you that we need to be proactive and need to be vigilant. There are steps we can take to mitigate the future effects of global warming. And if any of you reading this are still climate change deniers,

the worst that could happen is that we make some “needless” sacrifices but end up with a slightly better planet. And what's wrong with that? And in the best-case scenario (preventing the worst case), the actions we take today truly do stem the proverbial tide and we leave this place a better planet for future generations.



OFF TO THE PHILIPPINES

Our group of 19 stalwarts divers (actually 18 divers and 1 snorkeler) are getting ready for the start of our Philippines adventure, which commences in less than two weeks. This is a full 2-week trip with the first week being spent at the

Atlantis Dumaguete Resort (it's actually in Dauin, which is half an hour south) and the second week will be spent on the Atlantis liveaboard *Infiniti* where we'll head north to the Visays area and among the things we hope to see are Thresher Sharks (which will be a first for me personally as well as most others in the group too).

I've been to the Dumaguete area twice before, both times with Atlantis, and the major attraction there are all the macro creatures you can find. It's very similar to the muck diving we've done in Indonesia's Lembeh Straits. So my trusty Nikon 105mm macro lens is going to get a good workout. (You can see some pictures from previous Dumaguete trips on page 4 of this newsletter.)

The liveaboard sites will be some macro but also traditional reefs, with the additional hopes of large pelagics like the Threshers. So we shall see.

It seems like there's Wi-Fi at both the resort and on the boat, so please keep an eye on the Ken Kurtis and the Reef Seekers FaceBook pages as I'll try to post my usual Daily Top 10 Pix so that you can enjoy the trip vicariously with us.

2026-2027 DIVING VACATIONS

Sept. 2026 • Philippines

April 2-10, 2027 • Saba

June 11-19 • Bonaire

July/Aug • Total Solar Eclipse!!

SABA 2027 IS SOLD OUT

I'm certainly not complaining as we filled all 16 spots for this trip in about 72 hours. That being said, last-minute changes definitely happen (just look at our Indonesia trip two months ago) so we're taking a waiting list should there be any changes in the roster of divers going. If you'd like to add your name to that, just send me an e-mail.



BONAIRE 2027

We're going to Bonaire from June 12-19 (travel will likely have to start on June 11). We haven't been in a few years and have decided it's high time we go back. And we'll be staying again with our good friends at Buddy Dive in a combination of 1- and 2-bedroom apartments.

As usual, we're booking their "Dive & Drive" package which means we get the apartment (plus breakfast daily – but on our own for lunch and dinner), six boat dives, unlimited shore dives, and a vehicle so we can traipse around the island. We then add five more boat dives to that so that basically we end up with two boats dives each morning (except Sunday), free afternoons for shore diving, plus we'll have one afternoon boat dive as well. We usually offer a dusk dive each night and will even throw in a true night dive (9PM-

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES				
DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED ACTIVITY	\$\$\$
Wed.	Sep. 2	--- CLASS ---	--- FISH I.D. MADE EASY ---	25
Thu.	Oct. 8	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	25
Sat.	17	Veterans Park	Surf Entries Made Easy	25
Wed.	21	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180
Sat.	31	Veterans Park	Beach Diving Made Easy	25
Wed.	Nov. 4	--- CLASS ---	--- TABLES & COMPUTERS ---	25
Wed.	11	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180
Thu.	19	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	25

ish entry) one evening. On top of that, we'll also include the crew/staff tip and airport xfers in Bonaire.

Cost for our part of the package is \$2,495 which is based on three people per 2-bd apartment (one bedroom usually has a king bed and the other bedroom has two twins – each has their own bathroom) or 2 people in a 1-bd unit. Single supplement is available at a slightly higher cost.

We've already got some folks on the interested list so if you'd like to give this some thought or make a commitment (a \$500 deposit holds your spot), just give us a call at 310/652-4990 or e-mail us here.



AQUARIUM OF THE PACIFIC TO THE RESCUE

Illegal animal trafficking is a huge global problem. It puts strains on both the species being trafficked and the ecosystems from which they were snatched. And it also seems that it's hard to detect.

So it's refreshing to hear that someone – let alone a place where one

volunteers – has stepped up to do something about it.

A box truck with 2,000 various animals was intercepted a few months ago (mid-June) and the Aquarium stepped in to house and rescue some of the animals being trafficked. The Aquarium is a founding member of the Southern California Wildlife Confiscations Network, a partnership launched in 2023 between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and animal care organizations to coordinate care for seized wildlife.

Because the animals rescued are of unknown origin and it's also unknown how they've been cared for, they can't be returned to the wild. So they will be treated for any diseases, examined thoroughly, and added to the various Aquarium exhibits that would most closely resemble their real-world homes.

The rescued animals included Bamboo sharks, Clownfish, and Banggai Cardinalfish, to name just a few. Many of these species are already on exhibit, so the newcomers will fit right in once they're cleared.

It's another way that the Aquarium fulfills its mission statement, which is "To instill a sense of wonder, respect, and stewardship for the Pacific Ocean, its inhabitants, and ecosystems."

CORAL BLEACHING – NEW STUDY

We all know that coral bleaching is bad for reefs. Coral reefs depend on symbiotic algae for both color and nutrients. When the water gets too hot, the coral ejects the algae. It now has no nutrition and eventually dies and turns white, giving us that typical “bleached coral” look.

The good news is that bleached reefs can recover. If the water temperature eventually drops, and it hasn't been too long, the algae will return, and the corals will begin to heal themselves. This doesn't happen overnight and takes some time. That could be some months or even a year or two or more.

A report released Monday sounds an ominous warning. This study

looked at 40 years of data from 37,000 reef sites in 120 countries. It seems like 2010 is a demarcation point.

Prior to 2010, you'd get bleaching events about once a decade. That 10-year span gave more reefs time to recover to pre-bleached status. Since 2010, bleaching episodes are occurring at 4-6 year intervals, and that may not be enough time for the reefs to recover.

The last mass bleaching was in 2023, when some 77% of the world's coral reefs were affected. Given the El Niño that we seem to be in right now, scientists are predicting that another mass bleaching episode seems likely.

The release of this report, from the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network, comes at the start of the

annual Pacific Islands Forum, which is in Palau this year. later this year is the COP31 climate conference. Both of these gatherings aim to set government policy to make for healthier oceans and fight things like coral bleaching.

At the risk of sounding like Chicken Little, it seems we're reaching a tipping point (and maybe have already passed it). But when you look at events like the flash floods in Nepal and coral bleaching as well as a persistent El Niño, record temperatures in some areas of the world and record rain-falls in other areas, you've got to accept that something's going on and we need to take steps to first slow things down and then reverse and mitigate the damage.

Fingers crossed.

PICTURE PAGE - Dumaguete macro

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2026)



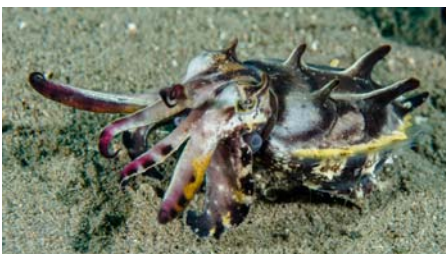
**Mantis shrimp
with eggs**



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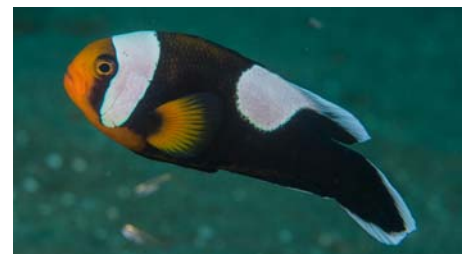
**Warty
Frogfish**



**Flamboyant
Cuttlefish**



**Harlequin
Shrimp**



**Saddleback
Clownfish (Anemonefish)**