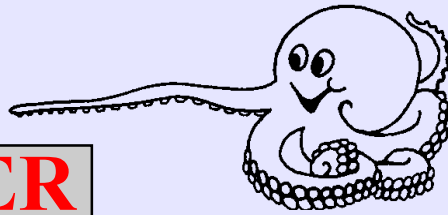


THE REEF SEEKER



REEF SEEKERS DIVE CO.
P.O. Box 634
Beverly Hills, CA 90213
(310) 652-4990
www.reefseekers.com
e-mail: kenkurtis@aol.com

October - 2020



LOBSTER SEASON ABOUT TO OPEN

Note to lobsters:
RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!!!

Note to everyone else . . .

California's annual lobster season opens this coming Saturday, October 3. If you're thinking "Doesn't it normally open in September?" you're correct but this year if you're a lobster hunter, you're a victim of the calendar. The DF&W regulations state that the season opens at 6:00AM the Saturday before the first Wednesday in October. Since October starts on a Thursday this year, the first Wednesday is the 7th and the Saturday preceding is October 3.

Minimum size remains at 3.75" from the rear of the eye socket to the back of the carapace. You've got to carry an approved lobster gauge with you to measure, and you must measure when the lobster is taken, not on the surface or back on the boat. (There's a free-diving exception that allows you to measure on the surface.) If they're under-sized, put them back where you got them. A good rule

of thumb: If you think it's under-sized, it probably is. Daily bag limit remains at seven and you must have a lobster report card in your possession – it's OK to keep it on the boat – and follow all reporting requirements.

Now for the admonition.

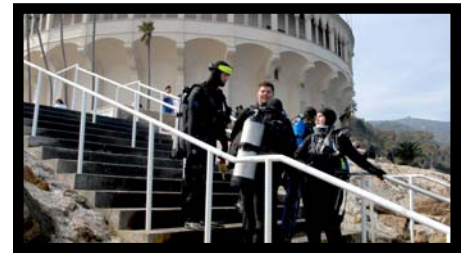
We generally get a little antsy as the lobster opener approaches because people may not have been diving in a while and get excited and get more focused on catching lobsters than they do on watching mundane things like air supply. One year, we had FIVE fatalities in the first week of lobster season.

But maybe our constant pounding of the safety message is starting to take hold. Because in L.A. County, our last scuba fatality was August of 2018, over two years ago. (And that was the ONLY fatality for that calendar year in L.A. County.) So collectively, you're doing a good job. Let's keep it up.

If you're going out lobster hunting this year, the most important two things to do are:

- Watch your own air
- Watch your buddy and your buddy's air

Do those two things and you're likely to have a safe dive. Because no one wants to finish the day by saying, "Well, my buddy died on the dive but at least we each got our limit."

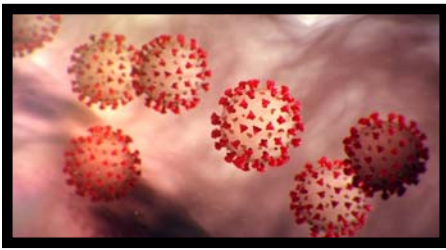


MID-WEEK AVALON TRIPS

We're really liking these mid-week Avalon trips rather than weekend ones. We realize that it does cut some of you out of the mix because you may actually have to work Monday-Friday, but it's definitely a nicer dive experience because – at least the two times we've gone so far – the Avalon Underwater Park hasn't been very crowded which makes it all that much more pleasant.

And with all that in mind, we've gone ahead and moved our October trip from Saturday, October 10, to Wednesday, October 14. We'll again leave out of San Pedro on the 9AM ferry and come back on the 6PM out of Avalon. \$150 covers you for ferry, taxi, tanks & airfills, and all of the Giant Sea Bass that we can find. If you want to join us, give me a call at 310/652-4990 (or drop us an e-mail).

That change of date also necessitates that I move the FREE Tables & Computers class from that evening to the following Wednesday, October 21.



COVID TRAVEL UPDATE

It's somewhat mixed news this month.

Hawaii is relaxing its 14-day quarantine rule as of October 15. You will need to take a COVID test 72 hours before you leave and arrive with proof of a negative result. (Obviously, if it's positive, don't travel at all.) You'll have your temperature taken and fill out some forms and you're good-to-go. If you don't arrive with an approved negative test, then you'll still be required to complete a 14-day quarantine wherever it is you're staying. Once in Hawaii, quarantine rules don't apply to inter-island travel.

Along those same lines, two airlines are now offering their passengers COVID tests.

Hawaiian Airlines has announced that, starting October 15, if you're flying to Hawaii you can get a COVID test through them but initially only at Worksite Labs near LAX and SFO. (They'll expand the program to other gateway cities later.) This is a drive-through test that you'd do before you travel and you have to pay for it. It's \$90 if you want the results in 36 hours and \$150 if you want the results that day.

United Airlines also announced the availability of rapid COVID testing. United is using the Abbott Labs ID Now test administered by

GoHealth Urgent Care and Dignity Health. You can get an on-the-spot test with results in 15 minutes or you can do a mail-in test ahead of your trip. No pricing was given in the United press release. And this service for right now is only being offered at SFO.

That's the good news. The "mixed" part comes from Bonaire, which now has new confirmed COVID cases on the island after having had none for a long time. According to a post on the Sand Dollar website, as of last week there were now 37 active cases of COVID on Bonaire which has a population of 20,000 and a total of seven ICU beds. They have further restricted travel from Europe and have announced no plans in the short term to reopen air space to flights from North America. So it looks like Bonaire will remain off of the calendar for a while.

There was also a report last week from the CDC of 1,600 flights where symptomatic (not a typo – people showing COVID symptoms) were flying and exposed roughly 11,000 people during those flights. CDC says those are people who were within six feet of the infected passenger on any given

flight. (If you average this out, that's roughly 6 people per flight so it's not like the entire plane was exposed or got infected.)

But all of this is still a sobering reminder that we don't have a handle on the spread of this disease. There's no doubt that once you're sick, hospitals are doing a much better job now of caring for people and making sure you don't die, but that's also because of everything that's been learned treating the 33 million people worldwide who have gotten sick. One of the things we are starting to see now are the long-term effects of people who survive which can include cardiac and pulmonary residual issues, some of which may last a lifetime. And to relate it specifically to diving, these could be problems that potentially could end your diving immediately or at least for a long time to come. You can argue all you want about survival rates – admittedly high – but the reality is that you don't want to get this.

So wear a mask, social distance, use common sense, and don't take unnecessary risks. Flu season is right around the corner – although there's a school of thought that

2021 DIVING VACATIONS

January 13-22 • Socorro

May 29 - June 5 • Bonaire

July (??) • Indonesia

August (??) • Isla Mujeres

with so many people wearing mask and washing hands, perhaps this will be a mild one – and that may complicate things. There’s no question that treatments have gotten better but that’s because we’ve learned at their expense of those who have already gotten sick and recovered or died. But just over the weekend, the CDC warned about a possible surge in cases as 21 U.S. states reported a 10% or more increase in new cases in the past week. Do the best you can and don’t pooh-pooh the risks. Better to over-react and under-react.



GOPRO HERO-9

Damn those GoPro people!!! It seems every year in September/October, they release an updated version of their camera and force those of us who use them to say, “Is it time to upgrade?” And they’ve done it again with the release of the GoPro Hero9.

Personally, I’m shooting with a Hero7 and a Hero4. Admittedly, the 4 is a bit out of date for a number of reasons so I only use it for b-roll and stuff like that. I didn’t get an 8 so I’m now tempted to give some serious consideration to the Hero9.

The improvements on the camera certainly seem aimed more at those who DON’T use the camera underwater – I still wonder if

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Wed.	Oct. 14	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Wed.	21	- CLASS -	- TABLES & COMPUTERS -	FREE!!!
Sat.	31	Redondo (Vets)	Navigation dive (single tank)	\$25
Sat.	Nov. 7	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$150
Thu.	12	Redondo (Vets)	••• Night Dive •••	\$25
Wed.	18	- CLASS -	- PHOTO WORKSHOP -	\$25
Sat.	21	Redondo (Vets)	Beach dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	Dec. 2	- CLASS -	- FISH ID -	\$25

GoPro realizes how big this market could be for them – and most of the changes are in software, not functionality.

Perhaps the biggest change, which will have minimal impact underwater, is that there’s a now a fully-functional front-facing viewfinder. For those who are shooting themselves as selfies while surfing, hang-gliding, or just influencing, this is a huge plus. And, for the times you want to flip the cam around and get a picture of yourself with the manta getting cleaned behind you, it’s got some usefulness. But underwater, I’m thinking it’ll be somewhat limited.

One thing that will be nice underwater is that they’ve upped the still camera to a 20MP version. That’s significant and if you use it to do stills u/w, you should notice a significant improvement in the quality and detail of your images. (Although sensor size factors in here as well and will affect the quality of the image. For comparison, my Nikon D750 is a 24MP camera and full-frame.)

The video now shoots at 5K (up from 4K), stabilization is now 3.0, there’s a new horizon-leveling setting which always keeps the horizon level (might have some underwater application), narrow FOV (field of view) – missing from the Hero7 but back in the 8 – is also in the Hero9, and the battery life is

supposed to be better by 30%.

One interesting thing is that, like with the 8, you can use the Hero9 as a webcam with the addition of some free downloadable software from GoPro Labs. And since it also has Face Detection, that could make it quite versatile as a webcam. Most webcams shoot phenomenally wide and with the various GoPro FOVs, you can probably create a webcam image that doesn’t make it look like you’re staring into the back of a spoon.

Although the camera itself is waterproof to a whopping 33 feet, you can (and should) get a protective housing for it, which adds another \$50. But my frustration with the housing for the 7 (and the 8) is that because all the settings are so touch screen dependent, once you lock the camera in the housing, you’re now stuck with however you had it set up. On the 7 at least, there weren’t many changes you could make once underwater. I’m not sure if that’s improved with the 9 or not.

But overall, the GoPros have really been a great addition to anyone who wants to shoot u/w videos, especially when you add in warming filters and lights. They’re small, lightweight, and produce some amazing results. You can check out the Hero9 at GoPro.com or go to a place like Best Buy to get a hands-on feel for it.



NTSB TO ISSUE FINAL REPORT ON CONCEPTION

On October 20, starting at 6:30AM Pacific time, the NTSB will hold a public hearing (it will be live-streamed - we'll give you the link when we're closer to that date) and issue a final report and recommendations from the Conception tragedy from last year. The NTSB has also released what they call their Public Docket, which includes their various factual findings, witness statements and inter-

views, and other information that they have used and collected in the last year, and which will help form the basis of their report. The reports are broken down into various areas and total 1,677 pages. Be aware that reading through some of it might be graphic and upsetting. But if you do choose to view the docs, start with the ones that are labeled "Group Factual Report" for each working group #2-6. Those provide an overview and a summary of findings for that particular part of the investigation. You can then drill deeper if you like.

The hearing will last at least a few hours (Zoom format) in the form of various staff members from each of their fact-finding groups delivering their findings and assess-

ments. There will also at some point be a list of recommendations – some of which the dive community has already voluntarily enacted – to be implemented. As this is not a criminal hearing, you will not hear accusations or recommendations for punishment (or not) of anyone involved. The NTSB walks a fine line between simply stating the facts and presenting evidence, as opposed to pointing the finger of blame. So you may see a statement like "all crew were asleep" but it won't be followed with "and that's why everyone died."

This will put to rest that part of the investigation and I hope will provide some good closure for many of us. So be sure to mark your calendar for October 20 and set your alarm so you don't miss this.

PICTURE PAGE - Things we miss seeing

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2020)



***Christmas tree worms
in Bonaire***



P.O. Box 634
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



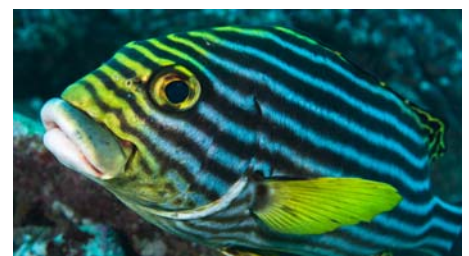
***Fire worms
in Roatan***



***Bumphead Parrotfish
in Yap***



***Black-spotted Puffers
in Fiji***



***Oriental Sweetlips
in the Maldives***