

THE REEF SEEKER



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DEADLY LOBSTERS

Outrageous claim of the year: Lobsters are the deadliest sea creatures around because they contribute to the deaths of more scuba divers than any other individual sea creature. Now before you think I've gone totally off my rocker, let me explain.

This coming weekend marks the opening the California Spiny Lobster season and, once again as we always do this time of the year, we caution you to be careful. Each year (and there's a similar trend in Florida for their 2-day lobster season every July), divers lose their lives while participating in lobster hunts because they are more focused on getting the lobster than they are in completing the dive safely. It's euphemistically called "Bug Fever" and it can kill you.

The most common cause of death seems to be running out of air. And while we raged about this over the years, the simple fact of the matter is that no matter what you're doing, there's simply no excuse for

running out of air. In the case of the lobster hunters, they become so focused on their quest that they forget to monitor their gauges and deplete their air supply. Some get lucky and have someone nearby to share air with, some get lucky and do a free ascent to the surface, but some aren't so fortunate and drown.

I have long taught and advocated that you should be able to know, within a few hundred PSI, how much air you have at any given moment without having to glance at your gauge. The only way you can do that is to be regularly and frequently checking it. By my reckoning, if you've consumed more than 500psi since the last time you looked, you're not looking often enough.

So if you start with 3000psi, you should be checking it around 2500psi, 2000psi, 1500psi, 1000psi, and 500psi. No one ever got into trouble from checking their gauge too often. Plenty of people have gotten into trouble by not checking it often enough.

D.A.N. statistics tell us that in cases where the trigger for an accident is known, 47% of the time it got started by the diver running out of air. And when you really start to think about that, that's an alarming statistic because there's no way that half the dives that people do

involve running out of air. Out of air is a relatively rare thing. Yet it produces an incredibly high number of the fatality triggers. So the only logical conclusion you can come to is that if a rare event has an inordinately large negative effect, that rare event must be extremely dangerous, perhaps more so than you've ever been led to believe during your training.

The point of all of this is that no lobster is worth your life. On top of that, factor in that some of you may not having been doing much diving or even no diving at all for the past two years because of COVID. In other words, you're not the diver in 2022 that you were in 2019, and you need to factor that in to how you approach a lobster dive as well.

Watch your air supply. Pay attention to what's going on with you physically. Dive with a lobster buddy who will pay attention to you and you should pay attention to them. Live to tell about the one that got away instead of your friends mourning that you're the one who's no longer around.



SOME TENTATIVE PLANS FOR 2023 TRAVEL

We've started putting together a tentative schedule for next year. None of the dates are locked in stone at this point but we're happy to start an "I'm interested" list for any given trip. (And some of you have already contacted us about certain trips.) Here's what's what:

GRAY WHALE WATCHING IN SAN IGNACIO LAGOON – This one's a non-diving trip – we go out in pangas and the whales come cavort with us – but it's run by a diving company, Nautilus Liveboards. We're thinking late January or sometime in February. Nautilus sets up a "glamping" camp so even though we'll be in tents, this isn't the Boy Scouts. To quote from their website: "We say NO to tiny tents with cots, sleeping bags and a couple of shared toilets and showers for the whole camp! Our tents are windproof, insulated and heated for maximum comfort, with ensuite bathrooms and showers, hot and cold running water with good pressure, and 24-hour power. Not to mention "real beds" with fine linen." We'd fly into Cabo and overnight, then fly to San Ignacio, spend 4 days whale watching, fly back to Cabo, possibly overnight again, and fly home.

YAP IS NOW OPEN (we think) – It appears that Yap, and the other FSM states, has now fully opened. And we're raring to go back. The main issue is with the United airline schedule, which has yet to be firmed up. It appears they're flying only every second or third Wednesday for a while, then every Wednesday starting in 2023, then Sundays and Wednesdays starting

in mid-March. But that could change. So we need to get a firmer idea of the flight sked before we can firm this up, and that may also mean pushing the trip back to summertime. But we're committed to going at SOME point next year. Generally what we do is make it a 10-day trip in Yap, which gives us lots of time to dive, do a land tour as well, and really experience all that Yap has to offer. With the flight sked (LAX-HNL-GUM-YAP and then back), it usually means roughly two weeks start-to-finish.

BONAIRE – This one we can count on. We annually make a pilgrimage to Bonaire shortly after Chamber Day wraps up (it's as much a needed vacation for me as it is for you) and 2023 will see us continue that tradition. We'll be staying with Buddy Dive again and usually have this planned as a Saturday-Saturday trip with six days of diving, doing both shore and boat dives. On top of that, there are an amazingly number of good restaurants in Bonaire, so you'll eat well too.

ISLA MUJERES – Want to be guaranteed an intimate encounter with a Whale Shark . . . or two, or three, or four (or more)? Then Isla

Mujeres is the place to go. We haven't gone here since 2016, so it's high time we went again. The way we generally set this up is a mixture of Whale Shark dives (three days – the encounters are snorkel-only), reef dives (two days), and a day of diving the cenotes on the Yucatan. So there's a lot of variety. And like Bonaire, Isla has an amazing number of good restaurants, so you'll eat well. For this one, we'll fly into Cancun, take a ferry over to Isla, a taxi to the hotel, and then we're in position ready to go. This is also usually a Saturday-Saturday trip.

GREAT WHITE SHARKS OF GUADALUPE – This is another one where we haven't been in a while (our most recent visit was 2017) and given that Guadalupe has been closed to diving all of this year, things ought to be hopping next year. It's all cage diving (three days), it takes a while (20 hours) to get there, the trip leaves from San Diego, but it's definitely a bucket-list experience. Every time we've gone, we've had incredible up-close encounters. Again, not cheap, but worth it.

MALDIVES – We'd want to go on the *Manthiri* again (our vessel of

2023 TENTATIVE DIVING VACATIONS

Jan/Feb • Gray Whales (non-diving)

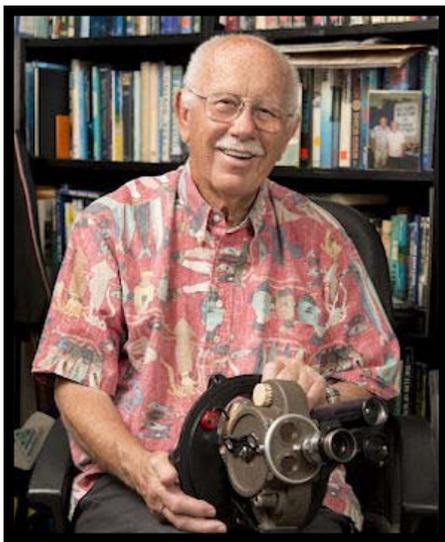
Mid-March • Yap

Late May • Bonaire

August • Isla Mujeres (??)

choice) because of the long-standing relationship we've had with them, they take excellent care of us, and the fact that the boat only takes 12 divers so the group stays nice and small. Most likely, we'd try to time this for sometime around November because that's when the Manta Rays congregate in Baa Atoll. We got lucky and saw them in 2017, and we'd hope for that again. We do this generally as a 10-day trip and, with travel time factored in, you're looking at two weeks overall. Also not cheap but definitely worthwhile and memorable.

So those are the tentative plans for 2023, subject to change for a whole host of reasons. But a nice, well-rounded (and ambitious) schedule with a variety of types of dives that should satisfy the curiosity and interests of divers of all experience and skill levels.



DR. SAM MILLER III HAS DIED

We're very sorry to share the news that Dr. Sam Miller III died on August 7, about a month shy of his 91st birthday. Sam was a diving pioneer and a veritable treasure

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Wed.	Oct. 5	--- CLASS ---	--- Photo Workshop ---	\$30
Wed.	12	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$175
Sat.	15	Redondo (Vets)	Beach Diving (single tank)	\$30
Thu.	27	Redondo (Vets)	••• Night Dive •••	\$30
Wed.	Nov. 2	--- CLASS ---	--- NAUI Nitrox ---	\$95
Sat.	5	Redondo (Vets)	Navigation (single tank)	\$30
Wed.	16	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$175
Thu.	Dec. 1	Redondo (Vets)	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE

trove of diving history and minutiae. (He was also supposed to be our November Zoom Seekers speaker, so that will obviously change.)

Dr. Sam came to California in 1951 at the ripe age of 19 and quickly became a teen-aged free-diver. Scuba diving had just arrived in Southern California and Sam made his first dive in Laguna Beach with no wetsuit and cheap equipment. It was just a tank and regulator, fins and a mask, no snorkel. Formal diving instruction didn't exist until 1954. When you bought your diving equipment, you got a little pamphlet of about six or eight pages that you read and that was the sum total of instruction. In those days, every time you put your head underwater it was a new experience. But Sam was enamored and quickly moved up the scuba hierarchy. His instructor credentials have impressively low numbers: L.A. County OWSI #11, NAUI Instructor #27, and PADI Instructor #241. Since 1962 he authored numerous articles in local, national, and international publications. And he maintained what is likely the world's largest library of scuba diving books and publications. Sam was a charter member of numerous dive organizations and he also provided diving support for water impact testing on the Apollo Command Module, which included helping re-

cover it when it sank to the bottom of the test tank.

Recreational diving was pretty much invented in the L.A. area back in the mid-50s and early-60s. And the fabulous thing about all of this is that the people who were there "in the room when it happened" still like talking about how everything came to be. But as these folks age, those stories get lost. And Sam's death means there's a little bit more of diving history that has now evaporated.

HURRICANE IAN AFTERMATH

It's too early to really know the effects of Hurricane Ian's trip through Florida but there are definitely some things we'll look out for. There's no question this powerful storm will leave much destruction in its wake.

Ian passed just west of Key West and that may have some effect on the reefs there, as well as some along other parts of the Keys to the east of Key West. The storm made landfall along Florida's western coast, just north of Fort Meyers (and far south of Tampa) but as it moved on a path to the NE, one has to wonder what effect this might have, most likely through runoff and storm surge, on areas like Crystal River, which are major winter

habitation areas for Manatees.

And while it didn't directly strike central Florida's cave country (areas around Branford), it still could have some effect on the rivers that are fed by places like Ginnie Springs, Orange Grove Sink, and others. And if those rivers back up, that could have some effect on those dive areas as well.

We'll update you with whatever we hear.

AVALON DATE CHANGE

We originally listed an Avalon day-trip for October 19, but I realized that I will be in Indonesia for that,

so we've changed that date to October 12. Same general parameters: 8:45AM going over from San Pedro, leaving Avalon at 6:00PM on the return. Call us at 310/652-4990 if you're interested.

ZOOM SEEKERS IN OCTOBER

You may have seen the article in the *L.A. Times* talking about earthquake faults off of Palos Verdes, many of which run underwater, that could be as serious as the San Andreas fault. So how timely is it that our October Zoom Seeker speaker is Dr. Mark Legg (I call him "Dr. Rock"), a geologist who studies that specific area as well as other underwater areas where

earthquake faults might be found.

I first met Mark in 1996 when I was working for KCET and did a filmed dive in the *Alvin* submersible off the backside of Catalina. Mark was the geologist on that trip, and one of the things we looked for when we dove was evidence of passing through a fault zone. Sometime after that, I alerted Mark to what appeared to be an underwater landslide in the Arrow Cove area, and it turned out to be a major event that he was able to study.

So Mark's got some experience in looking at the underwater landscape from a geologist's perspective and he'll share that with us on Tuesday, October 11, starting at 7:30PM. I hope you'll be able to join us.

PICTURE PAGE - Lobsters of the world

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2022)



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**Easter Island,
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**Yap,
Micronesia**



**Roatan,
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**Cocos,
Costa Rica**