

THE REEF SEEKER



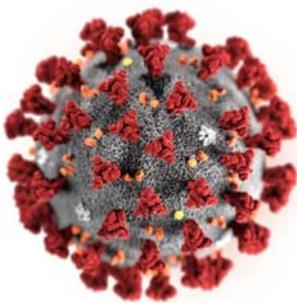
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November - 2021



HAPPY HALLOWEEN

Trick or treat!!! Your treat is that you're only getting ONE e-mail from me today since when the month ends on a Sunday, I combine TWARS and the newsletter. And that's no trick.



MY COVID EXPERIENCE

As many of you know, at the beginning of October, I tested positive for COVID-19. Fortunately, mine appears to have been a mild case and I feel that I'm now fully recovered. But there are certainly lessons to be learned from what I went through.

Maybe the biggest lesson in all of this is how much we don't know and how many variables there are,

as well as what we think we "know" maybe isn't really correct.

I have no solid proof as to how I got infected. I'm fully vaxxed (Pfizer) but my second shot was at the end of February. Did my protection wane in the ensuing seven months? No way to know. I wear a mask regularly and it's a KN95, not just a paper one. But where I think I got infected, it was an indoor event (first one I'd gone to in eighteen months), and there was eating/drinking going on so I had my mask off at times as did others. Was that it? No way to know for sure and the organizers of the event say they don't have knowledge of anyone else reporting that they were sick. But I had a good time (except for the fact my team lost) and certainly didn't feel sick at the end of the evening.

In fact, my symptoms didn't kick in for almost four days. And that's the danger if you DO get infected and why you should be wearing a mask. Fortunately in those four days, I only had close contact with three people, all three of whom were fully vaccinated. Also fortunately, two of them tested negative. Unfortunately one of them – who I'd had the most extended contact with – tested positive but, fortunately, was totally asymptomatic throughout.

But that brings up another issue and illustrates the insidiousness of

this disease. Had I not informed the person I infected that I tested positive, they would have had no reason to think they were infected since they had no symptoms. And who knows how many people they could have unwittingly infected because they were asymptomatic but, in theory, still able to shed virus and infect others.

The conundrum in all of this is trying to figure out what the balance is between trying to resume living a normal life – whatever the "new normal" will be – or shutting yourself off from the world as much as possible to avoid getting sick. To the extreme, you certainly decrease your chances of getting sick by only going out when you absolutely have to (work, supermarket, etc.) but is that the way you want to live your life? On the other hand, the more widely you venture out, the more likely it is you'll run across an infected person, and does that mean you've got a target on your back and you'll eventually get infected? Is it a form of COVID roulette? There's simply no easy or well-defined answer to all of this.

But we do know that this is a disease that someone has to give you. We also know that the fewer people that are sick, the less the virus will spread. We know that vaccines generally provide protection against getting sick which means

fewer targets for the disease which should also help diminish or even eradicate it. And even if you do have a “breakthrough” infection, that the same vaccine will generally prevent you from being hospitalized &/or dying.

COVID is not going away anytime soon. And while my experience was mild and mainly an annoyance, to not take this seriously in terms of your own health or that of others you come in contact with, is simply folly and even irresponsible. Because one thing that’s still unclear are the long-term effects that some people may suffer (referred to as “Long COVID”).

Please get vaccinated if you haven’t. Please get a booster if you’re qualified. Please wear a mask, especially when you’re around people you don’t know whether that’s outside or inside. Please socially-distance, especially from those you don’t know or trust, as best you can. All of these things will help lessen the spread, flatten the curve, and let us all enjoy life again. Be a responsible member of the community. Don’t be a covidiot.



COVID INSURANCE

Not to make this the “All COVID” newsletter but there’s one more thing to consider for those who have started travelling again.

Most countries now require a negative test to enter and the airlines check that before you’re allowed to board the plane at your origina-

tion point. But the U.S. also requires a negative test to get back into this country, regardless of vaccination status, so what happens if you get infected while you’re on your trip, and can’t fly home? Many countries will require you to not only isolate, but will have you do it at your own expense (sometimes in facilities they designate), plus you’re going to have to deal with costs incurred for changing your ticket for the eventual flight home, let alone any medical expenses that might be incurred while waiting for the disease to run its course.

You can get – and should get – insurance for all of this.

You want to have medical insurance to cover a hospital stay or something like that. You’ll want to have some sort of trip interruption insurance to cover hotels or additional airline costs. And the big thing is you want to examine whatever you have to make sure there are no COVID exclusions in whatever policy you have.

If you’re over 65 and on Medicare, bear in mind that Medicare coverage generally ends as soon as you leave the United States. So you’ll

want to give some thought to a supplemental policy that covers out-of-the-US situations. And you can buy policies that are short-term and only cover you for the duration of your trip. When we were in Mexico in January (and this was before I was vaxxed), I got a policy that covered me medically for the 10 days I would be out of the United States. There was no COVID exclusion, it covered hospitalization and other expenses incurred due to medical issues including COVID, and it cost me about \$100. Well worth the peace of mind.

So whenever you ready to start travelling again, you need to not only think about what dive gear you need, what photo equipment to take, how many t-shirts to pack, and things like that, but also do a really thorough deep dive into what insurance you have, what it covers and what it doesn’t, and what you may need to do to supplement it.

Hopefully, it will be something you’ll never need to use. But if the situation should require it, you’ll be awfully glad you invested that time to insure (no pun intended) that you were fully covered for all scenarios.

2022 DIVING VACATIONS

March 11-20 • Socorro

May 20-28 • Bonaire

July (??) • Indonesia

Fall (??) • Yap



ZOOM SEEKERS IN NOVEMBER

Make plans to join us on Tuesday, November 9, for our monthly Zoom Seekers meeting as our speaker will be outstanding photographer Renee Capozolla.

In 2013, Renee joined us for an Avalon trip armed with a point-and-shoot camera. She's come a long way since then. Not only has she upgraded her equipment, but her images have won worldwide acclaim, including being named "Underwater Photographer of the Year" in 2021. Her images have been published in many places and she also been judging photo competitions. Renee will share with us the story of her journey, give you some photos tips, and will show some of her favorite images and give you the story behind them.

Renee's specialty is over/under or split-image shots, where the top part of the image is above water and the bottom part of the image is underwater. And she'll be giving some tips and tricks on how to do these types of shots as well.

So mark your calendar for Tuesday, November 9, starting at 7:30PM. I'll send out the Zoom link next Sunday with TWARS. Hope you can join us.

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Wed.	Nov. 3	Redondo (Vets)	••• Night dive •••	\$25
Sat.	13	Redondo (Vets)	Navigation (single dive)	\$25
Wed.	17	--- CLASS ---	TABLES & COMPUTERS	FREE
Sat.	Dec. 4	Redondo (Vets)	Beach dive (single tank)	\$25
Wed.	8	Catalina Express	Avalon U/W Park (3 dives)	\$160
Thu.	16	Redondo (Vets)	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	FREE
Wed.	22	--- CLASS ---	FISH ID	\$25

OIL SPILL UPDATE

The good news is that it wasn't as bad as it could have been or was feared. The original estimate was 125,000 gallons spilled but the Coast Guard revised that. It's now being reported as 25,000 gallons but when you really drill down into what they're saying, it's a range of 25,000-131,000 gallons but they think it will be on the low end.

The pipeline, which runs north from the Elly/Ellen platform to Long Beach Harbor, has been totally shut down and any oil in that pipeline has been pumped out and removed. The investigation, which is still on-going, found the leak, which appears to have been caused and damaged by a ship's anchor that was dragging. The issue is now to determine when this happened and which ship caused it.

You keep hearing about the container ship backlog at our local ports and if you've gone out on the dive boat or the Catalina Express lately, you've seen some of the 70+ ships that are sitting out there waiting to offload their containers. What you may not be aware of is that there are designated waiting areas for ships waiting to offload their cargo. There are 28 of them inside the breakwater, and 25 more outside the breakwater. They are all clearly marked on nautical charts as a big circle. The

ship drops anchor in the middle of the circle and then the circle is the area where the ship might swing as wind and currents change. But the anchor is supposed to stay in the middle of the circle.

The pipeline runs just east of some of these circles without a lot of clearance between the outside of the circle and the right-of-way of the pipeline. The right-of-way is 200 feet wide but when you consider that these container ships can be as much as 1200 feet long and 150 feet wide, 200 feet isn't much.

The assumption is that one of the ships assigned to a circle near the pipeline dragged anchor and that the anchor smashed into the pipeline. This may have happened as long ago as January and it took until October for the rupture to develop. But that's still to be determined.

What is known is that the pipeline was displaced by 105 feet. The break is at a depth of around 100 feet and even though the pipeline sits on the sand at that depth and is encased in a cement sheath, it's not invincible. (Those anchors are REALLY massive and heavy.) One reason they think the initial displacement of the pipeline could have happened months ago is that when divers inspected the break area, the part of the cement sheath that had cracked had significant marine growth around the break,

indicating it had happened some time ago.

I was invited to sit in last week on a Zoom meeting of the Army Corps of Engineers for a discussion about the break. Their main concern was oil seepage into areas from where they dredge sand used for beach renourishment. (You may recall the disastrous beach renourishment around Vets Park in late 2012 which is how we first got involved with the Corps.) One of their concerns was that while a lot of the oil stayed on the surface where it could be retrieved, some of the oil can sink to the bottom and settle into the sand and they wanted to make sure that they were not going to be picking up that sand and depositing it on a public beach.

I was able to give them the diving perspective on this but also pointed out that sinking oil might become an issue when it comes time to decommission these rigs because if any of them in this area are taken apart all the way to the bottom, in addition to whatever gunk and sediment has built up over the years, would there now be an issue with oil that has settled to the bottom

being reintroduced into the water column when these rigs are dismantled?

That segued into a short discussion of the Rigs to Reefs program, which essentially is a movement to dismantle only the upper portion of the rigs, leaving the underwater parts intact, but that's all going to require further discussion (and is also not the purview of the Corps).

So there's still a ways to go on all of this but overall, it seems like it wasn't as bad as it could have been. I think all the OC beaches that were closed have now been reopened. There are some abalone planting and kelp restoration projects in the affected areas but I haven't yet heard if any of that has been impacted.

One of the other things to keep an eye on is the concern that Amplify Energy, the operators of the Elly/Ellen rig and the pipeline will simply declare bankruptcy and try to walk away from everything. Then the issue is who pays for the cleanup and any compensation due to anyone harmed by the spill? (Google "Huntington Beach Oil

spill" and the top results are ads from law firms soliciting clients.) So this is all going to play out for a while. It's a complex situation with lots of players, lots of variables, and lots of moving parts but we'll do our best to keep you up to speed.

TURN CLOCKS BACK NEXT WEEK

Hopefully, you didn't do it this week. If you did, that explains why you were early for everything today . . .

Next Sunday, November 7, we end Daylight Savings Time. (One easy way to remember this is that it's always the Sunday after Halloween, so the kids have extra light to trick or treat.) So before you go to bed on Saturday, make sure your turn all of your clocks BACK one hour – spring forward, fall back – and you'll be good-to-go when you wake up Sunday morning. And hopefully it's not too much of a shock to your system when you realize that sundown will now be at 5PM.



Manta Fantasy
Sea of Cortez - 1999

PICTURE PAGE

Two of my favs

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2021)



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Sheephead Stare-down
Avalon - 2017