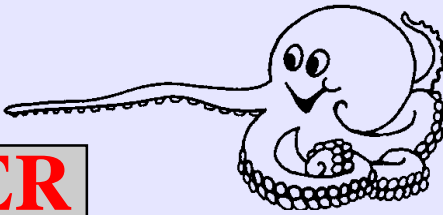


# THE REEF SEEKER



REEF SEEKERS DIVE CO.  
P.O. Box 11634  
Beverly Hills, Ca. 90213  
(310) 652-4990  
www.reefseekers.com  
e-mail: reefseekrs@aol.com

February - 2008

## FLORIDA PRE-TRIP ANTICIPATION

We're about a week away from departing for our Florida trip where one of the primary things we'll be doing is diving with (we hope) the Manatees who come into the Crystal River area each winter to lounge in the warmer inland waters rather than the cooler Gulf of Mexico.

I first dove this area back in 1979 and will be really interested to see how it's changed in the last 30 years. When we first went down (while I was living in Richmond, VA), we piled into a large RV - which had no heat other than the flames from a propane stove - and drive straight on down. (Ah, to be young and newly-certified again . . .)

At that time, there was only one dive shop actually on Crystal River, Tally's Pro Dive (which I think is now American pro Dive) and they were at the north end. So we rented these small boats and puttered for about half an hour (you can't go over idle speed) to get down to King Springs, which is where the Manatees hung out.

Someone had told us that the Manatees responded to humming through your snorkel and - like the manatee rubes that we were - we fell for that hook, line, and sinker.

So I was the first one in the water and I'm humming away like I'm auditioning for "American manatee Idol". But I'll be damned if within a minute or two, a very large Manatee emerged from the murkiness (viz was about 10 feet) to see who was going on. And it was just magic after that.

We dove other areas too (some of which we'll visit on this upcoming trip) and the next time you corner me, have me tell you about staying at Steamboat Bill's in Branford.

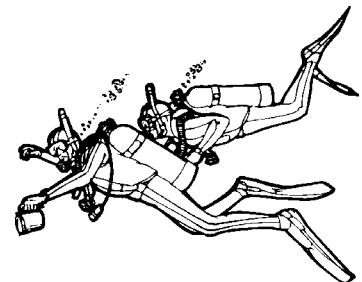
I did that trip every year while I lived in Richmond, through 1981. In 1992, the DEMA show was held in Orlando and we decided to go in a week early so I could take some of our staff (Billy, Maurice, Rod, Floyd & Pat from the maverick, and a couple of others) to my old haunts. And it was amazing to see how the place had changed in a little over 10 years.

There were now five or six operators on the river, there were more hotels, more congestion, and a lot more people. In fact, things had gotten so busy that they'd had to erect special Manatee Sanctuaries where the Manatees could go and where people were prohibited. And it was really interesting to see the Manatees swim under the buoy line that marked the sanctuary and . . . stop. They knew where the line was and when they'd had enough

of you, they crossed into safety and based thumbed their noses at the people.

I think my favorite thing from the 1992 trip was when we stopped for lunch the first day. We had rented a pontoon boat (which I promptly rammed into the dock because I mixed up "forward" and "reverse", much to Floyd's delight - he still needles me about it) and at lunch had pulled up to a restaurant with a dock and tied off. I went inside to ask for a table for eight and as an afterthought said, "Oh yeah, in your non-smoking section. Please." The hostess looked at me like I was crazy, paused for a minute, and then drawled out, "Non-smoking section? Y'all must be from California, aren't you? We don't have no non-smoking section."

So it'll be interesting to go back this time and to see what changes the last 16 years have brought to the Crystal River area. And I promise to tell you all about them when we return in the middle of the month. And - since we'll be going through Branford - maybe I'll even have a new Steamboat Bill story.



## CONTINUING EDUCATION

Feb. 7	Fish I.D.	Mar. 6	Fish I.D.
8	Practical Navigation	8	<b>Beach Diving/Nav</b>
10	<b>Beach Diving/Nav</b>	12	<b>Night Diving (Squid)</b>
13	<b>Night Diving (Squid)</b>	13	Rescue
16	CPR/Oxygen/1st Aid	13	<b>Photo Workshop</b>
27	<b>Squid Dive</b>	20	NAUI Adv. (& 3/22-23)
		26	<b>Squid Dive</b>

## AVALON UNDERWATER CLEANUP

Final preparations are underway for the annual Avalon Underwater Cleanup February 23. We will once again be taking a contingent over and would love to have you join us. There's still time to get you signed up.

We'll be leaving on the 6:15AM *Catalina Express* boat out of San Pedro. We should be on-station no later than 8AM and that will leave you a good hour for breakfast and to set up gear and hobnob with friends. The dive briefing will be at 9AM, diving commences at 9:30 and runs through 11AM, and then you can either have your gear stored for the afternoon and enjoy the awards ceremony (starting at 1PM) or you can go to the UW Park and dive the rest of the afternoon. We're coming back on the 6PM boat.

Cost is \$110 (because it's a charity event, the Reef Saver discount does not apply) which includes event entry, ferry ride over and back, gear transport, gear storage, and all the fun you can handle. I'm limiting our group size to 28 so if you want to join us, give us a call at 310/652-4990 before we fill the remaining slots.



## OIL RIGS ON 2/9

We've got our first Oil Rig dive of 2008 on Saturday, February 9 on the *Sea Bass* and we've still got space available. Hopefully this crappy weather we've been having will blow through (we've got to get a good day eventually) and we'll enjoy some spectacular diving, Rich Gayout, captain of the *Sea Bass*, says they were out there a few weeks ago and it was just stunning. And, since the rigs sit almost 10 miles offshore, they can handle a big swell and not have the vis disappear so we're hopeful that the spectacular conditions still exist. All we have to do is get out there.

## SEA BASS MOVES

Take note (and this will affect our February 9 Oil Rig dive) that the *Sea Bass* has moved docks. They haven't gone far as they're still in Ports 'O Call. But they're now at the far end of that area. Basically, you would go as you have before but now, rather than stopping at the Crusty Crab, you keep going all the way down Nagoya Way as far as you can go and park. The *Sea Bass* is on the last dock which is Berth 75. (If you've ever gone out on the *Psalty V* or the *Second Stage*, it's just beyond them.)

The dock change is effect as of now. Also note that this does NOT affect the *Magician* which is still at the dock behind the Crusty Crab.

## CHAMBER DAY

You'll get a lot more info next month, but you can mark your calendar for May 7, as that's Chamber Day and Chamber Evening this year. And this year should prove to be very special as it's our 20th annual Chamber Day and 10th annual Chamber Evening. We hope to have you participate. More details will be forthcoming in the March newsletter.

## DIVING VACATIONS

**April 6-15 • Socorro  
(Mantas & Hammerheads)**

**May 17-25 - Bonaire**

**July 11-20 - Yap**

## SMOKEY THE DIVER

When I was growing up, Smokey the Bear was frequently on TV proclaiming, "Only YOU can prevent forest fires." I think we need to put Smokey in a wetsuit so he can proclaim, "Only YOU can prevent diving accidents."

I am amazed and dismayed when either doing accident reports, reading through lawsuits, or simply talking to divers, how often people are simply not willing to take responsibility for their actions. I suppose it's only human nature, but even so, it gets a bit daunting at times.

And rather than delve into finger-pointing and accusations (we'll leave that to the Democratic and Republican candidates for President - by the way, don't forget to vote on Tuesday) I just want to take some time to discuss a fact that many people either don't acknowledge or simply aren't aware of.

And that is that once you jump off the boat, it's out of our hands. There's really nothing we can do for you until/unless you get yourself back to the surface. And even then, our options may be limited. So as Smokey the Diver might say, "Only YOU can prevent dive accidents."

One thing that's popped up recently deals with diver separation. By this, I mean when two divers separate unintentionally, as opposed to making a deliberate and pre-planned decision to go it alone. Sometimes, the divers continue assuming the other diver is all right. And sometimes they surface, kick back to the boat, and eventually mention they lost their buddy and

## UPCOMING BOAT DIVES

Sat	Feb. 9	<i>Sea Bass</i>	•• Oil Rigs (ltd load) ••	\$135/145
<b>Sat</b>	<b>23</b>	<b><i>Cat. Express</i></b>	<b>Avalon U/W Clean-Up</b>	<b>\$110</b>
Sun	Mar. 9	<i>Magician</i>	Catalina (Frontside)	130/140
Sat	22	<i>Great Escape</i>	Santa Barbara Island	150/160
Sun	Apr. 6	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (NW Harbor)	150/160
Sat	19	<i>Sea Bass</i>	<i>Palawan/Avalon/Domin.</i>	130/140
Sun	May 4	<i>Great Escape</i>	Farnsworth/Catalina back	140/150
<b>Wed</b>	<b>7</b>	<b><i>All boats</i></b>	<b>Chamber Day Benefit Dive</b>	<b>\$90f</b>

Prices are listed as 14-day advanced purchase/regular. Food/air included all trips. All diving to be done on compressed air only - no nitrox. Fuel surcharge may apply.

when we say "Where?" the answer is, "I'm not sure. Over that way . . . I think."

Basically when you dive with someone you have to make a commitment to them. And that doesn't mean that there's any sin in getting separated from your buddy. It happens. Sometimes you can find them again underwater and sometimes you can't. But it's important to follow recognized lost-buddy procedures (they really don't differ much from agency to agency).

The first thing you want to do is backtrack for about a minute to see if you can find the errant buddy. (Of course, who-lost-whom is always a matter of perspective.) If you can't find them in that time frame, you should do a controlled ascent to the surface (blow off your safety top - which should be optional anyhow - because if there's a problem, time is of the essence). If you don't see bubbles in your immediate vicinity, alert the boat crew or DM that you've lost your buddy. Stay in position because you're the best marker we have to last location seen.

Now if you're the "lost" buddy, the same thing applies to you. Search for about a minute (perhaps ahead of you in you're the one who

stopped to look at something) and if you don't hook up in a minute, go to the surface.

In an ideal situation, both buddies should become aware of the separation at the same time and both should surface at about the same time. Get back together, figure out what went wrong, and decide whether or not you'll continue the dive.

But in a case where the second buddy does not surface within another minute after the first buddy, it may be most prudent to assume something's wrong and launch a search. In cases like these, and especially when all buddy teams agree that these are the protocols to be followed (don't go off on your own, don't hook up with another buddy, don't meld into another group you find underwater), it may be better to over-react than to under-react.

Nothing's perfect. Certainly not the buddy system. Different people have different styles of diving. But if you agree to dive with someone, do your best to stay with them. And if you do get split up and can't find them, follow these procedures (both on the surface within a minute or so) and it might go a long way to safer diving.



## REEF SAVER CARD

If you don't have a Reef Saver card, you're spending 10% more with us than you have to. Now we'll be the first to admit that we're more than happy to take all of your money, but we're trying to be reasonable about it. A Reef Saver card, which only costs \$50 for a full year (365 days from date of purchase, not a calendar year), entitles you to a 10% discount on all local trips and repair parts. (It doesn't apply to labor or foreign trips.) But the bottom line is that if you spend \$500 a year with us,

which isn't tough to do, you ought to spend another \$50 and get a Reef Saver card so you can start enjoying a 10% discount on top of everything else you love (we hope) about Reef Seekers.

flood. But, used properly, they'll solve that annoying problem.

## E-MAIL POLICIES

FYI, we will NEVER will knowingly give anyone the e-mail address that you've given us. (And that includes the FBI if they come looking for scuba terrorists again.) Generally you'll get the monthly newsletter on the 1st and the Monday-morning "This Week at Reef Seekers" (both coming from [kenkurtis@aol.com](mailto:kenkurtis@aol.com)) but that's pretty much it. Occasionally, we may also send out special notices about last-minute trips or something like that, but we try to hold that to a minimum. If you ever get something else and you're not sure if it's legit, please give us a call.

## DRYSUIT TIP

If you're one of those who get little leaks through your wrist seals when you're using a drysuit, go out and buy a pair of terrycloth wrist bands (like you'd use for tennis or racquetball) and wear them inside your dry suit. They won't stop the leak, but they will absorb the water that gets in and prevent it from running down to your elbow. Just make sure you don't put them TOO far down your wrist and cause a full

# PICTURE PAGE - A mixed bag

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2008)

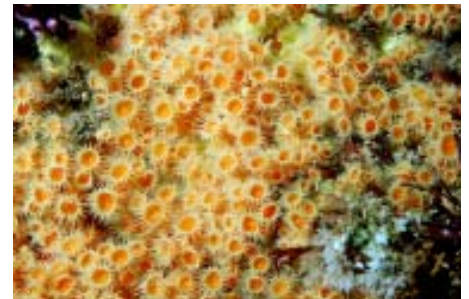


**Blue-spotted Jawfish**  
**Baja**



P.O. Box 11634  
Beverly Hills, CA 90213

[WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM](http://WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM)



**Field of Anemones**  
**Yellow Wall - Farnsworth**



**Shelled octopus**  
**Lembah Straits - Indonesia**



**Sir Clumpy (nudibranch)**  
**Kona, Hawaii**



**Red-toothed Triggerfish**  
**Palau**