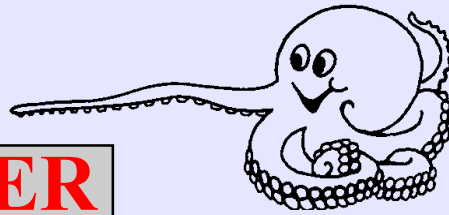


# THE REEF SEEKER



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January - 2023



**HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!**

Let's see . . .

- 2020 definitely sucked
- 2021 only semi-sucked
- 2022 occasionally sucked
- So 2023 ought to be at least tolerable!!

In all seriousness, here's looking to a brighter 2023. It really does seem like we're coming out of this post-COVID morass, and the new Influenza A morass doesn't seem to dampen our spirits too much. (We'll ignore RSV and hope it ignores us as well.) You definitely need to keep your guard up but it certainly seems like life is returning to some semblance of normal, or at least whatever this "new normal" is going to become.

From a Reef Seekers diving standpoint, we're fairly fully-ramped up. We've got a complete slate of local trips to Avalon, shore dives at Redondo, and even on-line classes. We've got five foreign vacation trips on the schedule (more on that later), and—in one of the good things to come out of the

pandemic – we're got a third season of Zoom Seekers lined up with a lot of interesting guests on the calendar (more on that as well too).

We truly hope that your personal, professional, and leisure lives have taken a turn towards normalcy and that 2023 will prove to be brighter, happier, and just plain more fun than the past few years have been. Here's to the next 365 days!!!

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## ZOOM SEEKERS

### 2023 SCHEDULE

If it hadn't been for the pandemic, we never would have created Zoom Seekers. But it seemed like a great way for all of us to get together regularly and talk about diving. It proved so popular in 2021 that we brought it back in 2022 and it will continue in 2023.

The sessions are the second Tuesday of each month from 7:30-9:00PM. (The exception this year will be in February because the second Tuesday is Valentine's Day, so we're bumping that by a day to Wednesday, February 15.) Each Zoom Seekers meeting starts with a 5-minute hi-how-ya-doing.

We then introduce our speaker, who talks for anywhere from 30-60 minutes, and that is followed with a moderated Q&A from those in attendance. And if you miss a Zoom Seekers, we record them all and they're posted the next day on both our FaceBook page as well as on our YouTube page. So you can always catch a talk you missed. (**HOT TIP:** All the talks are archived on the Reef Seekers website so you can go back as far as you like through those links.)

We've put together what we hope is an interesting and varied slate of speakers for 2023. More info along with their bios and pix are on our website, but here's who's who and what's what for 2023:

**JAN. 10** – Brett Eldridge talking about discovering new wrecks in Southern California waters as well as demonstrating the photogrammetric technique he uses to document the wrecks.

**FEB. 15** – This is the one that's on a Wednesday. Dale Sheckler will be talking about some of the best dive sites around the Channel Islands.

**MAR. 14** – Dan Orr is back once again and will be chatting about aspects of dive safety that have caught his fertile mind.

**APRIL 18** – This one is the third Tuesday because I'll be in Bonaire the previous week and the time difference means it ends way too

late for me. But our speaker is Coroner Captain John Kades, who I've worked with for almost 20 years, and he will outline the general way they approach a scuba fatality autopsy so that we can hopefully get to the bottom of what befalls a diving victim. (This is different than our "Why Divers Die" Scuba Show seminar as that one deals with specific cases for the previous calendar year.)

**MAY 9** – Stephen Holman is a local diver and artist and the underwater world has lately been inspiring his art. We've also accepted his donations for Chamber Evening prizes so you may already be familiar with his work. Stephen will explain what inspires him and show examples of what he's created.

**JUNE 13** – Continuing our art theme, we welcome Victor Douieb to Zoom Seekers. Victor, one of our regular divers in the past, has become a sculptor. In fact, it was a Reef Seekers trip to the Sea of Cortez that he says first inspired him to sculpt a shark. And he's kept going from there.

**JULY 11** – Steve Wertz is a regional manager for the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, specifically charged with overseeing many of our SoCal MPAs. As the CADF&W will have just completed what's called the "Decadal Review" where they take a good look at each MPA every 10 years, Steve will present what those findings were and what changes you can expect from the process.

**AUGUST 8** – If you ever wanted to dive Southern California and Palau on the same day, this is the talk for you. Because Rachel Cushman, Dive Safety Officer (Aquarium Operations) at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, will talk about the volun-

teer diving program there and explain how you can get involved if you're interested.

**SEPTEMBER 12** – Statically, anywhere from 33-50% of you reading this has been infected with COVID. And once you think the disease is gone, how do you know if it's safe to get back in the water? Dr. Charlotte Sadler is based at UCSD and heads up a team that studies exactly that question, making recommendation to UHMS, DAN, and the training organizations, as to what tests to run and when it's OK for divers to return to diving. She'll be sharing her knowledge and the latest research with us.

**OCTOBER 10** – Karl Huggins has been the Program Director at the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber for the past 30 years. He's not only a leading expert on dive computers, but he created the algorithm that was used in the Edge, Skinny Dipper, and Delphi/Phoenix dive computers. He'll explain how things you don't understand or know about your dive computer can actually make your dives more dangerous rather than safer.

**NOVEMBER 14** – TBA. Still working on this one.

**DECEMBER 12** – Doug Sloss is

a world-class photographer who used to ply his trade on the *Palau Aggressor II* but now has settled into the Colorado area. He'll be sharing with you some of his tips and tricks for getting good photos and making yours really stand out.

So that's the plan. And hopefully you'll be able to join us for many of these fun, informative talks.

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## **NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR DIVERS**

In case you needed some dive-related ones for your list . . .

- **DIVE MORE OFTEN** – Resolve to do more dives in 2023 than you did in 2022. Shoot for at least once a quarter (every three months).
- **IMPROVE BUOYANCY** – Almost every diver can do better at this but it takes practice. Even if your only option is a pool, the more you're aware of it and the more you try to get better, the better you'll become.
- **DROP SOME WEIGHT** – I can almost guarantee that you dive over-weighted. Start by taking off 2 pounds and see how it goes. Then take off 2 more. The ultimate

## **2023 DIVING VACATIONS**

**Feb. 6-10 • San Ignacio**

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**April 8-15 • Bonaire**

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**July 10-23 • Yap**

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**November 15-29 • Maldives**

test is 500psi in your tank at a 15-foot safety stop, no air in your BC, and you're neutrally-buoyant.

• **TAKE A CLASS** – There's always SOMETHING new to learn.

• **DIVE A NEW SPOT** – That can be local or foreign, but dive some place where you've never been before.

• **TURN A NON-DIVER INTO A DIVER** – Got a friend who's not certified? Get them turned on to diving and create a new buddy for yourself.

## TIME TO TRAVEL

As the world tries to get back to normal – at least whatever “new normal” is these days – we're ramping our travel sked back up to full. We've got five trips planned for 2023. You can get more details on our website, as well as see past trip reports and pix, but here's a quick overview of what we have planned (prices don't include airfare but do include diving, crew tip, and some other goodies):

### FEBRUARY 6-10

**SANIGNACIO LAGOON** – This is for grey whale watching as these leviathans come here each year to calve and prepare for their long migration back north. But amazingly, the whales over the years have not only tolerated human interaction, but even seem to seek it out. So if you're ever wanted to hug a whale, this is the place. Bear in mind this is a non-diving trip (it's prohibited in the lagoon) and it's a short trip (five days total including travel) but it will definitely be special. \$3,195/person.

### APRIL 8-15

**BONAIRE** – A favorite and annual destination, Bonaire is great

## UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	PRICE
Wed.	Jan. 4	--- CLASS ---	--- Secrets of Fish ID ---	<b>35</b>
Sat.	14	Redondo/Vets	Beach Diving	<b>35</b>
Wed.	18	<i>Catalina Express</i>	Avalon Underwater Park	<b>175</b>
Thu.	26	Redondo/Vets	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	<b>FREE</b>
Wed.	Feb. 1	--- CLASS ---	--- Photo Workshop ---	<b>35</b>
Sat.	18	Redondo/Vets	Navigation Made Easy	<b>35</b>
Thu.	23	Redondo/Vets	••• Squid Dive (night) •••	<b>FREE</b>
Wed.	Mar. 1	--- CLASS ---	--- NAUI Nitrox Diver ---	<b>95</b>

for those of you who may not have been diving in a while or who would enjoy a location that offers a relaxed pace with a combination of boat and shore diving. In fact, Bonaire's considered the shore-diving capital of the world with over 60 named and marked sites. We'll be back at Buddy Dive with a combination of 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom apartments. \$2,375/diver.

### JULY 10-23 (Group 1) as well as JULY 21 – August 2 (Group 2)

**YAP** – One of our favorite home-away-from-homes and this year, we're offering back-to-back groups. You can choose Group 1 or Group 2, or decide to extend your stay – more bang for your buck from the airfare – and do both groups. We'll have mantas, Mandarinfish, sharks, and a whole lot more. Plus we'll throw in a land tour of Yap including some WW2 sites and a visit to a Stone Money bank, do a Manta ID class, and a Photo Workshop. We've had some pretty incredible experiences over the years in Yap and are looking forward to adding some more. \$3,695/diver (Group 1 – Group 2 is \$3,550)

### AUGUST 19-26

**ISLA MUJERES** – Did someone say Whale Shark??? Isla Mujeres, just north of Cancun, is home to the largest known annual aggregation of whale sharks, with as many

as 800 animals in the general area. We'll spend three days out in the whale shark area, get in some local dives, and even venture back to the mainland to experience the famous cenotes. On top of that, Isla has some incredible restaurants so we'll be eating well too. Approx. \$2,995/diver (non-diver rate is also available).

### NOVEMBER 15-28

**MALDIVES** – Once again we'll be on the mighty *Manthiri*, our boat of choice in this area of the world. We'll explore many of the atolls that make up the Maldives with special attention to the area around Baa Atoll, where we hope to find the annual manta aggregation. We'll also visit Ari Atoll (second-largest atoll in the world) with a stop at Shark Circus, where friendly Nurse Sharks nuzzle up against you as they settle in for the evening. We'll have nine days of diving, covering hundreds of miles of ocean, and will help create memories and experiences for you that will last a lifetime. This trip is limited to 12 divers total and we've already got 9 spots accounted for. \$5,550/diver.

In addition, we'll have our regular offerings of Avalon and Redondo dives, as well as classes (which you'll always find on page 3 of this newsletter). But for those of you hankering to spread out a bit, have we got some options for you!

## **MPA DECADAL REVIEW**

California completed the last of the network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in 2012. Part of that process requires the CA Department of Fish & Wildlife to conduct assessments of the various MPAs every ten years.

I was part of one of the initial advisory committees in creating the first batches of MPAs and I was invited to be part of the Decadal Review committee as well. We've been working on this, for the last 18 months or so. (And yes, it's rather bureaucratic.)

While everything was supposed to have been presented to the Fish & Game Commission in December, that was delayed a bit and now will

be presented in early 2023. The Commission will then decide what action, if any, to take based on the recommendations and information submitted.

It's all part of what's known as "adaptive management" with the MPAs which basically means that they need to be monitored periodically and changed if they're not meeting initial goals. That could mean expanding or contracting boundaries, changing take restrictions within a given MPA, or even removing an MPA all together.

The goal has been to make it a transparent process and I've reported some stuff to you and given out links to documents as this all played out. Part of my role as (I think) the sole diving rep on this particular committee is to make

sure that other diving entities – boats, stores, clubs – were kept informed as well.

So it will be interesting to see how this all plays out. In general, the MPAs have seemed to be effective is helping to stave off species depletion and just in general terms help make for a healthier ocean in California waters. When it's time for Fish & Game to take action, those meetings are publicly streamed and you can "attend" from the privacy of your own home as well as in person.

Additionally, we've scheduled Steve Wertz, a regional manager for Fish & Wildlife, to be our July Zoom Seekers speaker and he will hopefully offer some more information and guidance on where the process is at that point.

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## **PICTURE PAGE - Try to see these in 2023**

*(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2023)*



**Elegant dartfish**  
*(Indo-Pacific)*



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



**Squid**  
*(generally found worldwide)*



**Male California Sheephead**  
*(SoCal waters)*



**Frogfish**  
*(worldwide but hard to spot)*



**Kurtisfish**  
*(on every Reef Seekers trip)*