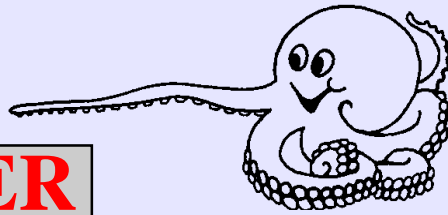


THE
REEF
SEEKER



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February - 2012



31ST ANNUAL AVALON UNDERWATER CLEANUP

Mark your calendar for Saturday, February 25, as that's the date of the 31st annual Avalon Underwater Cleanup. As in past years, Reef Seekers will be taking a contingent over and we hope you'll be able to join us.

Our plan is to leave on the 6:15AM boat out of the main Long Beach Terminal. Although we agree that that's ungodly hour to get going, it gets us over to Avalon around 7:30AM, which means we're easily in place by the Green Pier around 8AM. That leaves you plenty of time to relax and go get breakfast while I get us all signed in.

There will be a general briefing around 9:30 and then the diving starts at 10AM. We'll be once again diving the Green Pier and the nice

thing about that is that it's an area that's only open on this one day each year. Not only does that mean you've got a good chance at finding good trash that might have fallen off of (or been tossed from) a passing boat, but you'll also see some cool critters that you might not see within the confines of the UW Park.

It's a single-tank dive and we usually wrap the diving up by 11:30AM. Then you've got a decision to make: Pack up your gear and we will have it stored for you until our boat back, or, continue diving and we'll get you a cab and ship you over to the UW Park.

Around 1PM, the awards ceremony starts. There will be various prizes offered for things like Most Unusual, Most Valuable, and other categories, and we will also have the annual competition for the coveted "Ken Kurtis Silver-Tongued Devil" award. (Yes, there's really an award named after me.) It goes to the person who comes up with the best (aka outlandish) BS story behind whatever piece of trash it is that has been found. The finalists will tell their stories to the crowd and the assembled multitude (more like a crazed mob) will determine the winner by their applause. (It's really a lot of fun.)

The awards ceremony usually ends around 2:30PM and then you've

got time to wander around Avalon or even join us in the Reef Seekers Miniature Golf Tournament over at Golf Gardens in the middle of the city, which is (IMHO) one of the best mini-courses around. (They've got a par 6 hole, and it's a TOUGH par 6.) One round, low score (usually low-to-mid 50s) wins the title and bragging rights for a year. There might even be time for a second 18 but the first score is the one that counts. We'll catch a late-afternoon boat back to Long Beach.

The event's loads of fun and also serves as an important fund-raiser for the Catalina Conservancy Divers and the USC Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber. Your cost to us is \$125 which includes your boat over and back, event registration, taxis, gear storage, and loads of fun. To get signed up, call us at 310/652-4990.

NOT DIVING, BUT

If you're a golfer like me, and you're over 60 (like me - barely) you might like to know that the City of L.A. has dropped the minimum age for the senior rate at their golf courses from 65 to 60. I was pleasantly surprised when I played the other day. Saves you about 40% on greens fees. Yahoo!!!

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

As you may know by now, on January 1 a number of new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) went into effect as part of the implementation of the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA). This network of MPAs includes some that previously existed and some new ones. In all, it covers about 17% of the coastline and off-shore islands. (A full map is available at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa/scmpas_list.asp.)

Of course on a project of this magnitude, as things progress along it will be discovered that errors have been made. And we've already seen some of that and are working to get things corrected. One of the biggest that will affect divers in the new Blue Cavern State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA). This area includes the old Wrigley Reserve (established in 1988) but also now includes Bird Rock, and dive spots east of Blue Cavern such as Sea Fan Grotto, the Quarry, Crane Point, and others.

The problem is that in a desire to protect the Wrigley Reserve, which has been no-take and no-anchor for years, the wording for the Blue Cavern SMCA was crafted to inadvertently make the entire area no-take and no-anchor, when the intent was to only make the area no-take, and to keep the Wrigley area as no-anchor. Oooops. (No-anchor doesn't mean no-diving as you can live boat it, if that's an option for you.)

So there are a couple of plans afoot to rectify this. But just be aware that this is an evolving process. You also need to be aware that some areas where you may have

been able to hunt before (like around Point Vicente on Palos Verdes) are now off-limits. And don't forget that no-take means just that: No Take. DF&G wardens are on the lookout for violators, especially in the first 6-8 months of these closures and you don't want to be on the receiving end of a citation.

If you have questions, let us know or feel free to contact DF&G directly, either through their website or through numbers you'll find on that site.

VACATION TRIPS UPDATE

We've got a bunch of really great Reef Seekers vacation trips planned for this year and thought we'd bring you up to speed on some of them:

FLORIDA

Now that the political circus has cleared out, it's probably safe to go back there and we intend to do just that. We leave on February 12 and will spend two days in Crystal River diving with Manatees, then spend a day on the Rainbow River,

winding up with two days up in the Branford area exploring various caverns and the dive sites there.

YAP

We leave for our return to Yap on March 16. It's a long journey to get there but well worth it. Once again, we'll be staying at the fabulous Mantra Ray Bay Resort which has simply got to be the nicest dive-dedicated resort in the world. We'll get six days of diving in and will explore areas where Mantas come in to be cleaned (including a new manta cleaning station), we'll watch Mandarinfish mating in their nightly ritual, explore macro muck sites, drift down vertical walls, and get up-close while wild sharks rip apart a frozen fish head. (Plus there's lunch each day at Ganir or on the *Mnuw*.) It's a great trip and the airfare's still pretty reasonable, just over \$1700. We can still add you to this if you like.

DOMINICA

It's an island that's as pretty above water as it is below water. We're leaving on a redeye on May 11 and will have six dive days in Dominica. We're staying at Castle Comfort which is right on the water and even has a house reef which we can explore in the afternoons.

(continued on page 3)

2012 DIVING VACATIONS

February 12-18 • Florida

March 16-25 • Yap

May 12-20 • Dominica

(continued from page 2)

There will be a whale watch, and the possibility of other afternoon excursions. Dominica has a lot of to offer with very healthy reefs and some stunning marine life. Airfare's running just under \$1200 so this becomes a very affordable trip.

INDONESIA

July has always been a good month for us in Manado and that's when we're going back to visit our friends at Murex, where we had a fabulous time last year. We'll leave L.A. on July 7 and, once we get there (it takes a while - but we'll be on the A380) we'll enjoy eight full days of diving, which will include a day at the legendary Lembeh Straits. During our time there, we'll alternate between reef and muck dives and that'll expose us to all that Indonesia has to offer. Plus we'll have three days in Singapore on the back end. Airfare can be a biggie on this one but right now it's around \$1600 so it's actually pretty affordable, especially when you realize that this ends up being a 2-week trip.

On top of these, we're thinking about Bonaire in September, still trying to finalize details for La Paz in October, but also thinking of Australia (and an eclipse) in November. So if you're looking for a memorable dive trip in 2012, you need to give us a call at 310/652-4990 and let us get you hooked up with one of our tours.

RAVING ABOUT THE GOPRO

I got one of those little GoPro HD cameras for Christmas and finally

UPCOMING BOAT & SHORE DIVES

| DAY | DATE | BOAT/SITE | INTENDED DESTINATION |
|----------------------------|---------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Saturday | Feb. 4 | Redondo | Daytime beach dive \$5 / \$15 |
| Early Purchase (thru 1/28) | | | |
| Wednesday | Feb. 8 | Redondo | ••• Squid dive ••• FREE!!! |
| Early Purchase (N/A) | | | |
| Saturday | Feb. 25 | Avalon | 31st Underwater Cleanup \$125 |
| Early Purchase (N/A) | | | |
| Sunday | March 4 | Great Escape | Ship Rock & more \$155 / \$165 |
| Early Purchase (thru 2/26) | | | |

Prices are Early Purchase & Regular price. Reef Saver Card saves \$5 off all prices.
Food/air included on 1-day trips. Diving to be done on SCUBA air or nitrox - no rebreathers.

got the flat-port housing that enables the camera to focus underwater. the next day, I was able to taker my setup into the Aquarium of the Pacific exhibits and shoot some footage which I've got up on my SmugMug page. (Easiest thing is to go to my Facebook page and follow the link from there.)

Although it's got some limitations, the camera and housing are really wonderful to use. First of all, they're REALLY small and light-weight, as you can see from this picture (I put my mask in there to give you a size reference):



The camera's really easy to use although you're essentially shooting with a fixed length lens so you have to physically get closer or further away from your subject. You "zoom" with your fins. The camera can be set for wide (170°),

medium (127°), or narrow (90°). Due to refraction, the flat-port narrows that angle-of-view but that's OK because the wide is REALLY wide.

I played with all three settings and was able to shoot with each but probably did most of the stuff I posted in medium. That seemed to be a good balance for objects both big and semi-small.

The other nice thing about this flat-port housing is that (at least the one I got from Backscatter) it's threaded so it can accept 55mm filters. I don't have any of them yet, but I'll play with a warming filter and am going to see if there's a macro filter out so there so I can focus close on big things &/or on small things.

But my initial impression is that it's really cool and fun to play with. It's relatively inexpensive as you can get just the camera and housing for around \$300. I plan to taking it with me to Florida to shoot the Manatees and the caverns and such and will be able to share those with you after I get back.

But in the meantime, if video's in your sights, give some thought to the GoPro.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR ILLEGAL GAME

With the adoption of the MPAs, it's probably a good time to remind you about our Zero Tolerance for Poching policy. Although we welcome hunters, we just ask that you do it right.

It's really pretty simple. If you come up with game that's either out-of-season, short, or over a bag limit, our boat DMs/Instructors are being instructed to contact DF&G through the 888/DFG-CALTIP (Californians Turn In Poachers) and we will report the offense and request that a warden meet us when the boat docks.

And now we'll add to that taking game in a no-take area. Trust me when I tell you we'll consider that

a MAJOR infraction, as will DF&G. And we won't have any hesitation about turning someone in for that type of a violation.

The way to avoid a problem is simple: If you're going to hunt, be 150% certain of what you're taking and that it complies with current regulations. If you don't know what it is, don't take it. The days of someone coming up with a fish on a spear and asking, "Is this good to eat?" should be long gone.

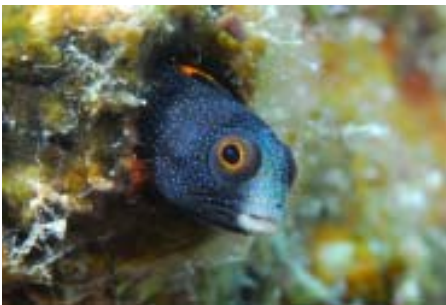
In general, those of you who dive with us and hunt are very responsible and not only follow the regulations but only take what you can eat. However, for the few who either choose to be ignorant or simply don't care, that behavior won't be tolerated and you may consider yourself on notice.

BEACH DIVING

Need to get some sand in your gear? Give some thought to one of our two upcoming beach dives at Redondo's Veterans Park. The first one is this coming Saturday and is our "normal" daytime beach dive. We meet at 9AM, are usually in the water by 10-ish, and are out of the parking lot before noon. The second dive is our Squid Dive (and it's a freebie) on Wednesday, February 8. We got skunked last month but you never know, and there were some juvy squid spotted at Redondo earlier this week. So maybe we'll get lucky. For either (or both) of these single-tank dives, you need to get signed up with us and you can do that by e-mail, or by calling us at 310/652-4990. Sand ho!!!!

PICTURE PAGE - Fish with Blue in them

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2012)



Barnacle Blenny
Sea of Cortez



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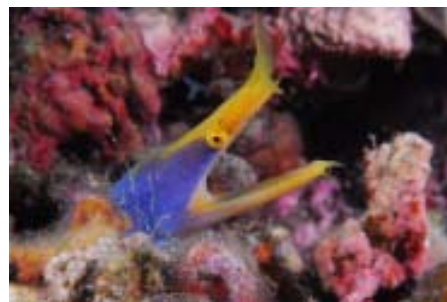
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