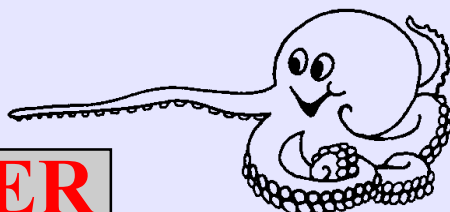


THE REEF SEEKER



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June - 2025



CHAMBER DAY 2025 RESULTS

We came, we saw, we conquered,
and . . . ended up with \$193,320!!!

This was an amazing total and only a few hundred dollars shy of last year's record-setting amount. All net monies raised will help fund the Chamber for the coming year.

With the aftermath of the Los Angeles wildfires and the economy in general, we had expected a drop from last year. Chamber Director Karl Huggins and I are quite pleased to be wrong in this instance.

Here's how the event broke down by the numbers in terms of participants (there's obviously a little overlap as someone could have done more than one aspect of the event):

Chamber Day divers (4 boats) – 75
Chamber Day boat capt/crew – 16
Flying Dutchman "Crew" – 125
Chamber Eve diners – 302
Chamber wait staff & servers - 40
Chamber Eve volunteers – 49
Virtual Chamber Eve - 41

On-line T-shirt purchases – 101
Challenge donors - 160

Thank you all for making this another very successful year for our Chamber. It's comforting to know that, while we're out diving, if something should go wrong, they will be there to offer whatever aid they can.

And mark your 2026 calendars for May 6. As this is an annual event, that's the date for Chamber Day and Eve 2026.



COULD BE AN ACTIVE HURRICANE SEASON

First of all, the disclaimer is that long-range forecasts have a lot of wiggle room. And the second disclaimer is that with the massive and severe government cutbacks to agencies like NOAA and the national Hurricane Center (because . . . well, it just doesn't make sense), the accuracy of predictions let alone real-time information when these storms strike, is likely to be diminished.

That all being said, the prediction

is for an above-average storm season (which runs from June 1 through November 30). The predictions are for 6-10 hurricanes with half of them reaching Category 3 or stronger. And this is just for the Atlantic hurricanes.

The Pacific season, which runs at the same time as the Atlantic (June 1 - November 30), calls for an average or even slightly below-normal number of storms. The Eastern Pacific area covers Mexico (including Socorro) and the Southern California coast, while the Central Pacific area includes Hawaii. The forecast for those two regions is 5-10 hurricanes in general, but perhaps only 1-4 reaching the Hawaiian Islands.

However, there are already two early-season storms that forecasters are keeping their eyes on (one already named as of this writing). Alvin has formed southeast of Socorro and is projected to be heading perhaps to Cabo San Lucas as a strong tropical depression. The other is now forming off of the coast of Africa and may eventually make its way towards the Caribbean. If you're interested in keeping an eye on storms through the hurricane season, a good resource is the map from the National Hurricane & Central Pacific Hurricane Centers, which can be accessed through this URL: <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/cyclones/>.



LET'S GO TO YAP!!!

There are a lot of things that make Yap unique but perhaps most unique – if that's even a way to correctly express it – is that this is the **ONLY** place in the world where the airport code for where you're flying (in this case YAP) is the same as the name of the place you're going (Yap). Nowhere else in the world can make that claim.

If that's not enough to get you to want to go – OK, it's admittedly a stretch – how about world-class diving? How about Manta Rays giving you a haircut? How about being a Mandarinfish voyeur while watching their nightly mating rituals? How about marveling at the grace and speed of dozens of sharks hitting frozen bait during a Shark Feed? How about a leisurely glide through the caverns and crevices of Yap Caverns? How about pleasant reef dives, a couple of vertical wall dives, and interesting things to be found around each corner? How about a world-class resort where the word “NO” is considered verboten? Does any of that get your juices going????

In all seriousness, Yap is one of my home-away-from-home destinations and I always love going there. We're shifting back to March – the actual dates with travel from L.A. are March 9-22 – for a couple of reasons. The last two trips we did there were in July and September and there's enough of a weather

shift that time of the year, as well as it's further into cyclone season, that we got rained on pretty consistently (especially in 2023). I don't mind a **LITTLE** rain every now and then, I'm even OK with the occasional downpour, but every day got to be a little bit too much.

That's not the case in March. Well, let me throw in a disclaimer: That **SHOULDN'T** be the case in March. (As my late weather mentor Dr. George Fishbeck was fond of saying about weather forecasting: “No man can predict the future.”) But the other advantage to March is that the mantas at that time of the year are generally found on the western side of the island, which means the manta cleaning station at Stammtisch is a must-dive.

The advantage of Stammtisch is that it's really shallow. Like 10-20 feet deep. So your tank lasts a long time and the mantas are always very close. Plus the shallow water is great for light for those who want to video or photograph the activities. There are certainly no guarantees, but we've had as many as five mantas at the same time hang with us for an hour, gliding

gracefully around and making low passes over the heads of the admiring divers. It's really an amazing experience.

I could go on and on (and I do in our regular trip reports – you can access many of them at http://www.reefseekers.com/Foreign_trip_reports.html) but let me get to the particulars of this upcoming 2026 trip.

We'll be staying at Manta Ray Bay Resort and I've already got the third floor Ken Kurtis Wing rooms set aside for us. Breakfast on the fabulous Mnuw is included daily followed by three boat dives just about every day we're there. (We'll do as many as 26 dives overall.) Each day we do a 3-tank dive, we'll have lunch on the boat, which is also included. (We're on our own for dinner each night which can also be on the Mnuw or one of the nearby restaurants.) We'll take a break one day for a half-day island tour. We'll do a Mandarinfish dusk dive. And on our last dive day, we'll do the Shark Feed which I've always said is one of the most high-voltage (in a good way) dives you'll ever do. Nitrox is also included (for those qualified) as well as the crew/staff

2026 DIVING VACATIONS

March 9-22 • Yap

July 1-14 • Indonesia

Sept (TBA) • Dumaguete (land)

Sept (TBA) • Dumaguete (boat)

tip (which, as Reef Seekers is known for, is usually considered somewhat generous).

Cost of the trip for all of that (and all the fun you can handle) is \$3,950/diver, only slightly higher than last year. Single-supplement is generally available for those interested, often at no extra charge. And while we have Ocean View rooms reserved, there are a couple of Deluxe Ocean View rooms available at a slightly higher price.

I love diving Yap and have been going there for over 20 years now. Every time I go, I see something new or experience something I've never had before. It's really a fabulous place to have a vacation. So who's ready to join me? You can reserve your spot now by calling us at 310/652-4990 or e-mailing me at kenurtis@aol.com. A \$500 deposit will guarantee that you will be exposed to all that Yap has to offer.



LET'S GO TO INDO!!!

My other home-away-from home destination is Murex Resort in Manado, Indonesia, and we've got them on the 2026 schedule as well.

UPCOMING LOCAL DIVES & CLASSES

DAY	DATE	BOAT/SITE	PLANNED DESTINATION	\$\$\$
Thu.	Jun 12	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	35
Wed.	18	--- CLASS ---	--- FISH I.D. ---	35
Wed.	25	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180
Sat.	Jul 12	Veterans Park	Beach Diving made Easy	35
Wed.	16	--- CLASS ---	--- TABLESCOMPUTERS ---	FREE!!!
Wed.	23	Catalina Express	Avalon UW Park	180
Sat.	Aug 9	Veterans Park	Navigation Made Easy	35
Thu.	14	Veterans Park	••• Night Dive •••	35

Because we're too far out (more than 11 months) to see the air sked, I don't have the specific travel dates but the resort dates are July 3-13 so with travel it's likely July 1-14 (out of LAX).

This is one of those places that also has something for everyone. Do you like vertical walls with pristine coral? Got it. Do you like looking for interesting creatures in the sand/muck? Got it. Do you like stunning soft coral reefs? Got it. Do you want to feel pampered while at the resort? Got it. Anything else you'd like?

We're using Murex Manado as our home base and will venture over to Bangka Island for a day of diving (some spectacular soft coral reefs) and we'll also do a day diving the Lembeh Straits, often referred to as the Muck Diving Capital of the World. In-between we'll do morning dives exploring the reefs of Bunaken National Park and then have either an extra afternoon boat dive there as well, or do one of the close-by shore sites that are a short skiff ride from Murex Manado (where we'll also have a sumptuous lunch).

The resort, which is set amidst a very tranquil tropical forest with ponds and running streams, has always been very nice. But they've ramped it up a notch and have been doing a lot of reconstruction over the past year or so, which includes

a new category of room known as Premium Deluxe Cottages (we've got three of them reserved) which are slightly bigger than the "standard" room (which is also pretty nice).

As usual for Reef Seekers, this trip includes all diving, including nitrox if you're qualified (three dives/day plus a late afternoon house reef shore dive for those interested), three meals a day (plus tea and snacks around 4PM daily), day trip to Bangka, day trip to Lembeh, double-occupancy room (single supplement generally available for an extra charge), marine park fee, airport transfers, and a generous crew/staff tip.

Also, assuming based on the initial number of people on the "interested" list that this will be a sizeable group, what we do is actually then do it as two groups so that the boats don't get too crowded. Generally each group will be 7-10 divers.

Cost of this fabulous adventure for the Deluxe room category will be \$4,360. (The Premium Deluxe adds \$250/person if available.) If you'd like to secure your spot, a \$500 deposit will do the trick and we'll work out an every-other-month payment schedule. So if you want to get in on this, call us at 310/652-4990 or you can always e-mail us at kenkurtis@aol.com. Don't miss out on the fun!!!



SCUBA SHOW RETURNS TO LONG BEACH

The Scuba Show, the largest consumer-oriented scuba convention west of the Mississippi, returns to Long Beach this weekend on Saturday (10A-6P) and Sunday (10A-5P) at the Long Beach Convention Center. It's also the reason I'm sending this out early because I want to make sure you know about the show, plus I'm a seminar speaker both days so still have some prep to do for that as well.

There's over 70,000 square feet of exhibition space, hundreds and

exhibitors including local dive shops, national manufacturers, international resorts, travel providers, non-profit ocean-oriented organizations, t-shirt vendors, other little knick-knack vendors, and even more. There's plenty of do and a lot of people go both days so they can explore the exhibit space and attend some of the 45-minute seminars as well.

Speaking of seminars, there are a lot of good ones to choose from. There are three of the paid seminars each hour plus a couple of free vendors ones. Tooting my own horn, I'll be doing "Keys to Fish ID" on Saturday at Noon and then repeating it on Sunday at 4PM.

But the best-attended seminar (we generally get 100+ people) usually is the "Why Divers Die" panel

with Corner John Kades, Chamber Director Karl Huggins, and myself on Saturday at 4PM. (We generally run a little long which is why we're end-of-the-day.) Each year, we review all the scuba fatalities from L.A. County for the previous calendar year. We only had one fatality last year (YAY!!), so we'll also review two other (older) interesting cases.

You can get tickets on-line through www.scubashow.com (digital to your phone). All-access weekend passes (exhibit hall and unlimited seminars) are \$75, all-access-single day are \$40, and seminars only are \$20/day. Whatever you choose, it's a good experience and you'll walk away having learned something. I'll be there both days and hopefully will see you as well.

PICTURE PAGE - Yap & Indo Fish

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2025)



Titan Triggerfish
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WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



Squarespot Anthias
(Indonesia)



Yellowtail Coris
(Yap)



Stone Money underwater
(Yap)



Peacock Razorfish
(Yap)