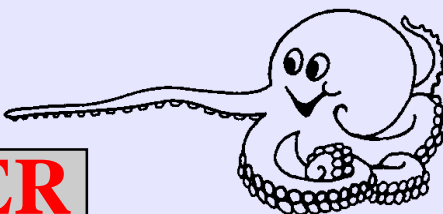


THE REEF SEEKER



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July - 2009



DIVING EASTER ISLAND

No, it's not the home of the Easter Bunny . . .

As some of you know, I've become a fan of chasing total solar eclipses. I went to La Paz in 1991, Aruba in 1996, and am going to Shanghai next month. As there are only one or two total solar eclipses per year, and since they're very predictable, I generally check out to see where the next ones are. (There's a NASA website for this.) So I was very intrigued to discover that there's not only an eclipse happening on July 11, 2010, but that the path of totality would pass right over Easter Island.

For the uninitiated, Easter Island lies about 2100 miles west of Chile, halfway to Tahiti. It's considered the most remote inhabited island

in the world. Easter Island is probably best known for the moai, or giant stone heads, that ring the entire island. Standing as high as 25 feet and weighing as much as 80+ tons, for years the statues has evoked a sense of mystery as to what they mean, why they're there, and how the natives managed to erect them. I remember first hearing about Easter Island when I was a kid and always wanted to go see the great stone heads (like I wanted to go see the stone money in Yap - maybe I'm just a stoner at heart).

The diving's not tropical but it's good and certainly interesting as 25% of the species seen are endemic (native) to Easter Island and found only there. And when you look on a map to see how isolated the place is, that makes sense. So there's certainly a chance to see things you can see nowhere else in the world.

On top of that, because of the Humboldt Current, the water's really clear and 200-foot visibility is not unheard of. The current also means the water's cooler, though, with low temps of low-to-mid 60s April-September and mid-to-high 60s (maybe squeezing into the low 70s) November-March. So it's at least 5mm diving and likely 7mm. It's definitely not tropical, although I did see one site that claims the water temps get as high as 80.

Not so sure about that.

So I started (as those of you who read TWARS two weeks ago know) looking to see if we could put together a diving trip to coincide with the eclipse. I've been in touch with a number of hotels on the island and it seems that they may be all already booked up by eclipse chasers. I've got a couple more to track down but it's not looking good at the moment.

But then I got to thinking, "Well, why not plan a trip anyhow but go during the better weather/diving time?" It's certainly something off the beaten path, the diving sounds interesting, the archeological (moai) sites sound very interesting, I've always wanted to go there, it's classified as a World Heritage Site and . . . it's Easter Island!!!!

So, if we can't do July of 2010, the backup plan would be to plan an Easter Island trip for January of 2011. No eclipse, but better water conditions, and it's summertime below the Equator so the overall weather should be a bit better.

Those who have already contacted me, I'll keep in touch with you about this. And if you'd like to get on the "interested in going" list, just send me an e-mail to kenkurtis@aol.com. Whenever we go, I can guarantee it'll be something special that you won't soon forget.

WARMER WATER - YAHOO!!!

We were VERY happy to dive Santa Barbara Island last week and discover that the water temps have risen nearly ten degrees. We were reading a consistent 63-64° on each of the three dives we made. Although we haven't personally been to Catalina in the last month or so, we're getting similar reports from there.

So if you've been waiting for the water to warm up a bit before taking your summer plunge, your wait is over!!! Come on in, the water's fine.



FARNSWORTH - JULY 12

One of our favorite dives in California is Farnsworth Banks and we're going back there in less than two weeks on July 12. You should join us.

Farnsworth is best known for the profusion of purple hydrocoral that's found all over the place. In fact, the purple coral at Farnsworth is protected and that level of protection over the years (along with Farnsworth's relative remoteness out from Catalina's backside) has likely played into the health of the area. But Farnsworth is a whole lot more.

Farnsworth is essentially a pinnacle with a steep/sheer drop-off on the north side and a more gradual sloping drop-off on the

south side. Near the SE corner, there's the Yellow Wall which is a very large area starting around 80 feet deep (and going down to 140 or so) that's covered in small yellow anemones. It's a spectacular part of the reef to explore. In other areas of Farnsworth, there are numerous cracks and crevices to check out, small ravines, and you never know what a glance out in to the blue might afford you. Farnsworth is truly one of the signature dives of Southern California.

Our plan (weather-permitting of course) is to do two dives at Farnsworth, break for lunch while we motor back and fill tanks, and then do a third dive either along Catalina's backside or West End. We'll be on the Great Escape. The trip includes food (breakfast, lunch, snacks) and airfills after each Farnsworth dive. The boat departs at 6AM but will be available for boarding the night before for those who'd like to avoid getting up at the crack of dawn. We should return to Long Beach around 6PM.

Cost for the trip is only \$148.50 if you have a valid Reef Saver Card or if you're a member of an affiliated dive club. (It's \$165 if you

don't have those credentials.) We're about half-full right now and we'd love to have you join us. The water's warming up, the vis at Catalina has been fairly good lately, and this is always one of those trips where we can end up with a spectacular day.

JULY 1 TAX HIKE

As a retailer, I got a notice from the State Board of Equalization that the sales tax rates in a number of areas will increase effective today, July 1. (It looks like these are due to district taxes imposed by the various cities or counties on top of the state sales tax.) What this means is that you'll be taxed at different rates depending on where you buy things. Here are the new rates:

City of Laguna Beach - (only one to go down) - 8.75%
L.A. County - 9.75%
City of Avalon - 10.25%
City of El Monte - 10.25%
City of Inglewood - 10.25%
City of Pico Rivera - 10.75%
City of South Gate - 10.75%

If you have questions about this you can go to www.boe.ca.gov or call 800/400-7115.

DIVING VACATIONS

October 11-18 • Sea of Cortez

**February 8-14, 2010 • Florida
(Manatees & Caverns)**

May 21-29, 2010 • Bonaire

THE DANGERS OF OVER-WEIGHTING

There was a free-diving fatality in the UW Park last month and over-weighting seems to have played a role in the death of the diver. He was trying to retrieve a weighted float line from about 20-25' of depth, fairly close to the shoreline, and never came back up. When his friends finally realized he was missing, they went and found him, on the bottom, weightbelt still on. The official cause of death has been ruled drowning, and there's some suspicion that shallow-water blackout and/or panic may have also factored in, though those can't be clinically proven.

In any tragedy like this, we hope there are things we as a diving community can learn. And there a couple of take-home messages with this accident.

One big one deals with over-weighting. The diver weighed a little over 140 pounds. When the diver's weightbelt was recovered, it was found to weigh 34 pounds. This would seem to be double the weight you'd expect the diver to need. On top of that, the diver was only wearing his wetsuit and mask/fins and you again wonder why the need for so much weight, if any at all? Couldn't he have just kicked to the bottom without any weight at that relatively shallow depth?

One thing to note is that he was found with his weightbelt still on and buckled. Had he ditched his belt (and assuming no entanglement - of which none was reported), even an unconscious diver will float to the surface. And there's a much better chance of a successful outcome in that situa-

UPCOMING BOAT DIVES

Sun	July 12	<i>Great Escape</i>	Farnsworth/Cat. backside	\$150/165
Sat	25	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (back)	165/180
Sat	Aug. 8	<i>Cee Ray</i>	<i>Olympic</i> wreck/Catalina	140/155
Sun	30	<i>Great Escape</i>	Santa Barbara Island	160/175
Sun	Sept. 13	<i>Great Escape</i>	Catalina (West End)	140/155
Sat	26	<i>Great Escape</i>	San Clemente (frontside)	165/180
Sun	Oct. 18	<i>Great Escape</i>	Farnsworth/Cat. backside	150/165
Sat	31	<i>Great Escape</i>	Santa Barbara Island	160/175

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.

tion than when you're still on the bottom for an extended period of time.

You also have to ask a dual question of why he didn't have a buddy with him watching and why it took his friends so long (about 15 minutes) to realize he hadn't come back. Someone on the surface watching him go down could have responded immediately to this, and even someone watching from shore would have realized after 60 seconds or so that something was amiss. This might have changed things dramatically.

Part of the problem here may also be complacency. This could certainly have been perceived as an "easy" task. But complacency can lead to carelessness which can lead to trouble.

Given that we are entering a life-threatening environment any time we go underwater (with or without scuba), no dive should ever be considered "easy". Every dive has risk and, as responsible divers, it's up to us to identify, evaluate, understand, and be prepared to deal with those risks.

When I was taught to be a NAUI instructor, one of the big things they drilled into us at my ITC was

the idea of "ready to respond". And what that essentially means is ALWAYS being on your toes, trying to anticipate the things that the might go wrong, and being ready to respond to whatever challenge that might be presented to you on your dive.

"Ready-to-respond" is something all divers should work in to their mindset. Too often, divers enter the water assuming everything will be all right. That may mean you're setting yourself up for problems when trouble arises. Switch over to a ready-to-respond mindset, and perhaps tragedies like the one outlined here can become more rare.

REEF SAVER CARDS

If you don't have one, you should get one. they cost you \$50 (\$85 for a couple, which is then good for both people), they get you a 10% discount on all of our trips (both Early Purchase and Regular pricing), and they basically pay for themselves in three or four trips. All you need to do is call or send an e-mail and we'll get you all hooked up.



STUNG BY A STONEFISH . . .

. . . and lives to tell the tale.

I was talking to a shop owner buddy of mine the other day who told of one of his customers who was diving in the Indo-Pacific (where she goes frequently). She was getting bored with a dive, had seen a Stonefish or two, but was looking to end the dive and may not have been paying as much attention as

she should have.

Although she doesn't remember getting stung, by the time she reached the surface, she was in tremendous pain, her joints had started swelling, and she could barely speak to call for help. She was put back on the boat and very shortly says her knee was the size of a basketball.

She was rushed back in to the local town where they didn't really know what to do. Another diver suggested hot compresses, which were then applied, and eventually things started to subside.

There are two lessons here: (1) She was very lucky, and (2) Be careful and stay aware of where you're putting your arms and legs.

SAFETY STOPS

We can't over-emphasize the importance of doing at least a 3-minute safety stop after EVERY dive. If your dive comes within 5 minutes of a no-deco limit, extend the stop to 5 minutes. If you actually went into deco (which we strongly advise against doing deliberately), then a 10-minute stop would be a good idea.

There's still a lot we don't know about nitrogen absorption. We know that limits vary person-to-person and that your personal limits can change day-to-day. And we do that safety stops of at least 3 minutes at 15 feet can be very beneficial and might even prevent problems from occurring. It's for your health and well-being.

PICTURE PAGE - Red, white, & blue fish

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2009)



**Redbar Hawkfish
(Hawaii)**



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WWW.REEFSEEKERS.COM



**Red-toothed Trigger
(Indonesia)**



**Blue-banded goby
(Catalina)**



**Black-eyed goby
(San Clemente)**



**Trumpetfish
(Bonaire)**