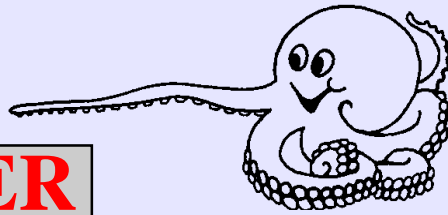


# THE REEF SEEKER



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November - 2009



## BAJA TRIP MINI-REPORT

(You can read the full Baja report - and see all of the pictures - simply by going to [www.reefseekers.com](http://www.reefseekers.com))

I was hoping for a picture-perfect (weather-wise) trip this year and didn't get it as we had to deal with some of the effects of tropical Storm Patricia, which glanced off of Cabo and out into the Pacific, but which sent some wind and rain our way in La Paz.

But it was still a pretty good trip and we even had a "National Geographic Moment" that I'm sure we'll all be talking about for years to come. The dive site was Los Islotes, the day was Thursday, it was mid-afternoon, and it was one of those dives where you're not expecting much and get more than you bargained for (in a good way). It's also a good example of how you can take a lemon and turn it into lemonade.

The original plan was to go to the shallow sea lion cave and shoot

everyone playing with the sea lions. But I didn't seat my lens properly and it wouldn't shoot. So I waved goodbye to everyone and kicked all the way back to the boat (200 yards) and re-seated the lens on the camera. Got a ride back over (all took about 20 minutes) and started again.

No one at the SL cave. Not unexpected. What WAS unexpected was the aggressive female sitting at the front guarding the entrance. You made a move towards her, she charged you and blew bubbles. OK, not gonna do the cave. So I shot baitfish and meandered down the reef. Thought I'd look again for Peter's seahorse from the previous day which I still hadn't found.

Couldn't find hippocampus but caught up with my harem of four women. Shot Tamar Toister and Linda Gorman trying to caress an eel. Thought I'd go out to the rubble field and look for Giant Jawfish so waved goodbye to the ladies, hung a left for deeper water, and started searching.

10 minutes later, I happened to glance behind me and - much to my surprise - I had four remoras in tow. Don't know why but there they were. So we all continued onward, me not paying them much attention.

Another ten minutes passed and Tamar gave a toot on her horn and

signaled me that she and Linda Whitehead were going up. No problem. I showed them - via hand signal - "boat" and then pointed ahead and up at a 45° angle to show them where the boat was. They signaled OK. I went on my merry way, assuming Elisabeth and Linda Gorman would continue following.

Imagine my surprise a few minutes later to realize that Linda G., Elisabeth, and Linda W. were all gone . . . but Tamar was still stuck to my side. Not sure what happened. So Tamar and I continued forward.

I was thinking we were approaching the boat (I could hear the generators running) at a depth of about 60 feet when I spied a shadow up ahead. I was pretty sure it was the shadow of the boat so I moved towards it because what I'll generally do is get under the shadow, then look up to the surface to make sure it's our boat, and ascend.

This is where this becomes a National Geographic Moment.

The shadow wasn't a boat. It was fish, specifically Big-Eye Scad. But the fish were so numerous and so thick that they literally blocked out the sun. Very impressive.

And as we moved towards the school and they swarmed all around (maybe a million

strong????), we realized that there was ALSO an enormous school (multiple thousands??) of Mexican Barracuda surrounding the Scad. It was hard to tell if they were herding them or hunting them but both schools were quite active, moving to and fro.

And every now and then you hear a “BANG!!” and a “WHOOSH!!” and the panicked Scad school would dart all over that place. That’s when the real action began as the Black Skipjacks & Giant Trevallies struck at the school trying to get a meal. On top of all of that, there were Rainbow Runners making their way on through with the Barracuda falling into a line behind each individual Runner. Really amazing.

We watched, mesmerized, as the balance of nature played out before us. And it would get dark every now and then as the schools would surround us, swim over our heads, and then move on, only to come back moments later. It was impossible to accurately estimate the number of fish involved but it had to be in the multi-thousands.

And although it seemed like we were there for an hour, a check of the time stamps on my photos says it was slightly less than ten minutes. But this is exactly the type of dive that “makes” a trip. It’s a memory that will live forever and a story I’ll be telling for quite some time.

When we got back to the boat, I excitedly told everyone they HAD to go see this as this was a rare opportunity and they should avail themselves of it. Most listened.

After a short surface interval, Tamar and I went back down for a

second look and - once again from hearing other people’s tales - we were in the right/best spot. Same experience as before but this time (according to my camera time-stamp) we were down for 31 minutes observing the spectacle, which ended on our safety stop with a young male sea lion playfully buzzing by to give us the once-over. THIS is what diving’s all about.

It’s also (might as well put in a pitch for what we do best) typical of what we experience on many of our trips, both local and foreign, Anyone can take you diving, but Reef Seekers strives to put you in the right spot at the right time and direct you to where the best action is. You dive to see cool stuff. Why not make sure you’re diving with people (that would be us, not to be too subtle about it) who will do their best to make sure that happens???



## **GREAT LOCAL DIVING**

Generally, the beginning of October through the middle-to-end of December offers some of the best local diving of the year. The water hasn’t really started cooling down yet and the visibility can be tremendous.

We had those conditions towards the end of October with some spots in Catalina reporting visibility approaching 100 feet and water temps hanging in the mid-to-upper 60s. Black Sea Bass have been spotted, many lobster have been taken, and a good time is being had by all (except maybe the lobsters).

Whether it’s with us or someone else, make sure you get out there and join in on the fun. And if the economy’s got you down, even the beach conditions have been pretty good lately with Redondo reporting vis approaching 30 feet. So make sure you get wet soon, and certainly before the end of the year.

### **DIVING VACATIONS**

**February 7-13, 2010 • Florida  
(Manatees & Caverns)**

**March 13-21 • Socorro**

**May 21-29 • Bonaire**

## MLPA UPDATE

Just when you thought it was all over . . .

The MLPA (Marine Life Protection Act) saga continues in to November. The short version of all of this is that by this time, there was supposed to be a recommendation from the RSG (Regional Stakeholders Group) and the BRTF (Blue Ribbon task Force) to forward up to the DF&G (Department of Fish & Game) for approval. Whatever plan is adopted would designate a number of areas up and down the SoCal coast and offshore islands as MPAs (Marine Protected Area) with the hopes in helping create a healthier ocean.

At their October 22 meeting, the BRTF decided to forward to DF&G all three of the RSG proposals, plus a fourth proposal directly from the BRTF that will sort of be a hybrid of elements out of the other three. That fourth proposal is still in the works as of this writing.

The BRTF has scheduled a November 10 meeting in Los Angeles (Sheraton gateway Hotel near LAX, 6101 W. Century Blvd. - starts at 9:30AM) to finalize all of this. Written public comment will be taken via e-mail through November 4 or comments can be directed through members of the RSG. You can submit written comments directly to the BRTF via e-mail at this e-mail address: [MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov](mailto:MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov).

Regardless this is all important and the public is certainly invited to attend and observe. Please keep an eye on TWARS for more details on the meeting time and place. Most likely, it will be an all-day affair.

## UPCOMING BOAT DIVES

DAY	DATE	BOAT	INTENDED DESTINATION
Saturday	Nov. 14	Sea Bass	Oil Rigs (limited load)
	Early Purchase (thru 11/7)		\$135 / \$121.50 (Reef Saver/club)
Sunday	Dec. 6	Great Escape	San Clemente (Pyramid)
	Early Purchase (thru 11/29)		\$155 / \$139.50 (Reef Saver/club)

----- HAPPY HOLIDAYS -----  
**WE'LL TAKE THE REST OF DECEMBER OFF  
AND RESUME DIVING IN JANUARY**

Prices are listed as 7-day advanced purchase/regular. Food/air included all trips.  
All diving to be done on compressed air only - no nitrox. Fuel surcharge may apply.

## LOCAL TRIPS NEXT YEAR

We're just now sitting down to craft our local diving schedule for 2010 and I'm not really sure what it will look like.

We really do love going out on the local trips with all of you. It can be great diving, it's great socializing, and we really feel like it's diving with friends and family when you're all with us. But . . .

Reef Seekers is a business and obviously has to run as such. And while in the past (for instance, even as recently as 2008 and 2007) our trips would almost always run at capacity. Unfortunately, 2009 has not been the same story. We have had an awful lot of light boats and while that's fun for everyone on board (heck, even WE like it when we're not filled to capacity) it's not great from a business standpoint.

We still want to keep running local trips and go dive with you. It's just that it will likely take a slightly different form next year. One thing that we'll definitely do is work the schedule more around our planned foreign trips so that we don't have any local trips scheduled for times when we're out of the country. We

also plan on adding some Avalon dates, which are perfect for people who want some low-key diving or for people who'd like to schedule a refresher or supervised dive. And we're also going to try to make better use of Redondo's Veteran's Park for scheduled escorted dives which might be refreshers, navigation, beach techniques, or what-have-you.

So while this is a work-in-progress, rest assured that we'll still be very active in 2010. It's hard to believe that it's been almost three years since we said goodbye to our home at 8612 Wilshire (I just drove by there the other day and they've done absolutely NOTHING since they booted us out) but it's been an amazingly busy (and successful) time. We appreciate your continued support and look forward to diving it with you again through 2010.



## **FOREIGN TRIPS NEXT YEAR**

On the traveling front, we're set for 2010.

We'll be starting off with a return to Florida in February to dive with the Manatees and explore the caverns and sinkholes of the Branford area. Because this is a land-based trip, it's also one where we can add people almost up until the time we're leaving LAX. As long as I can get you on the plane, we're good to go. \$1495 plus airfare.

In March, we'll return to Socorro (250 miles SW of Cabo) on the *Nautilus Explorer*, the same boat we used in 2008. Socorro is well-known for large-animal encounters. We've still got two spots left

on our half of the boat. \$3395 plus airfare.

In May, it's back to Bonaire for our annual trip there. Bonaire absolutely offers some of the most user-friendly diving in the world and we're very excited about using the new boat at Buddy Dive which is specially set up for a three-tank dive to the northern reefs on Bonaire, which are usually beyond the reach of most of the day boat trips.

In July, we will once again bask in the camaraderie and the luxury of our good friends at the Manta Ray Bay resort PLUS we'll get to go see Stone Money. Oh yeah . . . did we mention the diving's fabulous???? From Manta Rays to Mandarinfish, reef dives and muck dives, and a shark feed thrown in

as well, Yap's got it all. Price TBA but around \$2500 plus airfare.

In September, we've got the Texas Flower Gardens, the northernmost coral reef in the United States. And in October, Baja again.

So we've got plenty of travel planned and hopefully, you'll be able to join us.

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## **DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME**

If you're noticing that you're an hour early for everything, you forgot that Daylight Savings Time ended Sunday at 2AM, and you should have rolled your clock back one hour. But it's never too late to change.

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# **PICTURE PAGE - Baja 2009**

(All pix by Ken Kurtis © 2009)



**Scorpionfish  
face**



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



**Mexican  
Hogfish**



**Giant  
Hawkfish**



**Sergeant  
Major**



**Finespotted  
Jawfish**