

ABALONE OPENER AND PICNIC

By Ken Gwin

Over the years, there has been a small tradition among the hunter-gatherer crowd to congregate in semi-organized groups to celebrate the coming of spring and another glorious season of diving for food.

Of course, there are many and varied groups. But, locally, CenCal and a rag-tag assortment of dive clubs have seen to organize a yearly pilgrimage to Fort Ross, a well known dive destination on the Sonoma Coast, for their annual meet and eat.

Abalone season (another tradition so good it happens twice a year) starts the year 2010 on April 1. The first weekend following marks the start of festivities with a social gathering on Saturday the 3rd. "Officially," there is an informal meeting of divers on that morning between 8 and 10:00 AM in the Fort Ross parking lot to meet with friends, pick a buddy, and pull all your gear together in preparation for the leap to freedive foraging.

To make things simpler and narrow the time window somewhat, I suggest a meeting time of 9:00 AM to congregate, choose teams, check out conditions, find a suitable entry point, and go for it.

This is a social event. There will be those that will capture and eat a few abalone. For those who have never tried abalone, this is a good opportunity to attempt to dive for some, or share in the community feed afterward, even if you don't personally get one yourself.

Social and community - everybody pitches in for the picnic at noon. Abalone will be cleaned, sliced, pounded, prepared, and cooked. Everyone should bring some potluck contribution - pasta, rice, salads, herbs, spices, side dishes, sausages, beverages, cookies, utensils, homemade wine,

whatever. A white-jacketed staff will be available to plate and appropriately garnish your meal.

The picnic area is to the left along the coast between the parking lot and the fort. It's a pleasant green meadow with an exuberant outcropping of wild roses and tables. Grown men can be found photographing wildflowers and poison oak here and there, weather permitting.



Fort Ross is the site of a former Russian settlement. There is actually a fort there and you can see Sara Palin's house in the distance. There is also a scenic coastline.

Fort Ross is also another one of our State Parks. It requires an admission fee. It also provides (besides all the wonders of Nature) an information center, comfortable bathrooms, and the picnic area.

Abalone diving and other activities in the area may encourage you to consider camping out. There are many campgrounds and other parks near by. For those that feel the need for your more accustomed luxuries, there are inns and motels up and down the coast. On the other hand, Fort Ross is only a couple of hours away and is perfectly fine for a day trip and a quick getaway.

Abalone diving, like other activities associated with fishing, requires a saltwater fishing license and an additional abalone card and tags. These cards are numbered and the rules are explained in the official State of California Department of Fish and Game rules booklet.

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GENERAL MEETING

MARCH 17TH, 2010

AT SINDBADS

Pier 2, Embarcadero Street, San Francisco

MEET at 7:00p.m. for socializing, DRINKS & FOOD
and 7:30p.m. for CLUB BUSINESS



Der Stammtisch

By Pierre Hurter

It's Saturday morning and we've both been awake since 04:00 local time, that's o-dark thirty no matter where you are. We're in Cairns (pronounced 'Cans' as far as I can tell) staying at the Pacific International Hotel. I'm reminded of the quote by Churchill, or was it Wilde or maybe even Shaw. Whoever said "two nations divided by a common language" it was never more obvious. We're on the eighth floor smack dab on the Esplanade with a view of the Coral Sea, the Great Barrier Reef and the local swimming hole. And the bats, did I mention the bats?



The bats, flying foxes, are taking a bit of a holiday in Cairns. There are thousands of them, many hanging out in the large trees outside a nearby hotel, fortunately not ours. The bats are wonderful, as big as a cat and they start flying around town early in the afternoon, usually around two, but they are incredibly loud and when the temperature and the humidity both start to inch past ninety, well bat guano has a unique aroma to put it mildly.

Cairns, depending on which source you prefer, has a population of some 158,653 give or take the odd backpacking tourist passing through. Flying in over the coast from Sydney it reminded me of the gulf coast, they even call the lobster here crayfish.

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2009 SFRD OFFICERS

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Reefer's Rap 2009 – 2010

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
<p>01 - New Year's Day - Breakwater Dive ???</p> <p>02 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p> <p>06 - Officer's Meeting</p> <p>22 - General Meeting - Sinbad's</p> <p>23-31 - 41st International Boat Show - Dusseldorf - www.boot.de</p> <p>30-31 - 3rd Annual Texas Dive Show - www.divechronicles.com</p>	<p>03 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>03 - 07 - SF Ocean Film Festival</p> <p>13 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p> <p>17 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p> <p>19-21 - Our World Underwater - www.ourworldunderwater.com</p>	<p>03 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>05-07 - The Boston Sea Rovers - www.bostonsearovers.com</p> <p>13 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p> <p>17 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p> <p>26-28 - Beneath the Sea - New Jersey - www.beneaththe.sea.org</p>
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<p>03 - Abalone Opener - Fort Ross - CenCal</p> <p>07 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>10 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p> <p>16-18 - Ocean Fest - For Lauderdale - www.oceanfest.com</p> <p>21 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p>	<p>01 - Bay Area Dive Show - San Jose - www.divechronicles.com</p> <p>05 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>08 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p> <p>15 - 16 - Scuba Show - Long Beach - www.scubashow.com</p> <p>19 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p> <p>21-23 - Dive & Travel Expo - Tacoma - www.diveandtravelexpo.com</p>	<p>02 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>12 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p> <p>16 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p> <p>TBD - Abalone Closer</p>
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
<p>07 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>10 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p> <p>21 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p>	<p>TBD - Abalone Opener</p> <p>04 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>08-11 - Channel Islands - Jim Vallario - 415.566.0784</p> <p>11 - Channel Island Extension TBD</p> <p>18 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p>	<p>01 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>10 - 12 Lake Tahoe - Norm Knutson</p> <p>15 - Meeting - Sinbad's</p> <p>11 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p>
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<p>06 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>09 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p> <p>20 - Meeting - Sinbad's - Officer Nominations !!!</p>	<p>03 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>13 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p> <p>17 - Meeting - Sinbad's - Officer Elections !!!</p> <p>17 - 21 - The Dema Show - Las Vegas - www.demashow.com</p> <p>TBD - Abalone Closer</p>	<p>01 - Officers Meeting</p> <p>11 - Club Dive: Beachhopper II http://www.beachhopper2.com/</p> <p>15 - Meeting - Sinbad's - Christmas Party !!!</p>

Abalone Opener from page 1

All participants in the capture and taking of any game are required to have a fishing license and appropriate tags for abalone. Abalone diving is a breathhold sport only. No scuba is permitted while diving for abalone. Watching and shouting encouragement from the cliffs requires no license or government sanction.

Tools needed: Cold water wetsuit, booties, gloves, hood, fins (the cool guys use longfins), mask, snorkel, weight belt, abalone iron, abalone gauge (official measuring device), abalone float, boogie board, or kayak, game bag, knife, and whatever else you think you need to survive this freedive adventure.

Fort Ross is a couple of hours, or so, north of San Francisco on Highway 1 between Jenner and Sea Ranch (and Mendocino, if you continue even further north). You have several options to get there. You could take Highway 1 if you start really early and have plenty of time. You could take Highway 101 to Petaluma and cross over on 12 and 116 to Jenner and continue north along the coast to Fort Ross. You could also take River Road north of Santa Rosa (also off 101) and go west from there, which also connects to 116 and Highway 1.

Check a map, Google, or your GPS before setting out. Drive times may vary. Any route you choose will require traversing twisty mountainous roads, observing pastures and inspiring views of verdant forests, green with the freshness of spring, as well as stopping in Guerneville on your return trip for coffee.



MARCH 1, TIME TO GO DIVING

By Ken Gwin

Went diving recently with a group of other deep divers. This, of course means Captain Phil and another diver named Ken. Eric (one of the freelance surface support guys) helped us with all our gear.

Haven't been able to put much time into diving lately, what with all the up and down conditions. But, everyone around here knows that between storms can sometimes be the best days of the year. This wasn't the case, though it somehow seemed almost calm. Driving into town, the breakers along Del Monte seemed moderate. Monastery had no real waves - it was more a heaving bowl of soup. Lobos was a grey and dark lagoon. Conditions outside were more interesting, with slow swells, overcast, and a driving mist coming out of the West.

This was a planned dive to 250 feet. (We are revving up for diving later in the spring to some of the better offshore spots.) This means a complicated arrangement of tanks - twin 130s for back gas, two aluminum 80s and an aluminum 40 for deco. Of course, the argon bottle and a serious light complete the package. This is an ungainly and

heavy collection of things requiring a little help while gearing up.

This was a simple trip otherwise, staying within Point Lobos, but going just a bit further out into the deeper edges. I've made several dives out here in the past, going even deeper, beyond 300 feet.

The bottom was dark. Viz around 40 feet.

This area is made up of isolated rocks standing upright on sharply sloping sand. This differs from places like E3 and other spots that mirror the ridge and valley landscape of the rocks along the shore. We could recognize some familiar details, some cables and shrimp traps that have been down there for years.

The highlight of the dive was



the massive colony of crinoids that can be found in the area. There are all the typical giant white vase sponges and

gorgonians, but the crinoids are the highlight. These are found occasionally in deep waters around here, while in the tropics, they are common on the shallow reefs in many popular dive destinations.

There were also lots of schools of various juvenile rockfish. I didn't have an opportunity to get close enough to guess at some identification. From what I could tell, they were mostly the shiny

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Time to Diving from page 4

silver ones. I'll leave it at that.

And, of course, with all the deco time involved in this kind of diving, we had plenty of time to observe the many brown sea nettles. This has been almost an entire year of continuous jellyfish. These jellies were a constant onslaught, with at least 20 visible at any time. These ranged from the surface down

to about 100 feet. This makes deco a very pleasant and meditative thing.



There was a slight current on the bottom. On the surface, this current proved enough to drift us on our deco for over a half a mile. We went from north of Blue Fish Cove to well out in front of Monastery Beach.

Temp on the bottom was 52.
Surface temp was 54.
Viz (again) was a dark 40
Max depth 258
Run time 105min

Stammtisch from page 2

The humidity and temperature, both hovering around the mid 80's for most of our stay, with the odd thundershower to keep the parks green, we quickly changed

into the local uniform, shorts and flip-flops. At this point I should back up a day or two and start



out at the beginning of this particular journey. We had decided sometime last year to visit Australia. There's a long list of things I want to experience in my life time, my own personal "bucket list" places to see, things to do and Australia, as it begins with an "A" is close to the top of the list. So on Wednesday, a touch before 11:00 pm, we hopped onto Qantas Flight #QF74 out of SFO and headed for Sydney.

A fairly painless 14 hours later we were there, heading through immigration, rounding up our luggage and wandering through customs (watch for us on Australian Channel Seven TV ...

no really, we made it onto the local telly). Once past the guardians of the kingdom, passports freshly stamped, we followed the

contradictory signs, arrows and hieroglyphics looking for the domestic transfer point. Have you ever wondered why every airport in the world is perpetually in a state of construction? Luggage once again checked aboard our next flight, we headed towards our next stop, Cairns. We arrived shortly after lunch and made our way from the airport to our hotel.

We wrapped up our first day down under with a walkabout of the downtown area and a steak dinner on the waterfront. Saturday, you "lose" a day flying in, as you cross the International Date Line. It's simple really, take California time, add 24 hours and then subtract 6 hours and there you are, local time. Or, alternatively, you let your dive computer or iPhone do it for you. As an added wrinkle there's an hour time difference between Sydney and Cairns, so for a couple of weeks I never really knew what time it was, let alone what day. New Zealand is in yet another time zone, but that's a tale for another newsletter.

Anyway, I woke up at 04:00 o'clock local time and managed to put off rolling out of bed until a tad before 06:00 in the morning. We started the day at a Café around the corner from our hotel with a cup of coffee. Coffee, it's a state of mind, a communion between man and the dark fruits of the earth. When done right it's an

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Stammtisch from page 5

experience which sets the mood for the day, when done poorly, well it sets the mood as well, with the day going to hell in a hand basket. The Café Perrotta's (at the Gallery) knows how to do it right and may well be one of the best cups of Joe in the area.

Fortified with caffeine, a "Long Black with milk"(espresso with milk) in the local parlance and a bit of rye toast topped with butter and Vegemite we set off to take the train to Kuranda. Starting in 1886,



construction of the Kuranda Railway linked the tin miners on the Wild River with the port in Cairns. The railway spans 75 kilometers and passes through some spectacularly steep rain forests, beginning at 5 meters above sea level and ending at 327 meters. Along the way the tracks pass through 15 tunnels, 93 curves and dozens of bridge



crossings. As the brochure points out, the railway was built with "fortitude, sweat and bare hands." The village of Kuranda itself is interesting enough, a collection of tourist traps and leftover hippies, but in a good way. In its heyday as a

mining town it had five pubs, a brewery, school, jail, blacksmith, watchmaker, two bakers and three general stores. Times have changed; there are lots of shops selling everything from tee shirts to bottle openers and little leather pouches made from kangaroo scrota, just the thing to start a conversation off with perspective

in-laws, a boss or that good looking Sheila at the bar ... "would you pass me the bottle opener?"

On the way down the hill we took the Skyrail, a cable car that works its way back to town skimming the tops of the tree

canopy as it heads to the flatlands below. When you look out from the gondola you get a sense of how difficult it must have been to push the railway through the jungle beneath you. The cableway is 7.5 kilometers long and features 114 gondolas and 32 towers, all helicoptered in,

towering 40.5 meters above the ground. The whole operation has been certified as "green" and "sustainable", ISO 14001 to be exact. As the Skyrail traverses the Barron Gorge National Park, much of the work building

was done by hand to minimize the impact. Not sure what exactly sustainable implies, but it seems to entail people traveling halfway around the world in airplanes followed by belching air-conditioned buses and vans of all sorts.

The cable car makes several stops on the way down the hill so that you can step out and view the waterfall and get a sense of just how thick the forest is. On one of the stops a cassowary was regally strutting around the platforms walkway. It's a pretty dramatic bird; it's body jet black with magnificent blue and red plumage covering his head.



It's also a bit on the ill tempered side. In his book "Living Birds of the World" from 1958, Ornithologist Thomas E. Gilliard wrote; "The inner or second of the three toes is fitted with a long, straight, murderous nail which can sever an arm or eviscerate an abdomen with ease. There are many records of natives being killed by this bird."¹ We managed to escape without incident.

The best part of the whole

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Stammtisch from 6

experience in Kuranda was the veranda of Fanny O'Reilly's Irish Pub situated shortly after you get off the train at the Kuranda Hotel, great view, good meat pies and the beer; well it is the first and to my mind still the ideal sports beverage, helping to quench the thirst of parched travelers since 1880 (at Fanny's).

Sunday morning and we seem to be slowly synching up with the local time, today I didn't wake up until almost five o'clock. Plenty of time for a leisurely cup of Nescafe and some reading before the sun comes up and we're off to brekky. We headed to what was becoming our favorite breakfast spot and ordered two Long Blacks with milk and assorted fresh fruit and toast.

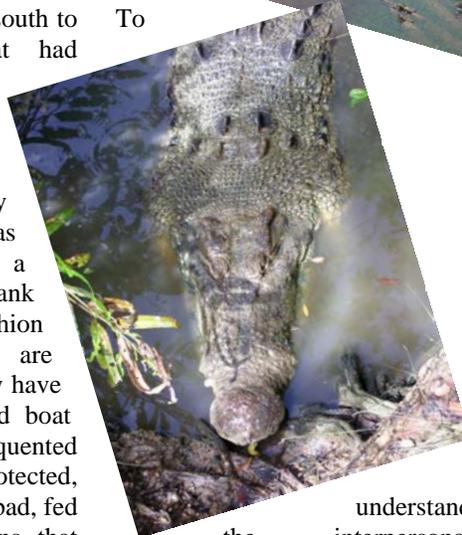
Afterwards we headed south to a crocodile farm that had originally been established to provide work for the aboriginal population. Apparently that never really got any traction and the farm was taken over by a management firm to crank out hides for the fashion trade. The crocodiles are brought here because they have become nuisances around boat ramps or other areas frequented by people. As they are protected, their lives are not all that bad, fed a steady diet of chickens that didn't make the cut for the Colonel, they get to do what crocs like to do, mostly lie about and screw as it turns out. Their eggs are harvested and raised to provide the raw materials for purses, wallets and assorted fashion accessories. Afterwards we took a boat ride back to

Cairns through the mangroves of Trinity Islands.

Back in Cairns we headed for the Blue Sky Brewery for a schooner of beer and a lunch of fish and chips. As an added bonus we got to watch Australian ultimate cage fighting on a really big screen with the volume cranked up to the max. It turns out that drinking beer in Australia is pretty much at the center of all male cultural experience on the continent.



To



understand the interpersonal dynamic of life here, you need to drink beer. That turns out to be more complex than you might think. When you order a beer you're likely to be asked if you want a pot, a schooner, a megapot, a jug, pint, Imperial pint, glass, middy, jug, seven, ten, an eight ... you get the picture. That's what I love about

travel, the opportunity for cultural exchange, experience and personal growth.

Tomorrow we'll have one more Long Black with milk and then head off to the Great Barrier Reef aboard the *Spirit of Freedom*.

So one of the biggest problems with schlepping a laptop along to record your musings is the need to actual drag it out once in awhile and fire it up. Looking back I see that my last entry was on Sunday, the 21st. Well today is Thursday, the 25th so it's been awhile.

We've been on the boat for several days now and have a pretty good sense of how things work. Every boat has a unique personality. By boat I mean the totality of the vessel, the crew and how they work things out day to day, the interaction with the passengers and the all important cook. This is a friendly boat, the crew is quite professional, but I feel as if we have known each other for some time. The feeling you get when you visit with your family, it's not always perfect or the way you thought it should be, but its family.

A couple of comments about this boat, it's big, or at least it feels that way. There is a large upper deck with a covered area with tables, which is where everyone seems to congregate after the last dive of the day. There's also a large open area for deck chairs and chaise lounges for those who want to work on a bit of a burn. There are one liter dispensers of sunscreen strategically placed around the

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Stammtisch from page 7

open areas, a subtle notice to the wise.

The food was delicious, Jesse, the cook is a young guy who from the looks of him has bounced around a boat or two and learned to cook at the entry level, washing dishes, prep, working his way up the food chain. Personally I think the apprentice system is the way to learn how to cook. It gives you insight into all facets of the kitchen, not just the slicing and the dicing, but the logistics and the management of a kitchen. As to the food, well we both brought a few extra pounds home with us.

It's a big crew, for the nineteen of us there are ten crewmembers taking care of the diving, housekeeping and of course the food. The dives are not guided unless you'd like a divemaster to show you the sites. The briefings are always fairly detailed and then you're off on your own.

Generally I prefer diving that way. Occasionally it's nice to have someone show you the sites, but diving alone lets you explore at your own pace and stick your nose into whatever interests you.



In the seven days on the boat we managed to fit in 24 dives, ranging from the Great

Barrier Reef, north to Osprey Reef, and then to the tiny speck known as Bougainville Reef, then back to the Ribbon Reefs. We had 19 divers and 10 crew on-board and never felt crowded, or ignored for that matter. The



right balance between attentiveness and privacy.

Highlights of the trip included a whale shark sighting, a fair number of sharks, giant potato cod, stone fish as big as pit bulls, huge schools of Big Eye Trevally, Green Sea Snakes and more than I can remember. With water temperatures ranging from the mid 80's to in a few cases the high 80's the diving was relaxed and easy, would do it again in a heartbeat.

We rounded our trip off with a few days in Sydney. This has got to rate as one of my favorite cities in the world. Pubs, good food, great wine, lots of charm and friendly people, a unique combination for such a large place, but not unusual for this neck of the woods as we would discover when we headed to New Zealand. That will have to wait for another newsletter, I've got a wee dram of Laphroig awaiting my attention and I don't want to disappoint.

Until next time ... waltzing matilda, waltzing matilda ... you'll come a waltzing matilda with me and he sang as he watched and waited 'til his billy boiled ... you'll come a waltzing matilda with me.



2010 CHANNEL ISLANDS TRIP PEACE DIVE BOAT



August 7th through 10th

1. Please send a \$100 deposit (per spot) to our esteemed and beloved Treasurer (Pierre Hurter, 515 Diamond Street, San Francisco, CA 94114). Receipt of check by the Treasurer adds your name to the list.
2. Boat departs the dock at 10PM on Saturday, August 7th.
3. Bring all of your dive gear, including one full tank. They can refill tanks with air or 32% Nitrox.
4. Unlimited Nitrox fills will cost \$75 for the trip. If you want Nitrox, please bring your Nitrox certification card and separate check for \$75.
5. The bunks have a pillow and a blanket. Anything more (sleeping bag, extra pillow, etc.) is your responsibility.
6. Boat supplies all food, snacks, drinks (non-alcoholic). Wine, beer, etc. may be brought on board, but please remember the homily about your 1st drink and your last dive.
7. For additional information, such as directions to the boat, please check out their website, www.peaceboat.com.

For any other questions, please contact Jim Vallario at 415-566-0784 (res) or 415-819-1159 (cell)

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SFRD Membership**



Dues are Due

**Time to renew your
SFRD Membership
Don't Delay!
Dues are Due
Don't Delay!**

Aquarium of the Bay Seeks Volunteer Divers



REQUIREMENTS:

- SCUBA certified with a minimum of 10 logged dives
- Provide your own wetsuit, booties, gloves, and mask
- Experience with cold water diving

MAKE IT HAPPEN:

- For more information and to apply, visit www.aquariumofthebay.org
- Apply now!.
- Questions? Please contact:



Sonja Gomez
Volunteer Programs and Education Lead
415.623.5342
sonjag@aquariumofthebay.org

Aquarium of the Bay is a 501(c)(3)
nonprofit marine nature center located on
San Francisco's waterfront next to Pier 39.



We encourage you to also support the other organizations listed below when you pay your annual dues. (Please indicate your membership options with the checkboxes below.)

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SINCE JANUARY 1ST 1973

ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO REEF DIVERS (SFRD):

The *Reef Diver Times* is the official newsletter of the San Francisco Reef Divers, a not for profit community organization dedicated to safe sport diving and the preservation of our ocean resources. Membership is \$25 annually, dues payable to "SFRD". The General Meeting is held the 3rd Wednesday of the month at Sinbad's, located at Pier 2, Embarcadero Street, SF, CA 94111. Meet at 7:00pm for socializing, drinks and food and 7:30 pm for club business and entertainment. For more information, visit <http://www.sfreefdivers.org/>.

SAN FRANCISCO REEF DIVERS
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