

DEDICATED TO SAFE SPORT DIVING AND THE PRESERVATION OF OCEAN RESOURCES



Back from the Grave: The Diver Disturbance Study

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From: Ed Cooper <ecooper@divemonterey.com>

Hello ba_diving community. I'm back on the list for this short but vitally important notice: The issue of MBNMS managing us divers predicated on a biased and politically motivated study is the single most important issue facing the diving community & industry to date. Please read the letter and chart posted on <http://www.cencal.org/kelpchart.html>. We'd like your direct involvement, and support by NOT participating in the MBNMS "Diver Partnership Program" or its associated photographic contest until this issue is resolved.

[Introduction for the web page - Please write to Dan Basta!]

We are writing to you for your immediate assistance regarding what we view as a serious threat to the diving industry. The enclosed letter and chart details the bias and flaws in the Diver Disturbance in Kelp Forests study the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is promoting. This study portrays divers as environmentally irresponsible and substantially harming our marine environment. It states among other things "Disturbance may be indirectly exacerbated by the overzealous promotion of recreational diving" and "Exploitation of environmental resources is often assumed to be a right". The study recommends restricting access and limiting our diving to underwater trails.

Please take the time to write a letter to Dan Basta, Acting Director of the Sanctuary Program Office, expressing your concerns about the Sanctuary's promotion of this study: Please forward a copy of your letters to us at the address listed below so we can track correspondence.

Dan Basta, Acting Director of the Sanctuary Program Office
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1305 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

David Clayton & Ed Cooper, Diving Representatives
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council
3793 El Campo Court, Concord, CA 94519
(925) 689-8840 or FAX (925) 689-8480 email drc@cnet.com

The Reef Rap

- **Tuesday, May 16th - May General Meeting:** Chuck Tribolet will present his UW portfolio in a presentation he titled: "Around the World in 400 Dives."
- **Saturday, May 20 - Salt Point State Park:** Wynn Matsumura will coordinate this one day scuba and/or ab dive on the Sonoma Coast. 415-585-1546.
- **Saturday, May 27th - Carmel Bay:** One day dive trip to Carmel, site TBD by conditions. Contact Frank Matzkies @ 510-528-2140 or matzkies@chabot.cchem.berkeley.edu.
- **Saturday, June 17th - Monterey Bay:** Day trip, Ann Gilmore coordinates. Tell her you're coming: (415) 664-6618 or billandann@mindspring.com Meet at the Aquarius dive shop on Del Monte at 9:00. NOTE THE TIME CHANGE!
- **June 20th - June General Meeting:**
- **June 23-25 - Ab Closer at Fort Ross:** At the Pedotti Reef Campground, Fort Ross. Maria Misthos is the organizer. 415-564-3464, mariamist@aol.com More details in next month's issue.
- **July 28th- July General Meeting:**
- **July 21-23 - Jade Cove Dive trip:** Anthony will coordinate this diving/camping trip at Plascett Creek Campground, 70 miles south of Monterey. NOTE THE DATE CHANGE! 415-751-3617.
- **July Events:** There will be another Cypress Point club charter.
- **August Events:** Bob Miche heads up the Ab Re-opener; Jim Vallario is in charge of our annual Channel Islands excursion on August 20th.
- **September events:** Join Jim Radkey for a "SH*T! Back to School" Dive; and hunt the elusive abalone with Tom Leroux
- **October - Mexico:** 7-10 Day Diving Excursion To The Yucatan Mainland for Reef, Deep, Cavern and Cave Diving with sidetrips to the Jungle and Mayan Ruins. Curt Degler Coordinator cdegler@best.com 707-570-0457
- **October events:** Roy Didier hosts the Ab Feed; haunt the deep with Robert Johnson leading a Halloween Dive to Cemetery Reef. Bill Palmer and Ann Gilmore will be coordinating a kayak trip.
- **Be a Leader!** While this year's schedule is already looking pretty busy, there's always room for you to coordinate another dive trip. If you have a plan, an idea, or even just a notion about a fun Reef Diver activity, please don't hesitate to contact one of our fearless leaders: Curtis, Anthony, Frank, or current VP Ann Gilmore, to select a date and get any pointers you might need to turn your dream into reality. It would be great if someone wanted to coordinate a warm water or other "Beyond California" dive trip...such as the North Carolina adventure 2 years back. Attend an officers' meeting (held the first Tuesday of the month - check with Curtis for a location) and discuss your idea, or bring it up at the general meeting to gauge interest.
- **Be a Buddy!** If there's no event planned, you can always call up some people on the roster and see if someone wants to go diving! A new and updated roster came with this issue.. If you got this newsletter, we have your address, but has your phone number or email address changed? If so, contact Loretta at (415) 305-7517 or lorettalowe@earthlink.net.
- **Be an Author/Photographer!** Story reports of Reefdiver events is all welcomed, and highly desired. If you take topside of UW photos, I can also use them. (High contrast pics print best in B&W). And if you leave California for diving elsewhere, tell us about the experience! Finally, express opinions on politics relevant to diving.

Day trips: If you're hankering to get out, but don't have an entire weekend, here are three upcoming day trips to shore dive all over. Also great if you aren't familiar with the common sites!

1. May 20, 2000 - 9:30AM - One Day scuba and/or abalone dive At Salt Point State Park 20 miles north of Jenner on Highway one in Sonoma County. Excellent calm beach access for scuba diving with a no take marine reserve and plenty of coves where abalone are plentiful and accesible. Option to camp over but suggest you make reservations. Coordinator is Wynn Matsumura (wmatsumu@pacbell.net), 415-585-1546.

2. May 27, 2000 - 9:30AM One Day Scuba Dive in Carmel Bay, location to be decided by participants and depending on ocean conditions. Meet at the Aquarius Dive Shop Parking lot on Delmonte Boulevard in Monterey. Coordinators are Frank Matzkies 510-528-2140 (matzkies@chabot.cchem.berkeley.edu) and Armin Luggens (armin@luggens.com).

3. June 17, 2000 - come for a post full moon, pre father's day dive in Monterey. We'll meet at 9:00 at the Aquarius dive shop on DelMonte. Take the Pacific Grove, Del Monte exit. As you're exiting, notice the dive shop down on your left. Make the first left turn on Del Monte and go into the Aquarius dive shop's parking lot. There we can get air fills or a second tank or pick up some vital piece of equipment. They have nice facilities and even a changing room. We can see what the dive shop says about the conditions for this beginning/intermediate dive and car carvan to a site. I was thinking about going to Coral Street---Curt told me that site was called Chase Reef. It's a plan. But plans may change depending on a variety of conditions. SO BE SURE TO CONTACT ME if you're in. (415) 664-6618 or billandann@mindspring.com. See you there. Ann

Weekend Trips: Why go for just a day when you can spend a weekend?

June 23-25 - Abalone Closer: If you didn't make the Opener last month, you'll want to make the midseason closer instead. Lots of people, many good recipes. Check the report on the next page. This will be a shorter drive to the Pedotti Reef Campground of Fort Ross. Maria Misthos is the coordinator. (415-564-3464)

July 21-23 - Jade Cove: The date for this event has been shifted one week. Mark your calendar for the Jade Cove dive. Jade Cove is located in Bib Sur, 70 miles south of Monterey. The campsite is Plascett Creek Camp grounds. This will be a three day camping trip. Bring your tents and camping equipment. Call Anthony for further information (415- 754-3617).

August 20-22 - the Peace in the Channel Island

We still have some spots available on the annual late summer charter. \$305 for 3 days of Southern Cal diving, \$75 for onboard nitrox! Contact Jim Vallario (415-566-0784).

Ab Opener Camping Weekend

Friday morning reasonably early, Gerda and I drove down to our local coffee house for a couple of eye openers to get us on the road to Russian Gulch. Kayaks strapped on the roof, beer and wine loaded in the cooler and assorted snacks in the mess box and we're off. We rolled into the campground mid afternoon and added our tent to the three that were already set up. Since it was Friday and we already had our tent set up, we decided to wander the streets of Mendocino and see if we could find any objets de art, candles or maybe that special tied dyed tee shirt. By the time we returned to the campsite, the place was sprouting tents as fast as mushrooms appear on freeway divider after a rainy night.

After a night sitting in front of a bonfire solving the world's problems, a group took off Saturday morning for a kayak trip in search of the elusive migrating whale. None were to be seen, but the paddle was great for those who turned in early the night before or who took a dose of Dramamin. I will lite swell made the paddle a little less enjoyable than it might have been.

Several other groups went out to hunt for the evening's main attraction, abalone. That Saturday night we cleaned, sliced, diced, pounded, breaded and fried at least twenty abalone to go with the potluck entrees that people had brought along. Two comments, first, when you prep abalone with this crew you will get a lot of advice about the 'proper' way to clean, trim and slice abalone. I'm still trying to sort out what the best approach is. The second comment is that the food was terrific. We had Hawaiian style pork, one of my personal favorites. There was pasta salad, potato salad, asparagus, three varieties of couscous, salmon salad, focacio bread and, and, and then there were the deserts. In short, it was probably the finest potluck that I have ever experienced.

The best part of the weekend, besides the food, the home brew and abalone, was meeting more Reef divers. It's an eclectic group: beer brewers, professors, fireman, merchant marines, abalone fanatics, teachers and you name it - a cross section of humanity. To sum it up, I had a great time, until next year. One thing though, if we stay up drinking homebrew and solving the world's problems next year, I suggest we take notes. --Pierre & Gerda

Diving Report: Vancouver, British Columbia

At the end of April I made my first trip *north* of our local waters and went to Vancouver. My primary purpose was for eye surgery, but it was a good excuse to see a friend and see what diving was like there. I had planned to make a great New Year's trip but company paranoia over y2k nixed it.

My buddy Miranda was leaving town the next day, so we kept it simple and dove at nearby Horseshoe Cove, about 20mins from her home in North Vancouver. I'm now very jealous of the proximity and quality of her shore dives. It takes me 1:45 to get somewhere from the East Bay. And their better diving remains up the coast.

I did my first and third (night) dives at Whytecliffs. They were two separate wall dives called 'the Cut' and 'Whyte Islet.' These were remarkably vertical walls, in excess of 80 degrees, dropping down well beyond the depths I want to go. Drop something here and it's gone. I imagine this area was carved by glaciers in the ice age. As this area is protected from the Pacific, waves and surge are not an issue. This also lead to an interesting effect with visibility. Above

20ft, you could barely see. Lots of organic matter and also river runoff. But just below that it almost immediately opens up to 50+ft, albeit a very dark 50ft.

Life in Vancouver includes many of the usual suspects for Monterey, but they tend to be a bit larger. This could be due to these sites being long established preserves. The ling cod was the most common fish I saw, and most of them would be referred to as lingzilla here at home. In the low viz safety stop I put my hand down on a rock to steady myself and nearly placed it on top of a smaller 3 footer. Don't bite! *Many* were 4-5ft and looked 6'. The sunflower star, my favorite, was also common. Where we have fields of strawberry anemonies, here I saw fields of the giant stars at certain locations, most in the 2-3ft size. Kelp was not so prolific here, perhaps not enough surge or constant current to support it. A little bull kelp, and some of the palm tree kelp that grows a bit off the bottom. 108ft max for 63mins, EAN32.

On the night dive, thousands of 2-8" long shrimp came swimming out and a couple 6' harbor seals lurked around our periphery. At the surface layer was the strongest bioluminescence I've seen in nearly 20 years. Finning left a trail, and with your hand you could make hundreds of sparks fly. Sadly, that didn't extend deep; I hoped to see fish move with a green trail. 95ft max for 60mins, EAN36.

Dive two was the wreck of the Nakaya, a 136ft wooden minesweeper sunk in the 80s. This was located at Porteau Cove, with a very different geology than Whytecliff. The bottom slopes away very gently from the entrance, a river delta. Again the visibility was poor on the top layer; I descended with no reference points until I dramatically crossed below 50ft and could see the ship. More lings patrolling around and in the sand flats were many of their version of the metridium, the plumose anemonie. It's a bit taller (up to 3') and often amber in color. The scientific name given was metridium senile, which our local books say only grows to a few inches. I'm not sure if it's the same species or not. A few dungress crabs also sat in the sand. They aren't a very animated species. I picked one up and it still didn't seem to care. 91ft max for 57mins, EAN32.

As for the subject of temperature, yeah, it was cold. Miranda's read 41 on the night dive (when I had a minor flood for the full 60mins). On the earlier dives it was 44. It's a good thing I bought gloves for this trip, even so the 3mms wasn't much after an hour. I found my drysuit underwear to be ok during the dive, but after I could tell I was drained. She wore two sets long underwear underneath her main insulation layer.

A couple days later I have my lasik surgery done. It's been two weeks now and I'm pretty much back to normal. One eye is still a bit off (20/25) due to astigmatism, but the other is at 20/15. As a precaution, I won't be diving for another couple weeks, but I look forward to it. I've used a prescription mask in the past, but the lenses were a couple steps weaker than my glasses. I also jumped to buy one of the low volume one pane masks.

If you're considering the procedure, Vancouver is worth considering. It is substantially cheaper, and uses better technology than is readily available in the US at this time. There are some risks to consider, and you'll be a bit hobbled for 3-7 days. If you'd like to see my research notes on the subject, feel free to contact me. --Jason

Newsletter News: We still don't have an html newsletter, but we're getting closer with the new www.sfree Divers.org page. Curt may start some conversion. In the meanwhile, I am creating the monthly in PDF form that retains the color photos. It is staged at www.jor.com/SFRD as soon as it's done, then will migrate over to the main page. Please tell me if that form is readable and/or useful for you. --Jason

Trashing the Sea in Costa Rica

by Paul Clark

Originally printed in the Costa Rican Tico Times

Maybe you'll think it shouldn't have surprised me--but I'd never thought about it. Did you know that commercial fishing boats in Central America don't have trash cans? They don't need them. The ocean is their trash can.

The Alexandria is a longliner in Puntarenas, Costa Rica, one of several owned by an entrepreneurial young expat American; I'll call him Ben. Ben's dad, Tim, is a friend of mine from the Bay Area. Ben and Tim recently invited me and another friend, Joe, a Hawaiian, to join them for a cheap week of sportfishing and diving on the Alexandria. At forty feet, wooden, wide and slow, the Alexandria is a tipico "Tico" (Costa Rican) commercial boat: functional but basic, crude even, cobbled together in alarming ways--you wouldn't like her if you're safety-conscious. She has few comforts--no head--and is crowded, with every nook and cranny filled with gear, tackle, supplies and equipment, ice and food. No space left, apparently, for a trash can.

It's six a.m., and we're twelve hours out of Puntarenas--not to come near land again for days--when I finish a breakfast of gallo pinto and platanos, take the last gulp out of a box of jugo de naranja, and first look around for the boat's trash can. Not on the aft deck, nor in the tiny galley. I even look in the wheelhouse. Nada. Holding the juice box, I glance questioningly at Jesus, Alexandria's skipper, and Guillermo, the deckhand. They motion to throw it overboard.

I couldn't do it. Far offshore, the Pacific is like an austere temple of waters: bright, pure, with cobalt clarity and clean-lined horizons uncluttered by land or any other solid thing save the boat you stand on. Jesus tossed the juice box in the water. Floating on that beautiful surface, it was a desecration. Everything my five companions used that week went overboard: cans and bottles, oil-soaked rags, paper, plastic bottles and bags, aerosol cans. I intercepted what I could, and filled a black plastic trash bag--there were plenty aboard, since Tico fishermen use them as flags on longline floats--and kept it hidden in my bunk lest it, too, be thrown in the water.

According to Ben and Jesus, no commercial boat in Puntarenas has a trash can. In its normal working life a small longliner like the Alexandria stays out for ten days and more, and her six man crew works hard, sometimes in dangerous weather, repeatedly setting and retrieving some thirty miles of continuous monofilament line, which is suspended from dozens of floats and draped with hundreds of leaders and baited hooks--and landing, butchering and icing big, violent pelagic fish by the dozens. Ben earns a good living, because his crews are good fishermen; his boats return to Puntarenas belly-full of dorado, atun (tuna) and vela (sailfish)--but with no trash. When next you watch picturesque little boats putting out to sea from a south of the border harbor, realize that each one departs with hundreds of pounds of packaged supplies, and returns with only fish. The fishermen take the fish, and leave behind litter, pollution, and death.

Death? Isn't that a bit melodramatic? Isn't the ocean voluminous enough to dilute beyond toxicity the remnant chemicals and oils in the cans, bottles and aerosol containers discarded by Costa Rica's small commercial fleet? Certainly paper waste must disintegrate, eventually. Other trash, dropped miles offshore, sinks (harmlessly?) to the abyssal plain. Perhaps true. But then there is plastic. Plastic persists, floats, drifts, collects in offshore wind and current lines and blows ashore onto the berms of beaches. (Probably there isn't a beach left in the world unsullied by plastic. When next you walk the remote wilderness beaches of Costa Rica, Baja, Yucatan or Honduras, consider that the trash you see there comes mostly from the handful of people who are

commercial fishermen.) And plastic accumulates also in the guts and gullets of turtles. That's right. Marine turtles eat plastic. Not that they should: it lodges in their innards, causes slow starvation, festering internal injury; yes, even death. But in the visual cortex of a turtle's reptilian brain, floating plastic looks like floating jellyfish, a favorite food. (Tico fishermen know this about turtles, which often bite holes in the gallon plastic jugs used as longline floats, or chew off the caps, causing the longline to sag.)

Costa Rica is internationally acclaimed for the investments it has made in its famous turtles: many kilometers of nesting beach have been set aside, protected, patrolled; captive brood programs have been established; and research has been funded, the better to understand and arrest the worldwide decline of marine turtles. Even only in cold economic terms, turtles have proved a good investment for the country. Tourists come hoping to see turtles, turtles nesting- sometimes in the thousands, the spectacle of the arribada. In terms of tourism, turtles are among Costa Rica's most visible and valuable wildlife. Thousands of Ticos have an economic stake- to say nothing of cultural and ecological values- in marine turtle recovery. But ironically, the few Ticos who are commercial fishermen, for want of the will and some trash cans, silently undercut it all by carelessly harming endangered turtles every day. (Their trash is not the only, or even the greatest, danger that longliners pose to turtles. Longliners inadvertantly hook, drown and discard turtles by the thousands as "bycatch". For that reason longlining recently was banned within 75 miles of the Hawaiian archipelago, and also in a huge additional swath of the mid-Pacific where the Hawaii-based longline fleet was taking large numbers of turtles as bycatch.) But let's not make too much of turtles. Even were there no turtles, there would still be reasons enough not to trash the ocean. For starters, it's so easy to avoid: get a damn trash can. I was a guest on Ben's boat, but I couldn't conceal my disgust. "You're probably right," Ben eventually said, "I should put a can on the boat. But the guys wouldn't use it."

I don't buy that. Ben is the boss, the owner; he's a forceful young man, a natural leader even, and an increasingly prominent businessman in Puntarenas. Ben could enforce, maybe even instill, a new ethic in his crews by providing a trash can and insisting that it come back full of plastics, at the least. Other boats in the fleet might eventually follow the good example. Eventually Costa Rica's fishermen will be forced to clean up their act anyway, as they have been in the States, after they've made enough mess for people to really take notice. If someone in the industry were proactive, we could be spared their mess now. What keeps Ben from being a leader in this? I think he simply doesn't want to be different; he doesn't care enough to risk a ribbing from his associates in the fishing business.

What a stupid reason to trash the ocean, especially when you know better. For Jesus and Guillermo, our Tico companions on the Alexandria, it has always been the same: the trash goes overboard. But for Ben and Tim and Joe, my North American friends, the norm has of course long been very different. Don't get me wrong. I don't think fishermen in the States are more enlightened, or less cavalier, than Tico fishermen. But all fishermen respect enforcement, and the US Coast Guard has resources to enforce U.S. maritime environmental law which has long prohibited the dumping of toxins and plastics. So at home, where the Coast Guard may be watching, and where by now many people deplore polluting and littering, my friends do the right thing. But in beautiful, relatively pristine Costa Rica where, unfortunately, no one is watching, or yet cares enough, my friends were as piggish as North Americans of two generations ago.

Witnessing this was shocking, depressing, and sad. Trashing a place is an act of disdain, even contempt, or at least of utter carelessness and neglect. My friends are among the last people I would have thought felt that way about the sea.

About SFRD (San Francisco Reef Divers): 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.

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Submit Articles: Please forward any submissions to Jason O'Rourke by the 7th of each month. Digital submissions are preferred, as attached plain text formatted documents. If fax is only option, send w/o cover to 603-697-6532.

SRFD

<http://www.sfreefdivers.org>

Reef Diver Times

c/o Jason O'Rourke

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