



International Scuba

Winter is ending!

Howdy everyone:

Happy Valentine's everyone. Hope you had a great weekend even in the awesome snow.

I think we are rounding the winter corner if we have made it this far without lots of freezes and ice. Fingers crossed.

We have plenty of warm destinations planned for 2004. We are off to our second Cozumel trip of the year this weekend. Next is Belize in April, Turks in May, Cozumel in June, Cayman Brac in July, Cozumel in August, Grenada in October, Bonaire in November. Flower Gardens are sprinkled along the way. As a new store to the Gulf Diving folks, I didn't score great trips this time so I am working hard for next year already.

We have a couple of things to pass along to everyone. Many of you know Ralph Mahon, he is one of our great assistant instructors. Well, courtesy of his

job at the airport and 15 years around fuel tanks, he has some pretty serious health issues going on. We hope you will email him and send him cool cards - ralph@internationalscuba.com.

On a better note, Gene and Carol Howard are proud parents of a baby girl - Haylie Marie. A new diver in the making!



Have a great weekend and hope to see you soon.

- Patti Stewart
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Remember to visit our website!
www.internationalscuba.com

Upcoming Lake Weekends:

February 28-29

March 13-14

Mar 27-28

Apr 10-11

Upcoming Trips:

April 10-15 Belize

May 15-21 Turks & Caicos

July 8-9 Flower Gardens

July 17-24 Cayman Brac

August 6-9 Cozumel

September Aruba

October Grenada

And much much more!

The World of Divers Continues to Grow

The number of certified divers in the world continues to grow and International Scuba continues to contribute to that growth. We would like to congratulate and thank all those divers who completed their certification in November:

Open Water/ Junior Open Water:

Lonnie Trammell
Ryan Trammell
Brad Trammell

EFR Instructor

Kathleen Garrett
Amanda Rickman
Cathy Robinson

Drift Diver

Simone Schreiner
Greg Gardner

Boat Diver

Simone Schreiner
Greg Gardner

Master Scuba Diver

Wendy Fox
Phil Fox

EFR for Children

Sam Lamoreaux
Kathleen Garrett
Terry Wynn
Ralph Mahon
Walter Hodges
Tami Gardner

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Technical Diving – A Closer Look

In some of the past newsletters I have talked to you about our new technical diving training program. Well we just finished our first class (Advanced Nitrox and Decompression Procedures), so I thought I would share the experiences.

We had three students in the class. This one was odd for me because I was now in the role of student instead of instructor. This first class is really the 'open water' class for technical diving. It gives the basics from how to deal with new equipment (double cylinders, long hoses, back plate, etc) as well as some new techniques.

We started out by holding a classroom session which was mostly an introduction with the rest of the evening spent on equipment configuration. We reconfigured much of our gear to be as streamlined and accessible as possible. The next night we got in the pool to get our first introduction to diving with doubles and the new gear configuration.

One of the things we learned at the start was that there are a number of pre-dive checks that are basically mandatory. We check for bubbles from our regulators/o-rings. You know those nasty small leaks that are normally no big deal, in this type of diving they are fixed at the



surface before you dive. We then did what is called an s-drill (safety drill) which is basically an air sharing drill. This makes sure that you can deploy and breathe out of both 2nd stages and that all divers are prepared to act in an emergency. Next is an equipment match.

This is equivalent to the pre-dive safety check in the recreational side (BWRAF). Basically it's a detailed head to toe check of all equipment to make sure it is in place and all divers have what they need. The final check is then to go over the dive plan. This makes sure everyone is in agreement on what the plan is so there are no misunderstandings during the dive.

The big lesson in all of this is that technical diving is not the go off on your own individually, but rather a team activity. Each diver should be able to take care of problems on their own, but also be prepared to assist anyone in the team should the need arise.

After the pool session, we made sure that any additional gear changes that needed to be made were done. Now we were ready for open water. We did our open water at the Blue Hole in Santa Rosa, New Mexico. We made 6 dives over a 3 day period. We arrived Friday around noon, got everything together and made a dive that afternoon. The dive was meant for acclimation. It was about 80 feet at 4500 ft elevation. That basically makes it equivalent to about 105 feet at sea level. The water temperature was about 62 degrees. We had around 100 feet visibility. Not bad for fresh water, sitting at the bottom looking up and seeing the surface very clearly. The first thing everyone noticed was that our buoyancy characteristics change greatly. A snug fitting harness was very important. The looser it fit the more the tanks were in control of us instead of the other way around.

The next few dives were intermixed with some lecture and we added some skills like valve shutdown drills (turning on or off each of the three valves in the manifolds), out of air drills, buoyancy drills (turning over, head down, etc), changing kicking styles to prevent stirring up silt, deploying lift bags and calculating our air consumption. The air consumption is used to determine how much air you will need for a

dive. This way you will make sure you go down with enough air to complete your dive as well as enough reserve to use in an emergency. The general rule is what is called the rule of thirds. The first third of air is used to make the dive, the next third is for the return trip, and the last third is the reserve.

The last two dives were done on Sunday. These dives were both decompression dives. We planned our dives (80 feet for 40 minutes, followed by 20 minutes on the surface and 80 feet for 25 minutes). The nature of the site made for very square profiles so this worked well. Using both tables and software we planned how we would do the decompression stops. Basically we stopped starting at 50 feet on the first dive, and 60 on the second. We stayed at each stop for about 1 minute until we got to 30 feet then it was 3 minutes. At 20 feet we switch to 100% oxygen and stayed there for the prescribed time.

This basically concluded the weekend. Overall I had a very good time. My impressions on technical diving changed greatly over the weekend. Instead of being a very difficult mysterious art, I found that it was based on skills we already had, but just needed to be refined. It is more about planning, teamwork, simplifying and safety than black art. I would recommend this to anyone who has a desire to go farther in their diving.

If you have any questions, come see me. You know I just love talking diving of any sort.

- Brian Divine

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Travel - Belize / Ambergris Caye April 11-16

Some destination are beautiful, some are quaint, some are laid back easy living, some are Barrier Reef diving at its best and some are just fun because of folks like "you". Our up coming trip to Ambergris Caye has it ALL!!! The Sun Breeze Beach Hotel is a quaint resort is just minute's stroll from the resort town of San Pedro with great restaurants and shops and adjacent to the Barrier Reef. This beach front resort has 42 air conditioned rooms and a great dive shop on-site. The dock is only 100 yards from the hotel. Darrell and I had the pleasure of visiting this resort in December and went diving with the on site dive shop. They were wonderful and took us to see some of the most unbelievable finger tip coral I had ever seen. One of our greatest dives was the second dive on this trip with nurse sharks all around and great little tunnels. What fun! This is an unbelievable place to dive. I came home so excited about the April trip and want EVERYONE to see what we saw!! The town of San Pedro on Ambergris Caye is only a 17 minute flight from Belize City. The flight over was as much fun and as spectacular as the diving. The view of all the



islands and the ability to see the Barrier Reef from the air was truly breathtaking. A must see!! There are more than 50 named dive sites in the waters around Ambergris Caye including the famous "Blue Hole". Our trip does INCLUDE this dive site. This is an all day trip out to the "Blue Hole" and a 2-tank dive. Come join us and experience the wonder of this great island. This trip is a GREAT value

@ \$1296, you will love it!! Even if you choose not to dive there is plenty to do and see. Plus you are right on the beach. There are only 4 spots left and one of waiting for "YOU".



- Tami Gardner
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Featured Product – Booties

Is your toe sticking out the front of your boot? Are they so gray you can easily tell them apart from others? Well, it might be time for some new ones.

As usual you have several choices.



DeepSee has the traditional Echo 5mm boot that is great for boat diving but not so great for shore diving. The soft sole is a little tough on the paws on coral or quarry rocks.

Would you like a semi-hard sole with options. Well, here you go:



DeepSee's Aqua Purge is a great 5mm short boot. It is a pull-on slipper like bootie. Best part is as you step on your heel, the water flows out 2 holes just above the heel—no squishy. Another great feature is a fin guard on top that lengthens the life of the boot.



If short isn't to your liking, try the Xcel Titanium 5mm that is taller with a zipper lock. It too has fin guards both on the toe and heel to lengthen the life. The best feature is the zipper lock that prevents the bootie from unzipping during your dive.



If you are hard-core and do diving that requires a bit of a trek to the entry point such as Bonaire or even Lake Travis, then the Titanium GlideSkin lined boot with molded sole is for you. It too has the zipper lock at the top.

This is a hard sole boot with a toe and heel guard like the others but the cushion protection for you feet.

Base your purchase on the type of diving you do most. That said, we all have more than one pair of shoes in our closet at home. So take that into consideration when planning your next trip. The team here dive all the boots or have dove all the different styles.

If you are a Caribbean diver only, I think the Aqua Purge is great. You can wear it from the hotel right on the boat, less to carry. If you are adventurous then I would choose the Xcel boots.

Come in and take a look, if you need a water test, I'm sure something can be arranged.

Happy Diving!

Suzanne Williams
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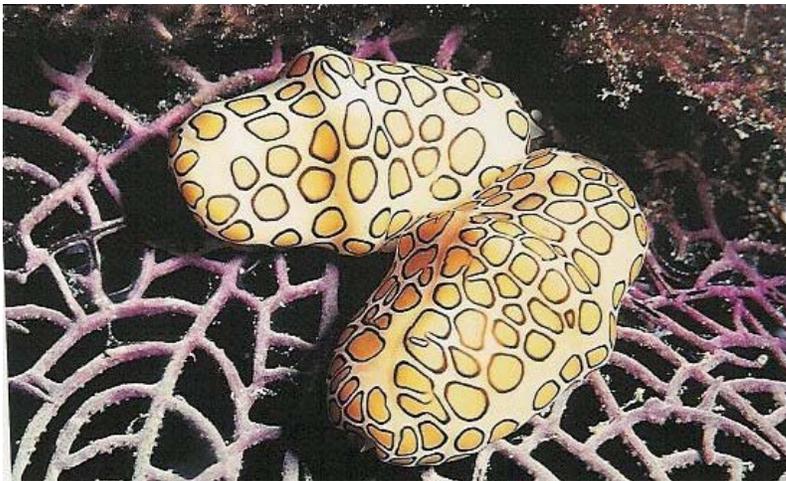


Please visit our website. We do our best to keep it up to date. Let us know what you think about the site and the newsletter. An important part of our success has been the friendships developed among customers and staff. That's part of why

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Creature Feature – Flamingo Tongue



Flamingo Tongue: *Cyphoma gibbosum*

Abundance & Distribution: Common Florida, Bahamas, Caribbean.

Size: 3/4 in.- 1 in.

Depth: 6 - 45 ft

Distinctive Features: Cream-white mantle covered with orangish, often somewhat rectangular spots with black outlines. Shell is lustrous reddish cream to white.

Habitat & Behavior: Attach to and feed on gorgonians (sea fans) in all types of habitats. Mantle normally extended over shell. The shell's lustrous finish is produced by the fleshy mantle, which can cover the entire outer surface.