



International Scuba

Happy Valentines! & Please Help Post Bail for Us!!!!

Howdy everyone:

I hope that since Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow that isn't dooming you from thinking about warm tropical waters. Besides, you have Valentine's Day to think about. Have you gotten cards, chocolates and or flowers. Perhaps jewelry—no wait, scuba gear. That's the ticket.

The weather in Texas is such fun. One day your are bundled up in whatever you can find to stay warm (Lord knows Texans are equipped for real cold weather) and the next you could be in shorts. I hope none of you have fallen prey to the flu or a cold thus far. Lots of vitamin C will help. It is time to begin thinking about those spring and summer trips.

We have a great group of 27 heading to Cozumel next weekend to celebrate Suzanne's birthday, no wait, Valentines, no—guess again—Carnival. Mardi Gras Mexican style. If you have not done this trip



at least once, you should. If you are old enough to remember Mardi Gras in the 70's when it was SAFE and still lots of fun, then you will enjoy Cozumel. The floats are homemade and many are very well done. The dancers of all ages have worked many hours to get the steps down just right. This trip mixes diving with celebration—give it a try next season.

On a more important note, Suzanne and I are participating in the Carrollton Lockup sponsored by the Muscular Dystrophy Association. We will be arrested March 16th and held at the La Hacienda in Lewisville, please don't make us stay for long. We are trying to raise \$2000 for the group to send 3 kiddos to camp this summer. Please come in and help out or visit the online www.mdalockup.org/?e=761. Any donation will get us back to the shop an help the kiddos.



- Patti Stewart

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Remember to visit our website!

www.internationalscuba.com

Upcoming Lake Weekends:

Feb 12-13 Apr 9-10
Feb 26-27 Apr 23-24
Mar 12-13 May 7-8
Mar 26-27 May 21-22

Upcoming Trips:

Mar 17-18 Flower Gardens
Mar 12-19 Bonaire
Apr 11-18 Akumal
May 21-28 Belize

Upcoming Classes:

Adv. OW 2/12, 3/12
EFR 3/1, 4/5
Rescue 3/17
Nitrox 2,15, 3/15,4/19
DAN O2 2/8, 3/8,4/12

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 certifications: **If you have hit a milestone please send me an email.**

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Open Water/Junior Open Water
Christy Walls

National Geographic Open Water Diver

Advanced Open Water
Teresa Howard

PPB
Brian Cleveland

DAN / PADI O2 Provider
Michael Leggett

Navigator
Rich Thomas
Brian Cleveland
Ryan Sterling

Photographer
Brian Cleveland

Fish ID
Wendy Fox
Gail Smith

Divemaster
Gale Smith

Equipment
Matthew Rodger

HMLI
Michael Leggett

DAN / PADI O2 Instructor
Rich Thomas
Stacie Collins
John Hall

Milestones
25 Dives

30 Dives

40 Dives
John Eriksen
Brenda Eriksen

50 Dives

60 Dives

80 Dives
Erin Reynolds

100 Dives
Sherry Nolan

500 Dives

Featured Product—Boat Coats

Those of you who know me know that I am very warm natured, however, not last month in Cozumel on fast boats. El Norte was blowing hard—30-35 knots at times. The water temperature was 77-79 degrees. Air temperature was 80-84 degrees. All normal temperatures for me except the wind thing.

As you know we dive with Dive Paradise and I dive with Victor mostly. He had one of these coats and loaned it to me and Wendy for the rides home each day. We were toasty warm and dry.

It is fleece lined with a nylon water repellent shell and hood. The cool part is the sleeves can Velcro down so skinny wrists aren't a problem. They come in 2 colors—Black or Blue and range in sizes from X-small to 2X-large. Even if you aren't heading to Cozumel in January with us, there is still a lot of winter and spring to go that will be windy. I would think this coat is a must on live-aboards — Flower Gardens.

Come in and order one for your next trip. You won't be disappointed.

- Patti

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A View from Above

Wendy and I recently returned from the January shop trip to Cozumel. I was not able to dive, but decided to go on the trip for a little R&R. It was a great weekend, except the wind was blowing—and I mean howling, several dives had to be cancelled. After hanging out at the Hotel Cozumel for a couple days, I decided to go out on the boat with the group for their Sunday morning dives.

It was a great morning albeit a little windy. We had to taxi to the harbor and take the ten person fast boat from there. I stayed on the surface and it was interesting to see the day unfold from that perspective. What happens on the boat after we arrive at the dive site, get geared up, and enter the water? Well let me tell you, but before I do, I would like to share one thing before you get on the boat. Please make sure your shoes, flip flops, etc. are clean, or better yet take them off when you get to the boat and put them in your gear bag. You really don't need them once you are on the boat. Also, you know that rinse bucket that the crew puts out to rinse your feet before getting back on the boat, it is there for a reason, please use it. That is my observation on shoes and rinse buckets.

We leave the harbor and arrive at the dive site. The group gears up and enters the water. After we put away some gear left on the deck, oh that reminds me please stow your gear bags and dry bags properly under the seats or wherever, out of the way. Especially on fast boats since space is at a premium.

But I digress, I wasn't sure what the plan was, but it soon became very clear, we start to swab the deck. We rinse down the deck several times and clean away spots of dirt and sand left behind by—you guessed it—those nasty shoes... Now you know why it would be cool to make sure your shoes, or feet are clean. The crew is responsible for their boat and one of the chores is to keep it clean. Next we cleaned off all the seats, straightened up all the excess gear and stowed it away.

By now, I'm thinking shouldn't we be following the group? We sit for a few more minutes and then we crank up the motors and start in the direction of the current and straight into the wind along(over) the reef. We motor for about five minutes, cut the engines and look back up the reef. The captain explains that all the light blue colored sections in the darker water are the dive groups heading down the reef. It was amazing to see this parade of groups coming down the reef almost in a

straight line. As the dive continued he asked me to see if I could pick out the divers either by the water color or by bubbles. I guess I did ok, because we left with ten divers and returned with ten. Thirty minutes into the dive, we started to watch both the time and the surface more closely. At that point, the captain explained we may have divers surfacing. Our group did well on air consumption and the first divers started surfacing at 45 minutes into the dive. We were within 100 feet of the divers, mainly because of the captain's experience. This is really a talent, and takes years to hone.

I would like to make some suggestions upon surfacing; 1. If you are signaled by a boat and asked if you are ok, please signal back. 2. If you are given a sign to show upon surfacing that designates the boat you are on please give the ok sign first and then the boat sign.

As the day proceeded and we went on to our second dive, the water became very rough with high waves. It became increasingly difficult to see surfacing divers or bubbles or different shades of color. I would suggest you purchase a safety wiener, I mean sausage. These were great and we were able to see them from quite a distance even in high seas. Also, remember to have a whistle or something that you use to get a boat's attention or some type of signaling device, say a mirror or CD. The mirror or CD work well if the sun is out but not so good if it is cloudy, the sausage can be seen cloudy or sunny.

At this point, we loaded everyone on the boat and headed back to the harbor. We all love to dive but this was a valuable experience for me on the surface.

The crews work hard for their money and we, as responsible divers should have all the safety equipment necessary and common sense to help them out and make sure we have a safe and enjoyable trip.

Remember; safety sausage, whistle, signaling device (I know a dive shop that would be happy to help you with these items), and please clean your shoes or feet.

Hope to see you soon and have fun diving!

- Phil "fender" Fox

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Featured Product – Cozumel Dive Guides

Howdy Divers!!! It's Stock Show time and being from Ft. Worth I just couldn't Resistol... (Sorry for the pun.)

Okay, just as it's Stock Show time and weather here, the blue water dive season is also well underway and with Cozumel being one of our favorite "quick fix" trips I wanted to let you know about a neat little book we now carry at the shop.

Produced by Underwater Editions, The Cozumel Dive Guide & Log Book, provides a unique "side view" of the awesome coral walls and reefs we get to dive, as well as cool pictures and names of the fishes and corals we encounter while there. This unique view helps you visualize the dive you are about to make (or just made) and brings it to life.

The Cozumel Dive Guide is very well organized and is presented in an easy to use format. The first section includes topside information about the Island, its history, the history of San Miguel and the weather that can be expected throughout the year. It also discusses diving in Cozumel, the reefs, currents, the Marine Park and it's regulations and Cozumel's great shore diving locations. Information concerning the Hyperbaric Medical Center and how to contact them in case of emergency is also included.

The second, and most important section begins by showing an overall view of the island of Cozumel and locations of the various dive sites. After the Cozumel island map you are presented with fold-out, artists renderings, of each reef identified on the main map.



Each map provides a "side view" of the reef from the perspective of being out in the open water looking back towards the island of Cozumel. The maps identify where each reef is in relation to the other dive reefs, the direction of the current, the wild life and/or formations you might expect to see and the degree of difficulty the site presents to divers. Brief text descriptions are also provided for each reef and usually include information on how the site got its name, what the current is typically like and what to expect upon surfacing after a dive.



The remainder of the Cozumel Dive Guide includes a brief dissertation on Coral Reefs and photos of the types of coral, sponges, fish, sharks, crustaceans, and eels you're likely to see

while diving. Last but certainly not least they've provided some dive log pages... just in case you've forgotten your logbook.

Please stop by the shop if you are interested in obtaining a copy of this nifty dive guide. We try to keep several on hand. Underwater Editions also publishes similar books on the Cenotes, the Riviera Maya, Playa del Carmen and Cancun. If you'd like more information on these books please stop by the shop, give us a call or visit their website at www.underwatereditions.com.

- Suzanne
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Are You Prepared for your next trip? Part 2

GOING TO / AT THE AIRPORT:

1. BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR THE AIRPORT – 1) DO YOU HAVE YOUR TRAVEL VOUCHER PACKET? 2) DO YOU HAVE YOUR PASSPORT OR A VALID BIRTH CERTIFICATE 3) DO YOU HAVE YOUR MEDICATIONS? 4) DO YOU HAVE ALL OF YOUR DIVE GEAR? AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST 5) HAVE YOU PACKED YOUR PATIENCE SENSE OF HUMOR?
2. For international trips, especially those on a Chartered flight, PLEASE BE AT THE AIRPORT AT LEAST 2 HOURS BEFORE YOUR DEPARTURE TIME. Getting to the airport early serves several purposes, you have the best choice of seats and it is less likely that they will weigh you luggage. Additionally, not only are the lines to check in long, but the lines to get to your gate are long as well.
3. Make sure you have a writing pen and have your coupon/ticket and passport out and ready to present to the ticketing agent.
4. Once you've gotten your ticket kick your sense of humor into overdrive and get in the line to go through security. Again, have your coupon/ticket and passport out and ready to present to the TSA agent.
5. Be ready to take your shoes off, if you have a computer they will ask you to turn it on and don't be surprised if you are pulled to the side and asked to have a look in your carry on bag.

6. If you are carrying rolls of film they might take each roll out of the container and inspect it before letting you pass.
7. Same thing goes for any medications you have with you. Make sure you have prescription medications in the specific bottles they were dispensed in.
8. Once past security go to your gate. They usually have a document they want you to complete and hand back to them before boarding the plane.

AND THE MORAL TO THIS STORY IS...

Use the packing list, double check everything, take your patience and sense of humor, get to the airport, get checked in, get past security, go to your gate, get on the plane, take off, land in Cozumel and GO DIVE!!!!

- Suzanne
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CD Corner—Report From Thailand—Part 2

Hello..... small update from me

The best diving in Thailand is found on the west coast that is part of the Andaman Sea. Most dive operators are found in the main areas of Kao Lak, which is situated just north of Phuket Island and is very close to the Similan Islands, Phuket Island itself and Krabi, which includes the Phi Phi Islands and Koh Lanta. The Andaman is generally clearer water and offers more tropical conditions and consists of many more islands than that found on the east coast of Thailand.

The worst affected area by the Tsunami was Kao Lak. Situated just North of Phuket it took the full force of the oncoming waves with nothing to shelter it except the Similan Islands. The Similan Islands are world famous and is Thailand's most popular destination for live-aboard trips. These Islands are part of the Thai National marine Park and are uninhabited except for some local people and small villages, but there are no resorts or any hotels on these islands. This is the reason why Kao Lak is so very popular, being close to the Similan Islands it offers great opportunities to do live-aboard trips to the Islands as well as day trips by speedboats. In this area alone I think that there were between 12 to 18 dive and live-aboard operators in this one little area alone. The Tsunami wave reached four kilometers in land when it hit Kao Lak. It destroyed many if not all the resorts, local villages and all dive operators. Most of Thailand's casualties occurred in this area since December and Christmas is the peak season, there were hundreds if not thousands of people in Kao Lak. Now almost one month after the Tsunami waves some of the reconstructed dive operators in Kao Lak have started diving live-aboard to the Similan Islands once again. Disregarding reports in Europe that all reef and dive locations in Thailand and other Tsunami affected areas are all destroyed and would take decades to rebuild itself, this is still one of the best dive sites in the world that has shown minimal change due to the Tsunami (Its not like the scientists in Europe were actually here in Thailand to look at the reefs before and after the Tsunami, they were NEVER here at all). Unfortunately not many visitors or divers are willing to go to Kao Lak because it was so badly affected and is at the moment a major construction area. Also because so many people lost their lives there, it just does not feel right.

Divers are still exploring the Similan Islands but are mainly live-aboards that are traveling from Phuket Island. Phuket has also been a hot spot for diving live-aboards to the Similan islands as well. Reports from our own dive professionals who have just returned from the Similan Islands are still reporting that the reefs, drop offs and pinnacles, home to marine life including manta rays, sharks and much more are amazing as they have always been. Even though Phuket was also somewhat affected by the Tsunami it has recovered remarkably well and is still flourishing with tourists. The atmosphere on Phuket Island is just MASS TOURISM. A city on an Island that almost makes one forget they are actually on one. All the major hotels and resorts have fully recovered from the Tsunami and continued with normal business. Daytrip diving from Phuket Island includes the Bida Islands near Phi Phi and some other closer reefs and wrecks south of Phuket and North of Phi Phi. All dive operators on Phuket Island are still operational but are experiencing a low level of diving tourism in the area. Tourism in general shows potential growth in the next coming weeks throughout Thailand for February.

Phi Phi Island was a major back packer location that offered diving, snorkeling tours and tours of the famous bay called Maya Bay that was featured and was the set for the movie "The Beach". Phi Phi was the base of operations for over 20 dive operators, resorts and a hive for nightlife. Twice a day from both Phuket and Krabi there would be a large ferryboat with at times over 200 people onboard visiting the Phi Phi Islands. Phi Phi has been completely demolished by the Tsunami waves. At the moment it is a massive construction site removing rubble and destroyed resorts and dive shops. No diving is done from Phi Phi island itself to it's Koh Bida Islands where the best diving is done near Phi Phi. Koh Bida Nok and Koh Bida Nai Islands are two small rocks that stick out of the water and offer fabulous diving. Again, disregarding reports, the reefs here at these Islands have almost been untouched by the Tsunami waves. The diverse array of soft corals, coral walls, hard corals and dense aquatic life including Zebra Shark, Black Tip reef sharks and sometimes Whale Shark is still not disappointing any diver. The Koh Bida Islands are reached from either Phuket Island, Ao Nang in Krabi and Koh Lanta.

Krabi is also part of the mainland on the west coast of Thailand. There are many dive operations in an area called Ao Nang which is also a popular destination for mainly rock climbing, canoeing, snorkeling and then of course scuba diving. Ao Nang was hardly affected by the Tsunami waves so suffered minimal damage since it is well sheltered by Phuket Island and also the Phi Phi islands. Ao Nang is also beautiful tourist destination and is currently still running dive operations amongst other activities. Close to Ao Nang there are a variety of dive sites that are close to the main land and still east from Phi Phi that have been unaffected by the Tsunami waves.

South of Krabi and Phi Phi, Koh Lanta has recovered almost 100% from the Tsunami waves in late December 2004. Some of the best diving on the west coast of Thailand is done from Koh Lanta. The dives sites in this area are so sought after that Phuket offer live-aboard trips here as well as the Similan Islands. Out of all the resorts along the islands west coast only 10% suffered any real damage by the Tsunami waves. These resorts have all been reconstructed and open to tourists within the first week of the Tsunami waves. Koh Lanta is unlike any other location in Thailand. It offers a visitor a true relaxing island atmosphere. Koh Lanta is not mass tourist orientated and will remain so for many years to come. Koh Lanta is also part of the National marine park and is close to some of the best sites in Asia.

Koh Haa (5 Islands) and Hin Daeng are two of the best dive sites in the world. Large pinnacles, coral walls, caves and caverns and tropical clear waters are inhabited by large marine species of manta rays, sharks, whales and many other pelagic deep water fish such as barracuda and sail fish. These amazing dive locations have not been affected by the Tsunami waves in any way. Koh Lanta has always been a top destination for divers looking for best diving operators and dive locations, and still continues to do so. The island has returned to normal with only memories to remind us of the Tsunami waves that struck this Island paradise almost one month ago.

- *Brendon Sing*



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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

CD Corner — Idea Hunting?

Howdy Divers,

This weather is making it difficult for any of us to think positive about warm tropical waters. I hope everyone is still healthy. Get your flu shot if you haven't already and take lots of vitamins.

I am planning the remainder of the year for my training and also assisting Suzanne as she finalizes the Recreational Schedule. We are entertaining the idea of taking the "Be a Better Buddy" Rescue program that has been so successful and adding to it. What would you think if quarterly we added in Hazardous Marine Life and On-site Neurological Assessment. Wouldn't be required to get your Rescue certification but an added bonus to the program. We would add to the program fees \$385 an additional \$138 instead of \$158 priced separately for the courses. Any feedback would be greatly appreciated.

We are also going to package Equipment Specialist with Gas Blender as a certain amount of material is overlapping. What do you think of this idea.

The idea of both of these programs is to provide the most bang for your buck and make you better educated divers. We are always looking for new programs that will be fun for all of us.

On the professional side, I will be adding Navigation and Search & Recovery specialties to the Divemaster program. These folks work with lots of rescue classes during training and many a mask is dropped along the way so search skills are necessary. As far as navigation—we all dive in our local quarries and lakes and hope that the folks leading us have a clue. Those of us blue water divers get a little lax because we tend to use guided dives or Cozumel. Gee, are we heading north or south—no mooring line to look after. When we head someplace else that has open dive decks on a mooring ball we are left to our own devices to get back aboard.

Finally, we want to offer courses both recreationally and professionally that YOU our customer base wants to see—please provide feedback to myself or any team member on how we can better serve you.

Hope to see you soon,

- Patti Stewart
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Creature Feature — Deep water critters from Thailand areas

These are not made up creatures but actual creatures that are typically found in deep waters in many places around the world but these guys make their home near Thailand. It is thought that the earthquake brought them up from their respective homes. Here is some information going clockwise starting at the upper left..

This is one of the most savage looking of all the deep-sea fishes. The **Fangtooth** is tough, but even the biggest is only the size of a human hand. Its two biggest bottom teeth are so long that, when the fish closes its mouth, they slide into two upper sheaths running along the sides of the fish's brain. It is related to the orange roughy and redfish. It is a mid-water species that feeds on fish using large fangs to seize its prey. It can be found worldwide in the open ocean. There are two forms of this fish, a rounded form and an elongate form. They are a hardy fish that have been kept alive in chilled aquaria for quite long periods.



Chimaera (Kim-era) cartilaginous marine fish, related to the sharks. Also called ratfishes, chimaeras are found in temperate oceans throughout the world, mostly in deep water. They have large heads, long, thin, ratlike tails, and large, fanlike pectoral fins. In many species there is a poison spine in front of the first dorsal fin. Their slippery skins are black, gray, or silver, often with stripes or spots. The largest reach a length of about 6 1/2 ft (2 m).



The strangely shaped **Prickly Shark** has small sharp structures in the skin called "denticles" instead of scales making it feel sandpaper-like instead of smooth. It has a high humped back and a small head. It gets its name from its rough spiky skin. They are typically about 0.1 mm long. The shape of this shark may be due to its very large liver, which is full of oil.



The oil is lighter than water and makes the animal float mid-water. This is called "neutral buoyancy", which means that it can hang without needing to spend energy swimming. This shark can be found around New Zealand and southern Australia at depths of 100-800 meters.

Coffinfishes are flabby bottom-dwelling fishes that occur in deep waters around the world. They can walk along the seafloor on short leg-like fins. These fish often come up in the nets swollen into a ball. Like the pufferfishes, they can swallow large amounts of water to inflate themselves, presumably making it harder for predators to bite into them. The lateral line system (a series of sensory pores that can detect vibrations and chemicals) is very obvious on their smooth bodies. Coffinfishes have a small lure on their head (like their anglerfish relatives), consisting of a short rod and a small glowing bulb at the tip used to lure its prey. The eyes of the fresh fish are speckled with iridescent green looking like a pair of spectacular opals. These animals are around 20-30 cm long.



The **Umbrella Mouth Gulper Eel** can open its mouth to pelican-like proportions. The scientific name for this strange deep-sea eel says it all. *Eurypharynx* means "all throat" and *pelicanoides* means "pelican-like". This all-black fish has a tiny head and eyes and has a huge mouth with small teeth and a big soft-bag throat. At the tip of its tail is a small light organ that glows pink but can also flash red. It seems that this eel hunts by waving the tip of its tail in its open mouth, drawing in schools of small shrimps and other crustaceans. Once inside the eel very slowly closes its mouth so that the shrimp don't even know they're trapped. Then the water is squeezed out through gill openings and the shrimp are trapped and swallowed. The animal shown was caught in the first leg of the trip off the northern Norfolk Ridge.

