



International Scuba

GETTING YOU THERE... STARTS HERE!

Volume 6, Issue 3

Shamrocks are a good thing right?

Howdy Divers,

We wanted to let you know that we aren't being rude if you have been in lately and we haven't spent the normal quality time with you.

As some of you are aware, we have our friend Ale up doing DSAT courses with 3 folks plus discover technical diving seminars plus IDC courses plus lots of new open water divers that have our attention.

Some of you are also aware that we leave for Palau on the 20th with a cool group of friends for a week of live aboard diving. Birthday wishes go out to Brian, Phil (Fender), and TK as this is their monumental birthday trip.

Please come in and bother Rich and Jeff as often as possible—buying a few things would be nice too :-).

New places to dive. We will be taking quite a few folks down to Aquarena Springs for their awesome Scientific Diver course in the spring and early summer. Please contact Rich if you are interested in attending.

That being said, you know that Aqualung is beginning the Dive Across Texas campaign like they did last year. Divers will be eligible to win some cool new dive toys and such. Dive as many places around the Lone Star state and soon to be surrounding states (New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arkansas) to

improve your chances to win. Last year Bonnie Jones and Romy Verhovshek won new ATX200 Apeks regulators. WOW!!!!

There are still plenty of trips out there for you and new ones popping up daily. Check out the website to stay in tune with what's going on.

Finally, we will hold 2 junior Open Water Diver camps this year to focus on our junior divers. The dates are June 18-22 and July 16-20. We want to keep the groups to 6 each session (8-12 and 1-5) so register quickly.

~ Patti

February 2007

Class Schedules & Trips— at a glance:

WEEKEND:

- MAR 3-4
- MAR 17-18
- MAR 31—APR 1
- APR 14-15
- APR 28-29

WHERE TO:

- MAR 9-12 COZ WITH GEORGE V
- MAY 31-6/1 FLOWER GARDENS
- MAY DIVE BVI
- JUN 22-30 BONZIRE
- JUN 30 COZUMEL
- JUN 30-7/1 FLOWER GARDENS
- AUG COZUMEL
- AUG 18-19 FLOWER GARDENS

Specialty of the Month— Now Where did I put that...

As I write this I am look out of my office windows and wishing I was outside to enjoy the beautiful weather. This time of year always makes me a little giddy. The weather is warming up, which means the water is following. April and May usually means the best visibility in our local watering holes as well. If you haven't traveled this winter or braved the cooler water, your gear is probably put away in a closet somewhere. It's time to break it out and get it cleaned up and serviced. Speaking of gear, today I want to talk about one piece in particular. This is a piece of equipment that many of us don't use as well as we could (or maybe even should). Normally we just tuck it way and ignore it. I am talking about your compass.

Last month I told you about the Specialty of the Month for March; Underwater Navigation. This is a great course to get more comfortable with how to use that wonderfully simple device. We start out getting you re-acclimated with the compass. In your open water course you used it some to take a reciprocal course. In this course you will start out with measuring distance and then navigating a square. You then learn more about taking

headings to various positions and finally run through a full navigation course. By the end you will have all the tools at hand to be able to always find the boat, entry point, or underwater attraction. If you have taken the Advanced Open Water course you will have a jump on everyone, since you have already done the first part of this (the square and distance measuring). If you haven't taken AOW, not to worry, after this course, you will also have one dive down on the AOW course.

Since this is the specialty of the month, you will get a free gift if you are a PADI diving society member. For March the gift is a knit hat to keep those ears warm after you get out of the water.

Underwater Navigation also leads very naturally into another specialty. So much so that it is the specialty of the month for April. That specialty is Search and Recovery. This is a fun course. You will learn search patterns, how to use lift bags, all the skill needed to find and recover small to medium sized items (up to about 100 lbs for larger items it very similar skills, just more specialized equipment). Hang out with us at any open

water weekend and you are sure to hear the phrase "Darn I dropped my mask". If you see anyone going in to find it, they are likely using the skills from this course. If you are at a marina, you may hear the "Darn my trolling motor slipped out of my hands" (ok, it will be a little more colorful than that). Again it is this course that teaches you the skill to locate and recover the lost motor.

For the Search and Recovery Specialty, the free gift is a nice PADI backpack. You need someplace to put all those masks you find....

Brian



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Our World of Divers Continues to Grow

Junior Open Water & Open Water (White Belt)

Bob Howard
Patrick Portner
Tim Portner
Brian Portner

Advanced Open Water Diver

Dana Poer
Robin Ridgley
Patrick Herter
Chanda Gabrysch
Jerry Hoverson
Phyllis Hoverson

Enriched Air

Becky Ronald
Brian Ronald
Marie Zastrow
Lyn Zastrow
Logan Zastrow
Marie Zastrow

Dry Suit

Matt Lopez
Pat Lynch

Drift

Tom Baggett
Kevin Gibbs
Jim Ryan

Robin Ridgley
Patrick Herter
Chanda Gabrysch

Boat

Tom Baggett
Kevin Gibbs
Jim Ryan
Robin Ridgley
Patrick Herter
Chanda Gabrysch

Deep

Pat Ivie

Digital Photo Level 1

Chad Rollins
Pat Ivie
Ron Folkes

Oxygen Provider

Ho Lee
Ron Bloomquist
Josh Racca

Emergency First Response

Ho Lee
Ron Bloomquist
Josh Racca

Tec Rec Gas Blender

Brad Sample
Tony Salter
Ron Bloomquist

Claudia Pfennig
Jeff Allen

DSAT Tec Deep

Brian Divine

Open Water Scuba Instructor

Tim Ralston
Kyle Beighle

Tec Rec Gas Blender Instructor

Tony Salter
Claudia Pfennig

DAN Instructor

Bart Jennings

Milestones—number of dives recognition

Don't forget to email us your milestones—remember you are working hard!

10 Dives

20 Dives

25 Dives

Deidrea Johnson

60 Dives

100 Dives

150 Dives

200 Dives

Brian Ronald

250 Dives

300 Dives

400 Dives

500 Dives

600 Dives

1300 Dives

Kevin Murphy

What do you do to celebrate a 30th a 40th and two 50th birthdays---go to Palau, of course!

We recently returned from our adventure to Palau and it is hard to describe it in writing. But I will give it a shot.



After 22 hours of flight time we touched down in Koror, Palau and spent the night in great anticipation of getting on our live aboard the Ocean Hunter II the following morning. We boarded the boat a little behind schedule, but none the less, we were pleasantly surprised by the accommodations, dive deck, and as we were to find out, the food.

Our typical day started with the alarm going off at 6:15AM every morning. You might ask so what is so special about that, well it is pretty cool when the alarm is the boat engine warming up. Get up, have a light snack, go to the bow to watch the dolphins swim with the boat, and then get ready for our 7am giant stride. After our morning dive, we ate a full breakfast and looked forward to the next dive. Mid-morning was dive #2 and after that we ate a full lunch. Third dive of the day followed in the early afternoon and after that dive there was smoothies and brownies. Oh, and did I mention there were warm towels waiting after every dive following your warm, fresh-water shower on the dive deck? Fourth dive of the day completed in mid-afternoon, and we waddled back on the boat, what no snack? There was a night dive available, and once that was complete, we all sat down to a really tasty three-course dinner. All the meals had different themes throughout the trip and the variety and quality was wonderful.



We had a crew of five that included two dive masters, one deck hand, the cook and our captain. The dive briefings were thorough and always were centered on safety. The crew was a great bunch and I hope they enjoyed us, as much as we enjoyed being with them. It is true customer service when the crew actually would get annoyed when we tried to help. They often commented this

is your vacation and you are here to enjoy, relax, eat, and dive. The crew was very professional and they were around if you needed them, but scarce if not.

We did a variety of diving wall, drift, cavern, wreck, and a new one for the group - diving with a reef hook (one end hooked to your BC). The Blue Corner is a favorite and popular Palau dive site but the currents are extremely swift so you dive down pick a piece of dead coral hook in with your reef hook and you are tethered to the reef. Add a little air to the BC, and bingo you are flying without moving. Sharks were too many to count and other life just swam by as we all looked on in amazement. When I got back to the boat I told the captain I wasn't sure how I would explain this to people. He said, and I agree, it is like getting in your car going to a drive-in movie, parking, watching the movie, and then leaving---unbelievable. We had several dives like that that really stuck out as spectacular, some of the others included a nautilus dive, a manta dive, and of course my favorite, the WWII wrecks.



The sea life, including creatures was varied and colorful. I never thought I would say, oh there goes another shark. I will leave this to the pictures from the trip to do all the critters justice.

Aside from diving some of us took a land tour to Pelelieu. An interesting spot in American history during WWII. A small island of 8x3 miles that was supposed to take American troops 2-3 days to secure took some three months. The Japanese had caves in the mountains with plenty of artillery (see tank) to fire at us for a long while. Worth seeing if you are history buff.



I think the group as a whole got really spoiled and I heard many comment on how they were not sure they could go back to regular diving.

It is hard to capture the full experience in writing. If possible, I would corner a person that was on the trip and let them explain it to you. I know everyone will have different ideas and different perspectives about the trip. Locally, talk to Patti, Brian, Wendy, Fender, TK, Deidrea, or Kevin. Kevin shot video and we have many pictures that I'm sure we can make available if you are interested.



Suffice to say it was an incredible adventure and I would like to thank Patti and my beautiful wife Wendy for making it happen for my 50th birthday--if anyone would like to offer me a present of a week in Palau aboard the Ocean Hunter II, I will gladly accept!

Have fun and safe diving,

Fender



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 we dive.



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GETTING YOU THERE... STARTS HERE!

CD Corner — Age doesn't matter

Howdy Divers,

I often hear "I'm too old to dive" or "I'm too old to go pro". I am a firm believer that you are as old as you act. Okay, I admit old as you feel is often how it goes. Some days we all feel ancient but much of the time we like—when is the next dive. Our group in Palau ranged in age from 30 to 49 and you couldn't tell age at all. So age isn't all that important if you keep learning and growing.

We just had two IDC candidates come through—one 19 and one 50. What a spread.

It is never too late to stop learning. I sometimes hear "You're at the top, what else is there?" I then tell them there are many ways to continue education. I also say I will stop learning when they throw dirt in my face.

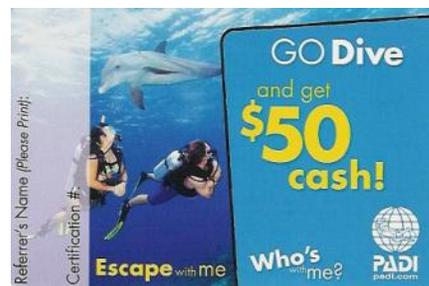
I applaud a new Divemaster candidate who is 50 years old and just got certified last summer. He thinks, wow I wish I started years ago. I tell him it is never to late to have fun. Age shouldn't be a factor if your health is good.

If you look on our wall of shame or the web site you can see we have a seasoned team but we are bringing in new young team members as often as we can.

Speaking of learning and age, PADI will launch in April a new online Open Water Diver academics program. You will be able to do the knowledge reviews and quizzes online then bring in the paperwork indicating a completion point and join a regular class. For those of us who are unaccustomed to using text books and conventional learning this will be a new avenue to get certified. Some folks like to study at off hours so this will accommodate them as well. We look forward to seeing and using this new program to create many more divers.

If you have someone you know who will be a candidate for the online course, keep them posted for the end of April.

Make a plan to learn something new every week. You will be surprised!



~ Patti

Creature Feature — Lionfish



Here are two different varieties of the lionfish shown here. The first is the Common Lionfish and the second one is the Spottin Lionfish.

Many of the lionfish we saw in Palau grow upwards of 18 inches while a few were less than a foot. We saw more than the two listed here as there are over 12 different varieties. They are not terribly active critters so it is easy to take pictures of them. We probably took over 50 shots collectively. You won't believe me when I say we got tired of seeing lionfish. They are gorgeous fish with a host of different colors. They even blend a bit into the coral they are laying in.

That brings to mind where we see them. Could be on wrecks but mostly on walls. They are pretty feather fans that we would have to look closely at to see if they were a lionfish or fan. There were several times we should hang and watch to see if they moved. We weren't willing to miss sightings.

Patti once told me on her trip to Australia that she saw only one and he was asleep or pretending to be anyhow. She can't say that anymore!

~TK