



International Scuba

GETTING YOU THERE... STARTS HERE!

Volume 7, Issue 1

Changes!

The New Year has always been a time for reflection on the past and plans for the future. At International Scuba we have looked back with real satisfaction on the past. But, as a part of that reflection we are also planning changes that we believe will benefit all of our divers. As you can tell, I'm not Patti. This is just one small change to take some of the load from Patti's shoulders. We hope to allow her more quality time for those things that require her special touch.

I want to take just a few lines to tell everyone how happy I am to be a small part of the International Scuba family. In the few months that

I have been on board, I have rediscovered what diving is all about—friendship, camaraderie, and above all getting your head underwater!

Brian's Article this month, "Your Next Trip" should serve as a gentle reminder that football season is about over. That means it is time to get ready for the next dive trip whether it is to The Flower Gardens, Akumal or CSSP.

Speaking of the Flower Gardens, you still have a chance to get in on the Feb trip and maybe see schooling hammerheads. You need to book now!

Some of our other trips are:

Akumal—Mar 1-6

Belize—Apr 11-16

BVI—May 24-30

The Dry Tortugas—May 24-28

Of course, since the new year means a new dive season, now is the perfect time to take that specialty you've been wanting or better yet, get a season pass for any and all the specialties you want. Stop in and let's discuss it. And while you're here, find out where we're diving Sunday. Then make plans to join us. It would be a great start to a great year of diving.

Dive often, dive safe, have fun
~ Anthony

Specialty of the Month— Your Next Trip

Here we are at the start of another year. Has everyone gotten used to writing 2008 yet? It always takes me most of January to get into that swing. Now that holidays are over and we are getting back into the swing of things, we are probably already looking forward to our next dive adventure (or for those people going to Turks and Caicos or Cozumel this month packing for the next trip).

For a lot of divers, the first time they get on a boat to go diving can be a bit intimidating, especially if you do not have much experience around boats. For those of you in that boat (pun intended) the good news is that the specialty of the month for February is just for you, boat diver. This is a great course to get you familiar with the terminology, etiquette and procedures for boat diving. Do you know the difference between the bow and the head (probably not a good thing to mix up)? When are you allowed to board the boat?

For the answers to these questions and more, sign up for the boat diver course. If you sign up in the month of February and you are a PADI Diving Society member, you can get a pair of PADI flip flops. You do not need to complete the course in February, just sign up for it. If you don't have a trip planned soon, stop by and talk with Rich. We often go out boat diving on Possum Kingdom. Its great fun and we get to go places on the lake that we don't get to dive often.

Another great course for that trip to Possum Kingdom or your favorite warm water destination is Enriched Air Nitrox. That is the specialty of the month for January. Take a look at last month's newsletter for more information. Remember to get your free gift, you just need to sign up in January, you can complete it later if you need.

Happy diving,
Brian



January 2008



Class Schedules & Trips— at a glance:

WEEKEND:

JAN 19-20 AQUARENA SPRINGS

FEB 2-3 AQUARENA SPRINGS

FEB 16-17 TBD

MAR 1-2 TBD

WHERE TO:

FEB 9-10 FLOWER GARDENS—SPREE

MAR 1-6 AKUMAL

MAR 15-16 FLOWER GARDENS

APR BELIZE

MAY 24-31 BVI

MAY 24-28 DRY TORTUGAS—

SPREE

JUNE 13-21 BONAIRE

JUN 23-25 FLOWER GARDENS

JUN 30-JUL 1 FLOWER GARDENS

MUCH MUCH MORE!!!!!!

FEB 2010—PALAU

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Our World of Divers Continues to Grow

Open Water (White Belt)

Bryan Davis
Nathan Davis
Andrew Lin

BLSPRO Instructor

Barb Anthony

Enriched Air

Levi Andrew
Lance Thomas
Jeremy Shelby
Edward Lindsley

Deep

Tonni Shook
Lance Thomas

PPB

BLSPRO

Brian Brewer

Master Scuba Diver

Cyndi Smart



Milestones—number of dives recognition

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

10 Dives

100 Dives

300 Dives

350 Dives

20 Dives

150 Dives

400 Dives

500 Dives

25 Dives

200 Dives

600 Dives

50 Dives

250 Dives

Dave Allen

700 Dives

Meet our Team— Dave and Patti

What better way to start the year off right than feature two of International Scuba's brightest stars Patti Stewart and Dave Allen? Dave is known to students and fellow team members as calm and caring. Often times Dave's special touch with students is just the ticket when it comes to overcoming seemingly impossible issues. Whether it's figuring out how to navigate underwater with a compass or getting a pesky mask cleared, Dave always maintains a friendly and positive atmosphere for the sometimes nervous students. I have heard many times how great that gentleman with the beard is.

Usually the first to respond to his fellow teammates in need, Dave is almost always up to the task when someone is sick or taken away on business. For awhile it seemed like Dave was our fulltime Discover Scuba and Scuba Review instructor. It's no wonder so many of the folks that try scuba in the pool decide to get certified. Dave has found a way to make it a special experience for everyone.

Here's your chance to get to know them a bit better.



Dave Allen—Assistant Instructor

How did you get started diving? I'd been interested in diving since I was a kid, so when my family was invited to spend a week over Christmas in the Bahamas in 2003, I decided to

check out diving before the trip. I took a Discover Scuba class and loved it! I got certified on a cold November weekend and have been hooked ever since.

What brought you to International Scuba? John & Suzanne were my OW instructors, so when they came to I.S., I followed them over.

Number of years diving? How many dives? 4, 2.5, 250+

Tell us something about yourself that your diving friends would be surprised to learn. I have a 2nd degree black belt in Tai Kwon Do and taught it for several years.

If you could leave tomorrow to live in the islands where would it be? Someplace in the Bahamas.

What is your oddest diving experience? When my reg free-flowed at 30 feet in Cozumel. We had just started the dive when it happened. Fortunately, I had recently practiced that skill since I was training to be a Divemaster so I was able to make a safe ascent. I swapped out regs on the boat and was able to continue the dive.

What is the one tip you would like to share with a new diver? Do everything you can to develop good buoyancy control. When you do, you'll be more comfortable in the water, have longer dives, and have more fun

If I were reincarnated as a fish, what kind of fish

would I be? While not truly a "fish," it would have to be as a dolphin. Every time I've ever seen on in the water, they look like they're having a blast!



Patti Stewart—Course Director

A woman that really needs no introduction! The hardest working woman in the scuba business! Ladies and Gentlemen put your hands together for International Scuba's very own Patti Stewart! I'm sure Patti is going to swat me for that introduction and that's ok with me. Patti has made it possible for many folks to follow their path in scuba. Whether helping a prospective diver with an impossible schedule get certified in time for a last minute trip or babysitting a group of white knuckled instructor candidates prepare for their instructor exam, Patti is at her best making things "just happen". There is fond Patti memories I could share told by friends, instructors, students and PADI personnel but to me it's easier to sum her up as a person that just makes it happen. Just about everyone has experienced the magic of Patti taking an unlikely scenario and doing whatever it takes to make it happen. Patti is truly a person that doesn't know the meaning of can't do. While Patti is definitely a great business woman she also has an equally intense kid that will never grow up inside her. A couple years ago after hearing I had never been to Disney, Patti led me on a tour de force of Epcot Center. It was hilarious to watch Patti transform into a 10 year old in front of my eyes. I think in another life Patti would be a Mouseketeer!

How did you get started diving? It's all Mike Rowe's fault. If he hadn't made such an impression on Brian to come to the store and meet him I might never have taken the first step. Truthfully, in my corporate days I actually had a gig in Hawaii so I had Brian join me after the consulting gig was done and we snorkeled in Maui. I got frustrated at not being able to enjoy the beautiful colors below and the rest is history

Number of years diving? How many dives? Fast approaching 10 for diving, 9 as a professional. I knew the moment I put my head under water I wanted to be an instructor. Number of dives, hmmm well over 900 by now.

What brought you to International Scuba? Mike Rowe again – his fault J. I have the dubious honor of being the first customer to go from Open Water to Instructor in the store.

Tell us something about yourself that your diving friends would be surprised to learn. That Brian and I used to work together in Alabama. He built the products that I used support and sell. We would probably still be at the company

maybe not in Alabama though had they not changed directions.

If you could leave tomorrow to live in the islands where would it be? I always thought it was the Caribbean but after having visited Palau I am torn. I think anywhere I could put my toes in the sand with a view is good.

What is your oddest diving experience? Bahamas Shark Dive! Brian told his mom where we were going and she desperately tried to talk him out of it. I didn't tell my mom until we were back. The actual first dive was a complete realization that while we believe we are the top of the food chain on land that is certainly not the case in the water. During the feeding I got buzzed by a black tip – he grazed the top of my head. It was so cool but creepy at the same time.

What is the one tip you would like to share with a new diver? Never stop learning and never stop diving.

If you were to come back as a fish in your next life what kind of fish would you be? I would be a reef shark. Many sharks have to keep moving and if you know me – I am always doing something and almost never idle. Also, as an Aggie I get a bad rap just like sharks do. Honest we are good folks.

Meet our Team— Winter Weather, Great Diving!

Well another annual New Years Day Polar Bear dive at Clear Springs Scuba Park has come and gone. Fox 4 news' Richard Ray was there to document all those crazy divers willing to risk frostbite or worse. Many viewers that saw this newscast just shook their heads in amazement. Why do they do it? What causes otherwise reasonable people to lose their senses and take a plunge in the middle of winter?

There are a growing number of Dallas divers learning that some of the best diving occurs during the winter here in Texas. There are two great reasons to dive during the winter. The first reason is great visibility. The second reason is that most of the dive sites are less crowded making for a relaxing, and more in tune with nature experience. Some of my most enjoyable dives have been during the dead of winter. To make it enjoyable you do need to prepare a bit more than during warmer weather, but usually it's not that much extra work.

In Texas our winter water temperatures are typically no colder than many of our northern neighbor's summer temperatures. I'm always amazed that many of our divers that dive frequently during the summer will pack their gear away and only break it out for a trip to the Caribbean. Many days during our Texas winters we are blessed with almost summer like weather. I find myself in shorts at the lake more often than not. Just this past weekend we had just about perfect conditions for a day spent outside. Even on our colder days it's still not the bitter cold of many locations.

Ok, you are probably asking. Why is the diving so great? Well the biggest reason is that the visibility is almost always just about as clear as it gets. When the water gets warmer we have all kinds of algae that start to bloom in our fresh water lakes. This is completely natural and happens fairly consistently each year. There can be times that it is more prevalent than other times due to conditions and the amount of nitrates in the water from the over fertilization of our yards and the water run off from irrigation.

Last week while diving at Clear Springs Scuba Park, the visibility was outstanding. I could easily see 30+ ft. During much of the summer months we sometimes measure viz in inches. Part of the reason that the viz is so good can be attributed to the lack of divers out there. I only saw two other divers the whole day. With fewer divers that means fewer fins stirring up the bottom. I would have to say that last weekend was one of the best days of diving I've done at Clear Springs. If you have ever wanted to really see Cisco the shark, the entire plane at once or the interesting areas around the silos now is the time to go. The fish even slow down for the winter and allow for close encounters.

It's too cold you say? I will admit the water was 48 degrees and if not properly geared up will take your breath away. But we had no problems with the water temp because we planned for it. I must confess I was diving dry. Believe me when I tell you it's heaven for winter divers to dive dry. My buddy was wearing a layered 6mm wetsuit along with a hood and gloves. After our third long dive of the day we both were warm and comfortable. The only reason we stopped at 3 dives was to let Robert, the owner, get home to dinner. The air temperature was a typically warm Texas day around 70 degrees.

What would we have done if it had been a cold windy day instead of the perfect day we had? Now is the make it or break it time. There are several things that a diver can do to make the best of even the worst conditions. Exposure protection is the first key.

When picking out a wetsuit think in terms of all the condi-

tions you'll dive in. For many years I had a layered approach to my wetsuits. Short wetsuit for summer, 3mm long for springs and fall and a 5mm for colder water. I found that if I layered my shorty and 5mm that I could be quite warm even in the dead of winter. If you pick your suits carefully two suits can really take you throughout the year.

Many people forget that you lose lots of heat thru you head. A good fitting hood or beanie can really make a difference in how warm you'll stay. Make sure the hood fits properly. A hood that is too tight could create problems by restricting blood flow thru the carotid artery causing you to pass out underwater. A loose fitting hood allows too much water to flow around your head causing you miss out on most of the thermal protection. Some folks hate the way a hood feels restricting. I prefer a beanie because I don't feel as bound up. While not as warm as a hood, comfort is important to enjoying your dive. Once when on a trip with lots of daily diving, my dive buddy started getting really chilled even though the water was in the mid 80's. Our dive master came to the rescue with a beanie and that made all the difference in the world without adding a heavy wetsuit.

A good pair of warm gloves can make things better too. Fingers can get cold quickly and stop working if exposed to cold for even short periods. We have very little natural protection on our hands. If you have poor circulation your fingers can become numb even easier. Gloves come in many thicknesses and several styles. There are light gloves which really will only provide you abrasion protection, 3mm gloves are a good warm glove yet you still have some feel and dexterity left and 5mm gloves are super warm, yet you sacrifice much of your feel for fine detail.

Even though you have all this great gear to keep you warm there are a couple little tricks to remain even more comfortable. I like to bring along a water cooler with hot water. The cooler is just as good at keeping things warm as cold. The warm water is great to warm up your gloves, hood, and also perfect to pre-treat your wetsuit. By pouring a small amount of warm water down the neck of your suit, you get a head start on insulating yourself from the cold water. Those painful icy fingers down the spine are banished forever. As the cool water enters it is almost unnoticeable since you have a nice warm layer to dilute its bite. After the dive, fingers are often the most effected and are easily warmed up by a quick dunk in the warm water. Another easy trick to keeping warmer is to get that wetsuit off as quickly as possible. The water evaporates from your wetsuit and will chill you even more by the heat carried away during evaporation. It works the same way as a swamp cooler in the heat. If you have a short surface interval and don't want the hassle of getting back into your suit, then just remove the upper portion and slip into a thick sweatshirt or better yet a boat coat.

Boat coats are a winter diver's best friend. The boat coat typically is longer than most coats and has a two way zipper. The coat has warm flannel on the inside lining and also in the pockets. This feels great on a cold day and warms you up quickly. The outside layer has a nylon shell that acts as a wind breaker stopping the cold winds that seem to cut right thru a thick layer of clothes sometimes.

If you plan to spend much time in colder water and cool outside temperatures, each day you will need to restore your core body temperature. Long exposure to cool conditions brings down your core body temperatures gradually until it's hard for your body to warm itself back up. I have found the best way to recharge my internal heater, is thru plenty of hot soups and warm drinks like cocoa and hot apple cider. At

bedtime I also make sure to cover up with a warm blanket to keep as insulated as possible. This enables me to start off warm when diving again the next day. By returning your body to its optimal temperature you can give yourself a better shot at keeping warm and comfortable.

If you plan on doing lots of winter diving you might want to look into a semi-dry wetsuit or even a dry suit. A semi-dry works just like it sounds. It keeps you as dry as possible thru a heavy duty zipper that is used on dry suits, along with well reinforced neck and wrist seals to prevent water from leaking. These suits are pretty darn dry but will at times leak a bit hence the semi designation. They also don't have the valves to control the amount of air in the suit that a dry suit has. The Swedish wetsuit manufacture Waterproof, has one of the best designed semidry suits I have ever seen. I have heard great things from those who dive it. It appears to be virtually dry and could be considered a dry suit if valves were added.

Dry suits are considered by many in the area to be a luxury item. I have heard folks say they are just too expensive for the amount of diving done during the winter. If I could only get these people to try a dry suit out and experience the thrill of being instantly warm and dry after exiting the water. A dry suit will take you all the way thru the winter in comfort and allow you to laugh at winter winds and shake off the cooler waters. The amount of undergarments worn determines just how warm you will be on your dives. From fall to spring a few layers of clothing added here and there will keep you feeling just right. Slipping into the warm thermals is great on a cold morning. I often feel like I've headed out to the lake while still in my pj's. Diving dry could easily double the number of dives you do in a season. This fact alone makes a dry suit a real bargain.

Manufactures are also striving to make an inexpensive high quality dry suit. It's not an easy task as much of the cost of a dry suit is in the heavy duty zipper that is much like those found on space suits. In our shop White's dry suits seem to be the most popular choice to date. White's has a great way of offering the complete package; suit, undergarments, boots and suspenders all for one price. All the accessories can really add on to the price of a suit, yet Whites puts everything you need together for one price. A new dry suit that promises to bring diving dry to the masses is the Fusion Dry suit by White's. This suit is designed to fit a wide range of sizes. The entire size run is 4 suits. Because the suit fits so many sizes they can reduce the costs by making them in larger numbers. The suit also is more streamlined with a profile that is more inline with a wetsuit. The fusion is about to start shipping after a long back log in production. Just introduced this fall, dive shops have been snatching them up faster than they can make them. There are far too many dry suit manufactures to address them all but the next most popular suit worn by our staff is the Bare suit. Bare has a suit to fit just about anyone right off the rack. That means you can dive right away with it instead of the long wait which accompanies a custom made to fit suit.

Ok I admit we may be a bit crazy. We're even more than a bit obsessed. But if you learn how to do it right, you just might be the next diver to embrace the fine art of winter diving. And there is nothing better than the warmth that comes from sharing dive stories among fellow polar bear divers. I'll be sure to save a cup of hot cocoa for you.

~ Rich

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 team. That's part of why we dive.



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Getting You There... Starts Here!

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CD Corner — Biting off more than you can chew

Howdy Divers,

The Penguins are about to mutiny. For those of you who don't know the story I will tell you to equate your brain with an ice berg. Only so many penguins can live on the ice berg (knowledge). When new penguins want on – then old penguins must jump off. I have lots doing cheerleader pyramids right now.

We decided to jump into a new software program for the store. We found a new program at DEMA that will make our lives much easier – after the migration of course and if there are any penguins left. After 10 years of tracking customer data this is no small endeavor. I am proud to say that we started in mid-November with the transition

with a goal of going live January 2nd. I am pleased to say we went live even if we still have some transition to do.

Have you ever started a project at home that you said – ah, I can do this in a weekend and not 2-3 hours into it you realize you bit off more than you can chew. I know we have done that once or twice. If you learned from your mistakes then you also learned to ask for help. We have all of us on retail staff doing bits and pieces to make it even smoother. How many of us after two weekends or more of our home chores still haven't completed the project. Come on you can admit it – at least to yourself. It might be time to ask for some assistance at home to finish that cool project. There is a lot of warm fuzzies from doing something yourself (meaning with help sometimes) and having an

awesome outcome.

Please bear with us during the learning curve period. There are lots of new buttons and the terminology is a bit different than we are used to. We promise to take great care of you just as we always have, it just might be a little slower at first.

We are doing this project to make the behind the scenes run smoother and hopefully the retail floor as well. You will see our online store come up within a month to make shopping even easier for everyone.

Now that we are doing this for us, WHAT can we do for you?

Hope to dive with you soon,

~ Patti

Creature Feature — Goliath Grouper

The **goliath grouper** or **itajara** (*Epinephelus itajara*) is a large salt-water fish of the grouper family. It was formerly known as the jewfish. However, in 2001 the American Fisheries Society made the decision to change the name to the less objectionable "goliath grouper".

The goliath grouper is found primarily in shallow tropical waters among coral and artificial reefs at depths of 10 to 165 feet (50 m). Their range includes the Florida Keys, the Bahamas, most of the Caribbean, and practically all of the Brazilian coast, where they are known as "mero". In the eastern Atlantic Ocean, it occurs from Congo to Senegal. In the Pacific Ocean it ranges from the Gulf of California to Peru.

They are yellowish brown to olive green in color with a rounded tail fin. One of the largest fish observed on the reef, the goliath grouper normally grows to 4-6 feet with a maximum length of 8 feet.

Although they may reach extremely large size (record 1680 lb (762 kg), they usually are around 800 to 900 lb when mature. Considered to be fine food quality, goliath grouper at one time were a highly sought after quarry for fishermen of all types.

The goliath grouper's inquisitive and generally fearless nature make it a relatively easy prey for spear fishermen. They also tend to spawn in large aggregations returning like clockwork to the same locations making them particularly vulnerable to mass harvesting. Until a harvest ban was placed on the species, the species was in rapid decline. The goliath grouper is now totally protected and recognized as a critically endangered species by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The U.S. began protection in 1990 and the Caribbean in 1993. The species' population has been recovering since the ban, however with the fish's slow growth rate it will take some time for populations to return to their previous levels.

Goliath grouper eat crustaceans, other fish, octopi and young sea turtles. They are often reclusive and tend to hide in

caves, wrecks and under ledges.

While they are normally shy or indifferent to divers, they have been known to bump spear fishermen in an attempt to take their catch.

