



International Scuba

Galapagos 2005—awesome trip!

Remember to visit our website!

www.internationalscuba.com

Upcoming Lake Weekends:

Sept 11-12

Sept 25-26

Oct 9-10

Oct 23-24

Nov 6-7

Nov 20-21

Upcoming Trips:

November 21-28 Bonaire

January Cozumel Advanced!

February Cozumel Carnaval!!!!

March—BVI with Jeff & Casey

June Little Cayman and Cozumel

July Flower Gardens

August Family Cozumel

August Galapagos

September Sharks in Guadalupes

September Utila

And much much more!

Howdy everyone:

I am going to use this portion of the newsletter to plug George Vincent's Galapagos trip that is scheduled for August 2005.

George now has 4 additional spots available on the boat and he will be the trip leader.

August is prime whaleshark season and we will be running a special itinerary, heading straight to Wolf and Darwin Islands for some whaleshark and hammerhead action.



The trip is for 7 days, running Thursday to Thursday and cost \$2995 plus air and two nights hotel and marine park fee. There is no other diving like it in the world.

It's not the easiest diving and it is recommended that you have at least 100 dives under your belt before going. I didn't find it overly difficult, but

you have to be comfortable in current, cold water and open ocean.

Have a great weekend and hope to see you soon.

- George Vincent
George@internationalscuba.com



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**

Open Water/Junior

Open Water

- Logan Adams
- Becca Williams
- Carley Anger
- Casey Anger
- David VanVickle
- Jay Wilson
- Don Lawrence
- Jeff Allain
- Alex Greene
- Josh Otwell
- Deanna Gadt
- Tim Donham
- Halyee Hastings
- Ryan Ridenour
- JD Davis
- Stacy Keyser
- Monte Baker
- Jared Weaver
- Kristina Weaver

Advanced Open Water

- KW Weaver
- Caron Lawrence
- Teresa Howard
- Matt Rodger
- Chuck Billingsley
- BJ Ames
- Kevin Ames
- Alan Randall
- Laura Osburn
- Bill Gutknecht
- Susan Gutknecht
- EFR**
- Roger Alexander

Enriched Air Diver

- Matt Rodger
- JD Davis

Peak Performance Buoyancy

- Erin Reynolds
- KW Weaver
- Vickie Sullivan
- BJ Ames
- Melissa Scaggs

Navigation

- Greg Howard
- Nick Howard

Drift

- Greg Howard
- Nick Howard
- Gale Smith

Milestones

- 25 Dives**
Tony Cowles
Susan Gutknecht
Bill Gutknecht
- 30 Dives**
Madi Gardner
- 40 Dives**
- 50 Dives**
- 60 Dives**
- 70 Dives**
Erin Reynolds
- 100 Dives**
- 500 Dives**

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Shark Week ala International SCUBA

Like many of you I grew up watching Jacques Cousteau and Sea Hunt. These days it seems the Discovery Channel and the Travel Channel get my attention. Shark week is always a hit. I'm probably not alone in my entertainment choices. I get a kick out of the nurse sharks in Cozumel; I've done the shark dives in the Bahamas. How about stepping it up a bit. Wouldn't be bad to be spoiled along the way as well. Luxury and adventure at the same time. Sounds good to me. Well have we got the trip for you. How about a live aboard to Isla Guadalupe? Cage diving with the Great Whites, a little deep sea fishing along the way.

'OK', you ask, 'where is Isla Guadalupe?' It's actually about 150 due west of Baja California, or 200 miles south-west of San Diego. The boat leaves from San Diego for a 22-hour ride out to the island. From there they drop the cages in the water and we go into 1-hour rotations of shark watching. Each cage will hold 4 divers, so everyone can get in the water every couple hours. Depending on the number of sharks in the area we may or may not move each day and do it again. Three solid days of sharks. Why do shark week, when I can see it in person!!!



Now for packing. I've never packed like this for a dive trip before. Because its cage diving, we get to leave most everything at the house. Just pack wetsuit, mask and swimsuit.

The dives are done with surface supplied air and since it is in a cage you don't need your BCD or fins. The other good thing, since we leave out of San Diego, no passport.

'Next question', you ask (see I can hear you from here), 'What is the water like?' Well, the visibility is 100'+, the water temp runs between 65-70 degrees. 7mm wetsuits are recommended, mainly for the time in the water. Great for photos, or just watching.

We are still working on dates, but are trying for August or September of 2005. This is in the middle of prime shark season. The cost is going to be around the \$2500-\$3000 + transportation to San Diego. We'll get all the details and post it to the web and a future newsletter.

Happy diving and blow lots of bubbles,

- Brian Divine
Brian@internationalscuba.com



Featured Product—Doc's Pro Plugs

Swimmer's Ear (external otitis) and dirty water that plagues rescue and salvage divers are common problems for divers. Cold water in direct contact with the eardrum will cause pain. Clearing the ears every few feet while descending will prevent this pain. Doc's Proplugs can help prevent these distresses and are safe because the Scott's valve allows the pressure to be equalized. Surface tension at the vent hole reduces the abrupt pressure changes that reach the sensitive eardrum. Clearing the ears frequently will make sure the Proplugs vent is open to avoid "ear squeeze" and possible ear damage. Proplug wearers who have trouble clearing their ears should check to make sure a lump of ear wax is not blocking the canal or butting up against the vent. If the vent is fouled by debris while descending it is best to remove the Proplug. If fouled while ascending, there is no problem because the air and water under pressure can escape around the Proplug.

Advice for person with a ruptured eardrum

Do not dive. The ruptured eardrum must be checked from time to time by a physician to see if it has healed. When one tries to equalize on dry land there will be a thud with a normal intact eardrum. If there is a big hole, the sound will be like a "whoof" and if the hole is tiny, the sound will be a squeak or squeal. So be very careful. I advise that you do not take chances. It is best to not dive.



Benefits of Doc's Proplug

- Prevents ear problems from excessive exposure to water and cold air
- Children Keep them in their Ears
- No putty to Put into Patient's Ear
- Easily Cleaned and Long Lasting
- Watertight seal keeps water out, let's voice in
- Extra protection against eardrum rupture from impact
- Designed by a surfing physician
- Approved by ENT physicians
- Takes only seconds to fit and no mess
- Does not impact earwax
- Available in 8 sizes for accurate fitting Vented (w/ hole), allows equalization and better hearing & balance
- Softer, more comfortable than other brands
- Available with a leash for open water use, and they float
- Inexpensive, only \$10 per pair with leash

Welcome To Doc's Proplugs
The Ultimate Multipurpose Earplug



Keeps Water Out... Lets Voice In

-Suzanne Williams
Suzanne@internationalscuba.com

Trip Report—Flower Gardens

Believe it or not, we have some awesome diving right in our own backyard. After a quick 5-hour drive to the port where the MVS Spree and Fling depart, and a 7-hour overnight cruise I was in the Gulf of Mexico, 110 miles south and east from Freeport, TX. There lie the East and West Flower Garden Banks and Stetson Bank, the northern most coral formations in the “Western Caribbean”, three of the most beautiful and wild places in all the world. Manta rays, whale sharks, coral heads that are bigger than cars, hundreds of species of fish and invertebrates.... Simply amazing!

Formed from salt domes that pushed their way through the ocean floor these gorgeous reefs abound with just about every hard coral you've ever seen and some you haven't – the colors are brilliant. Notice I said “hard coral”. Oddly enough there are no soft or branching corals here. According to the Marine Biologists there are:

Coral - 21 species - no large branching corals, sea fans or sea whips
Algae - > 80 species
Invertebrates - 250+ macro invertebrate species
Fish - 200+ species – some specific to this region only
Mammals - no resident mammal species
Marine Turtles - 3 species documented, only the loggerhead turtle is a resident

As mentioned above, several fish species call the Flower Gardens home including the largest Scorpion fish and Drums I've ever seen. If you've been fortunate enough to see one, adult Scorpion fish are approximately 8 inches in length and are about the size of the large end of a baseball bat. Well, just as with everything in Texas, the Scorpion fish in the Flower Gardens are HUGE. These guys/gals average 18 to 24 inches long and were about the size of a 13 CF air cylinder! A family of Drums will entertain you by playing hide and seek as they swim in and around a rock formation as if there were on a carousel... quite amusing! Green and gold spotted Morey Eels can easily be found at Stetson Bank, as they don't have many places to hide. It is not uncommon to see them swimming right out in the open – great photo opportunity!!

Okay, as Paul Harvey would say, “and now for the rest of the story”, my version is “now for the **best** part of the story!!” Many of you know I've been diving for several years, have traveled to some really incredible places and have seen a lot of different species of aquatic life.

However, there has been one underwater creature that has eluded me all these years and that creature would be the magnificent Manta Ray. Now, being a native TEXAN, I am very proud to announce that I saw my very first Manta at Stetson Bank right here in the Gulf of Mexico!!

It was UNBELIEVABLE!! The dull hum of the Spree lets him know divers were soon to be present and sure enough he made his grand appearance out of the deep blue Gulf waters made a large circular “fly by” and disappeared back into the deep. That was awesome enough, but he returned a few minutes later, actually interacting and almost playing with divers who were in his path. With a wingspan of approximately 8 feet he “flew” in and around us with fluid grace and majesty like I've never seen - absolutely magnificent!!

Mantas aren't the only large species to visit the Flower Garden Banks. During certain times of the year Hammer Head and Whale Sharks can be seen cruising through the area. I just looked at the website and it seems that on the trip right after we returned, a 40 foot Whale Shark made an appearance, several turtles and sharks were present AND the coral was spawning.

All I can say is – WOW What a TRIP!!!! And it's all right here in our backyard.

To learn more about the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary please visit www.flowergarden.nos.noaa.gov.

Also visit www.gulf-diving.com, website of Gulf Diving, LLC the charter operation offering 2 - day and 3 - day charters to the Flower Garden during the summer dive season.

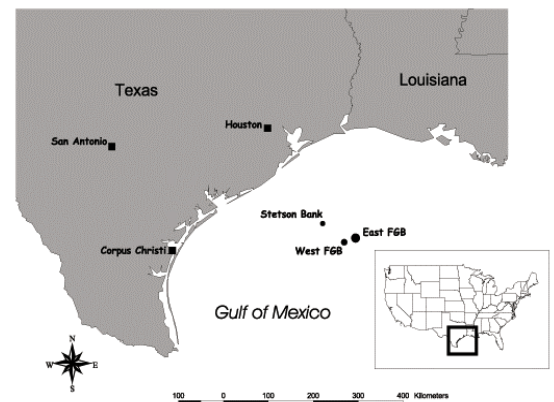
Length: 100'
Beam: 21.7'
Upper Deck: 36' X 20'
Lower Deck: 36' X 20'
Draft: 7'
Berthing: 34 Passengers
Main Engines: 3 X 1271 TI
Horsepower: 1800 total
Generators: 2 X 35 kw
Compressors: 2 Mako



Cruising Speed: 16 knots
Range: 700 nautical miles
Fuel Capacity: 3,000 gallons
Potable Water: 6,000 gallons
Dingy: 3.1M Rigid Hull Chase Boat
Electronic Equipment: Cellular and Satellite Phone, GPS, SSB, Video Depth Sounder, 2 VHF, Loud Hailer, Auto Pilot and Radar

-Suzanne Williams
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Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary





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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

CD Corner

Hi everyone:

This is my first attempt at writing a professional section of the newsletter so I will try to do as well as Mike did.

As you know, I took July off to attend the Course Director Training Course in Newport, California. A really pretty area, I think. When I received my acceptance letter it went something like this: Congratulations, your application has been accepted. Prepare to be assimilated, and don't plan on sightseeing much if any. Boy did they peg that. We stayed at a nice Hyatt where we could see the ocean in the distance—with binoculars mind you. We were in training from 8-6 daily and then a couple of hard hours of homework typically rounded out the day. We all had rooms around the pool area which made it nice to hang out wetsuits and gear to dry in the afternoons following pool sessions. Great pool actually as it could hold 45 candidates and about 15 staff members. I met folks from all over the world. There were only 16 Americans which I thought wasn't very many. I had 3 other Americans in my group which was rare and 3 women to boot. We had 8 women which was high statistically.

We were broken down into 6 groups each color coded (blue, red, orange, yellow, green, purple). We were told early Monday morning that we had until first thing Tuesday morning to come up with a group name or the staff would give us one. We the Blue group, immediately started working on a name—we didn't want one from them. We came up with Fellowship of the Blues. Not too bad. The yellow team wasn't so lucky—they tried Yellow Submarines which had already been taken so they

were renamed Yellow Puddings—not cool. We had quite an experience. Our teams stuck together throughout the entire course. We couldn't even board a boat or a bus without the entire team. I am hoping some of the friends I met will be trips in 2006 such as Thailand and the Red Sea. There's lots more to share and we can do that over a beverage sometime.

Well, back into the grind we started my first IDC at the end of August and will finish the second half on Sept 16th. We have 2 candidates and 3 IDC Staff candidates. I am excited as I am surrounded by great supporting staff and looking forward to many more to come.

We have an Assistant Instructor program beginning September 23rd and another October 6th. If you are a Divemaster and are interested in taking the next step please don't hesitate to contact us. Stay tuned for more training notes and come see Mike Rowe in and around October 20th as he is here to teach an IDC with us.

If you are interested in DAN programs please call as those are easy to schedule.

- Patti Stewart
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Creature Feature — Manta Ray

Class: *Chondrichthyes* - Cartilaginous fishes

Subclass: *Elasmobranchii* - Sharks and batoids

Super order: *Batidea* - Batoids

Order: *Myliobatiformes* - Eagle and Manta Rays

Family: *Myliobatidae* - Manta/Devil Rays

Genus: *Manta*



The Manta Ray, like other rays and sharks, is an elasmobranch ("plate gilled") and differ from bony fishes by having a cartilaginous skeleton. Commonly also known as the Devil Ray, due to the cephalic fins on the sides of the head resembling horns, its scientific classification varies depending on what batoid systematic hypothesis one favors.

Individual manta rays can grow up to 23 feet (8 meters) across and weigh over 1400 kilos, which qualifies the Manta Ray as one of the five largest species of fish in the world.

Manta Rays are primarily planktivores - plankton feeders. They use the unfurled cephalic fins on the head to funnel plankton-rich water into the mouth, where gill rakers filter out the plankton. Some small crustaceans and fish might complement the diet, but like other filter feeders, the Manta Rays have reduced, nonfunctional teeth and are no threat to larger ocean animals unless threatened themselves. Unlike many other Rays, the Mantas don't have any spine on the tail. Their only defense is

their powerful wings. According to Yapese myth, the Mantas might wrap their wings around a person and squeeze him to death. This is not true, but a blow from a wing of a full grown manta carries a very powerful punch.

During the mating season (December to late April in Yap), the mantas gather in large numbers and several males can be seen courting single females. The actual mating is done belly-to-belly. Some fifteen months later, the result is born - usually one, but sometimes two, manta "pups", only a foot wide, rolled up as tubes. They are born alive and become active as soon as they have rolled out their wings. The actual birth of a manta is something rarely seen by man, and it has only been captured on film once. On Yap, the young mantas are sometimes seen in the waters surrounding the mangrove system, where they take shelter in their infancy.

- Suzanne
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