In this issue:

Cover photo credit........................................................................................................ 3
New members.................................................................................................................. 3
Monthly meeting............................................................................................................ 3
President’s Message..................................................................................................... 4
Highlights of Tides, Current, and Navigation Class............................................... 7
July is Plastic Free Month............................................................................................ 11
Bonaire 2018................................................................................................................ 13
Cuba, Gardens of the Queens..................................................................................... 17
Apollo 13 Cuban Adventure....................................................................................... 19
Cuba SCUBA Liveaboard........................................................................................... 23
Feeling Stiff? Try Sun Salutation............................................................................... 35
Shooting Gallery......................................................................................................... 36
Training........................................................................................................................ 41
Upcoming trips.............................................................................................................. 42
About Marker Buoys................................................................................................. 43
New Members

Welcome to the Club! You’ve joined one of the most active and social dive clubs in the region.

Liz Miller  Elena Booze  Charlie Olson
Dave Riebel  Curtis Johnson  James Warren

As you can tell from Meetup we have a steady stream of activities going on for divers of all experience and skill levels. You are also invited to attend the monthly club meeting. The meeting is a great opportunity to meet club members in person, hear from interesting speakers, and get into the swing of things. Details are on the Meetup site.

• First time dive hosts will receive a 5 fill air card from Lighthouse Dive Center.
• If you get 6 Club members to attend you will also earn a 10 fill card from the dive shop of your choice.

That’s almost $100 for very little work, but lots of fun. Everybody wins!

July Monthly Meeting
Thursday, July 5, 2018 - 6:00pm
Picnic Shelter # 4 at Woodlawn Park

Time for our yearly summer gathering. Its casual. Its fun. Its a great way to catch up with old friends and meet new ones.

It’s a Potluck so bring something to barbeque, something to share and what you want to drink. Club provides charcoal, soda, cups, paper plates, and plastic ware.
This issue of The Buoy Tender comes at a time when we transition from the previous Board to the new Board – based on the recent election results. 46 members voted and they voted unanimously in support of the proposed slate of officers on the ballot.

Over the past year I have had the great pleasure of working on the Board with a really creative, collegial, fun loving, organized, constructive and productive group of people.

So while the Board is losing three of its members as of July 1st, we are very lucky to have six members stay on and three new members step in to fill the vacancies.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all of the Board members who have truly made the club a vibrant and active meeting place, whether it is through email, Paypal, website, Meetup, or in-person at a social event, monthly meeting or at dives. There is so much that they have done over the past year. The brief examples that follow don’t do justice – but with July being the month where the Board composition changes, I wanted to highlight some of what I’ve seen.

First however, I’m going to back up for a moment to put the work of the Board in context. And I’m curious - how many of you actually know how our by-laws describe the purpose of the Club? The purpose of the Club is:

To promote SCUBA diving activities.

To aid and promote sensible conservation.

To inform membership of legislation.

To promote diving safety and education.

It’s the role of the Board members to be responsive to you, the membership, in making sure that we efficiently and effectively address the purpose(s) of the club. So keep this in mind as you read through the text below. I think you’ll agree that they have done just that.

First, those who are stepping down –

Steve Kalilimoku, our Dive Coordinator/Vice-President was hugely instrumental in encouraging and helpfully mentoring members (particularly new members) to attend and host dives. As a result, we have seen a real growth in the number of dives hosted by newer members over the past year, thanks to Steve’s warmth and enthusiasm. He was also the co-lead in soliciting raffle prizes for the banquet, and the lead for the Nominating Committee. It is largely thanks to him that we have the excellent new Board members joining us.
Dave Riley was our Program Chair this past year and prior to that he was the Club Treasurer. Dave handed over his immaculately organized Treasurer’s files and oriented the incoming Treasurer, Joan Hansen, to the role and the procedures last year in a detailed and thorough way. As Program Chair he was equally thoughtful, conscientious, positive and thorough in identifying and scheduling the wide variety of interesting speakers we enjoyed at our monthly meetings, or at off-site experiences.

Justin McClellan was our Secretary this past year – and prior to that he was Webmaster Justin was THAT important first person with whom potential new members had contact when they applied to join. As you will all recall from when you joined, hearing back promptly and in a personal manner makes a huge and positive difference! In this role, Justin truly was the face of the Club before people even knew who the rest of us were.

I’d also like to thank the Board members who have generously offered to stay on this year to continue the great work they’ve been doing.

Our newsletter just seems to be getting better and better, with Joyce Merkel’s oversight as Newsletter Editor. The professional appearance and creative layouts really put the spotlight on the diverse articles and great photos that you have all been providing to her. I hope that, by seeing how good she makes things look, it inspires more of us to contribute to the newsletter.

Speaking of communication, we now have a much more modern and “spiffy” club website (https://markerbuoydiveclub.org) with all credit due to Webmaster Dave Ballard. His vision was, and continues to be, to make it full of helpful information and be an attractive and up-dated way to communicate to the public about who we are. Dave took the initiative to produce the tank stickers for our new Club logo. Communicating about diving, in various ways, is what we are all about (if we are not actually diving!) and he is a valuable resource to the Board and the Club.

Joan Hansen was just the right person to take over the Treasurer’s important responsibilities from Dave Riley. In close coordination with new or renewing members and the Secretary, she makes sure that memberships are handled expeditiously. And when you have hosted a dive and want that wonderful air card as reward (and to make it easy to dive even more!) Joan gets it to you. Needless to say, our fiscal affairs are in good order! Joan co-led the successful solicitation of raffle prizes with Steve and made sure we got plenty of highly coveted contributions from local businesses.

Andrea Naert, Events Coordinator. If you haven’t experienced any of our regular club social events, you are missing something! Andrea plans and manages all of our annual social events - - the holiday party, banquet and raffle, picnic, dive social, and underwater pumpkin carving contest. Her unique mix of practical organizational skills and quirky and creative sense of humor make for a great event.

Where would we be at our meetings and social events without dessert?! And like dessert, which comes at the end of a meal, recognizing Catherine Knowlson’s contributions of home-made treats comes at the end of recognizing the 2017-2018 Board. We are a community of divers and having food at our meetings and events is one of the ways that we make members feel welcome, appreciated and also enjoy themselves!
Finally – last but hardly least. WELCOME (and welcome back!) As of July 1st Ron Richardson will be Vice-President/Dive Coordinator, Jonathan Hollander will be Secretary and Gene Coronetz will be Program Chair.

Ron and Jon both joined the Club in 2017. Ron has already begun hosting regular dives specifically for new members. Both he and Jonathan attended the June Board meeting and already their fresh ideas and constructive perspectives helped to move our work along productively. Gene has been a club member for many, many, many years and has previously served on the Board. We’re glad to have him back!

A club would not be a club without members. And while I have spent a lot of time talking about the Board, our work is all about making sure that YOU get what you need from the Club. Feel free to email, text, message, or just talk to any of the Board members with your ideas and feedback. My biggest thanks of all are for you, the members, because you make this Club the active, fun, dynamic group of divers that it is.

Myra Wisotzky
President
Marker Buoy Dive Club

Editor’s Note: It would be a huge oversite not to mention how much Myra herself, as President, is contributing to the club running so smoothly. She is the glue that manages and keeps our talented Board on track. Without good leadership, no matter how talented a board is, its difficult to get things organized enough to do the ongoing work needed to keep the club operating well….and even harder to implement new ideas. She not only manages all of that expertly, she makes it fun along the way. If there is ever a problem or a Board member needs help, she’s there. And as her president’s message shows, she is generous and genuine about letting people know they are appreciated. Not to mention she does a bang up job of running the Monthly Club Meeting. Its hard to say enough about what a great job Myra is doing, but as members of this club we are all definitely enjoying the benefits.
These club sponsored workshops were a spectacular success. Twenty five members participated in the events.

I want to thank Randy Williams who was able to reserve a conference room at The MaSt Center Aquarium, Fritz Merkel, who conducted the Tide and Current workshop and John Downing who did the navigation workshop while sick with pneumonia. Without these three very knowledgeable and connected people this could never have happened.

Also a big mahalo to Katie Morgan and Rich Moore who were installing and retrieving the navigation markers. Two others that helped to make this a success were Bob Bailey, who made the markers and Andrea Naert who helped me with gathering supplies and shore support. The funding for the food and drinks were approved by the club's board of directors as they wholeheartedly support the advancement of our member's skills and knowledge.

The participants varied from new divers to advance divers to divers that had thousands of dives under their belts. It shows that even veterans continue to review their skills and knowledge, as well as being willing to share them with others.

Fritz's presentation answered many questions that members had, but also lead to even more questions, which is good. I think the one thing that lingered was, which current station to use for a particular dive site. The Northwest dive book, by Stephen Fischnaller covers most of them, but there are a couple of sites that are not in the book. Having a discussion with someone in this regard is sometimes better. Feel free to do so starting with the master himself, Fritz.

John Downing started his workshop in the parking lot. Some people still had their hotdogs in hand. Everyone scrambled for their compass and the class started in earnest. Once everyone had a grasp of the compass and it's use John moved everyone back into the classroom. Here, I'm sorry to say I had to stay in the parking lot to clean up and to see Rich and Katie off as they went to set the markers. So I am clueless as to what transpired in the classroom.

After a while the attendees reappeared from the MaSt Center and headed for their vehicles to suit up for the practical. Paul and Liz were the first ones in. They swam out to the dive flag and there they submerged to do the course. Viz was so-so at 30ft, but this was a navigation class and so shouldn't be a problem. The viz did improve as you went to 60ft. Once a pair of divers dropped the next pair swam out.

There were varying results but for sure all results were helpful. Those that completed the course reaffirmed their skills. Those that had issues were quick to identify the problem. They learned from them and were willing to work to overcome them.
The goal of the Marker Buoy Dive Club is to promote scuba diving, improve the skill level of its members and to make them better, safer divers through diving experience and shared knowledge. I hope each of the attendees takes advantage of today's workshop and put it to good use.

I would highly recommend to all members to attend any and all club sponsored classes when they occur in the future. It can only make you a better and safer diver.

Mahalo to all of the attendees.

*The 2 hour Tides and Currents class taught by Fritz Merkel was held in the morning*
The Currents class was followed by a break with food provided by the club.

Then it was John Downing’s turn starting with the dry side orientation for the navigation class.

First compass orientation in the parking lot

Then back to the classroom
Finally everyone’s ready to take those navigation lessons to the beach.
Maybe you have heard that July is Plastic-Free Month. It is one of the missions of the Marker Buoy Dive Club to “To aid and promote sensible conservation”. With that in mind we would like to suggest that you, Marker Buoy members, participate in this global movement (http://www.plasticfreejuly.org/) to raise awareness and make a difference for our oceans.

Plastic is an integral component in our lives, from plastic bags, utensils, cups, water bottles, and straws, to plastics that are contained within toothpaste, skin-care products, and makeup. In fact, it is so common and pervasive, that it can feel overwhelming to even begin to cut back, let alone stop using it.

We would like you to consider reducing your plastic use for the month of July. Our hope is that once you start down this path, you will realize that it is not that difficult to make a serious dent in your plastic use and continue to incorporate this change into your lifestyle.

Social media is full of story after story about how plastic is bad for the ocean and its creatures that live in it. Plastic is being ingested by and killing sea life. It is choking fish and birds. There is an entire island of plastic that has become home to penguins. Scientist are now even finding micro plastic in the shell fish we eat. The list goes on and on.

If you are on Facebook, check out Plastic Free July’s Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/PlasticFreeJuly/).

Here are some suggestions for simple changes that you can make and really make a difference.

- Coffee cups and water bottles
  Bring your own, do not buy bottled water

- Plastic straws
  Use glass or bamboo straws or no straws at all (https://www.lifewithoutplastic.com/store/ca/drinking/straws.html)
• Plastic shopping bags -
  Use re-usable shopping bags
  Use re-usable produce bags
• Plastic utensils
  Bring your own and take them home each day and wash them.
  Consider bamboo, stainless steel, or chopsticks.
• Plastic storage bags
  There are re-usable storage bags on the market, some are made out of cotton.
• Packaged foods
  Shop the bulk bins
• Soap and hair products
  Use either refillable containers or soap and shampoo bars
• Plastic toothbrush
  Use a bamboo toothbrush (https://brushnaked.com/)

As divers, we need to be advocates for saving our oceans. We need to take action and make changes so that others in our lives will learn and follow us down the path toward cleaner, healthier, and sustainable oceans.
Let's just cut to the chase here, Bonaire has a reputation for being the best shore diving in the Caribbean and that reputation is well deserved. The odds are good if you've been diving for a while you've either already been there, or already heard all the reasons why that is true. But, if you're new like me, or looking for that final bit of information needed for your upcoming vacation destination, here's my contribution to what amounts to a mountain of praise for Bonaire.

A small island off Venezuela, Bonaire has been part of Holland since the 1700s. Dutch, English, the native Papiamentu, German, French, Spanish, and Italian are all heard regularly on the streets. It's kind of like Amsterdam in that way. You can stand still on a sidewalk and listen as the world walks by.

We stayed at The Dive Hut (http://www.divehutbonaire.com) and got a package deal that included a kitchenette in our room, unlimited nitrox, tanks, and weights from Wannadive (https://wannadive.com), and a week truck rental from Avis (you can find that web page on your own) for about $1400, before tax. Not a bad deal at all.

The Dive Hut is well run, clean, and the air conditioning works. Breakfasts are regularly available but the bar was only open one of the nights while we were there and I think it was because a group of guests requested it. There is no shower in the gear rinse room and the room itself needs more hanging points to accommodate all the guests. As the last guy to
store gear each night I had to get creative at times. But the staff are helpful and friendly, the location is fantastic, and the price is very reasonable. If one isn’t expecting a luxury resort, the Dive Hut is a fine place to stay and I’d do so again.

Wannadive took good care of their equipment, could easily handle both DIN and Yoke, ended up not charging me for the pony tank I used all week, and offers one or two boat dives a day. While there I took my PADI lionfish hunter course with them and got two boat dives as part of it for $120, a price no other service on the island could match, based on my limited research. Julian (pronounced as it would be in Spanish) and Emma were the dive masters I interacted most with and they obviously knew their craft while being friendly and helpful.

The airport on Bonaire is small and slammed with large planes arriving and departing in short time windows. As a result, plan for it like you would any busy US airport and get there two hours before your flight is scheduled to leave. If you can, using a cell phone application to check in remotely (and my cell phone and plan worked with the local network without problem) really helps. On the flight down there they stopped accepting carry on bags three passengers behind me, as everyone going there dives and everyone wants their gear with them. I spent about $100 to upgrade my seating order and was glad I had.

And now on to the part you really want to hear about, the diving. It is, in fact, spectacular. The water was right around 80 degrees, making my 3MM wetsuit the perfect warmth layer. I was never cold, nor hot. Visibility ranged from 30’ at the worst to around 100’ at the best. The coast of Bonaire is dotted with shore dive sites, most of them well marked with yellow stones painted with the name of the site. And about all of the sites are listed in Bonaire Shore Diving Made Easy by Susan Porter (http://wwwbsdme.info/). It’s a great guide to the local sites and can be purchased online before you go or at most any dive shop on the island.

Before your first dive you’ll need to purchase a diving “permit,” the proceeds from which go to supporting the marine park, and have a check out dive with a local dive master. After going over all the rules with me (no gloves or knee pads, don’t touch anything, and don’t collect anything) They let me do my “check out” dive alone and I considered that a virtue.

Over the five and a half diving days I had on the island I did 16 dives and hit twelve different sites. Most of them were as easy as parking on the beach, gearing up, and walking into the water. The exception were those on the upwind, eastward side of the island. Diving those sites require local knowledge and I used Eastside Diving (http://www.bonaireeastcoastdiving.com) for my two dives there. Again the dive masters were both knowledgeable and friendly and the dives themselves were beautiful.
During my trip I saw eagle rays, sting rays, green sea turtles, tarpon, and endless reef fish. The coral itself was largely in good shape with amazing colors and structures. I did two boat dives to Klein Bonaire, the smaller island right off shore where no development is allowed, and I’d suggest to any traveler that they take a trip to Klein Bonaire themselves to see if they feel it is worth it. Personally I think it comes down to how much one likes guided vs. unguided tours.

For myself, one of the major appeals to diving on Bonaire is the independence. I dove when, and where, I wanted to without the entanglements of being with a group of other tourists. If I wanted to revisit a site I did and my favorites on the west side were The Salt Pier, Angel City, The Hilma Hooker, and The Front Porch. Angel City is an incredible double reef, The Salt Pier is where I saw stingrays, The Hilma Hooker is a gorgeous wreck, and The Front Porch had a wide diversity of life every time I dove it.

But let me add a quick word of caution. Bonaire is not Cove 2. On one of my night dives I got caught on a rip tide that was blowing me away from the island and away from my entry point. I’ll tell the full story of my “Scary Night Dive at the Salt Pier,” in a coming article. And one of my dives at The Front Porch involved what I’d guess to be about .5 knot current pushing me into boat traffic. Doesn’t sound like much but it’s enough to make resisting it impossible. The surf combined with rocky shorelines can make entries and exits an adventure at points and you will want your hard soled booties. Yes it is beautiful and relatively easy diving, but it is not to be taken for granted. Ah, but it is to be taken.

In the final analysis, Bonaire has earned its reputation for a reason. The diving is accessible and incredible, the culture is a wonderful combination of world culture and small town Caribbean life, and the natural beauty should not be underestimated. Bonaire has become my favorite place to travel to dive and it may very well have that same effect on you.

Postscript from Ron’s non-diving wife: If you are thinking of inviting your non-diving partner to go as well, this is for them. When I was considering joining Ron for his trip to Bonaire I was told that there wasn’t much to do if you weren’t diving. Not true. For sightseeing and land activities there are two museums, a Donkey Sanctuary, and the Cadushy Distillery (http://www.cadushy.com) with some very tasty liquors and hard alcohol. If you like the water but don’t want to dive you can swim, snorkel, kite-surf, wind-surf, and take boat tours. There are also numerous spas (many at the resorts on the island), a bit of shopping, and many very good restaurants (examples include “It Rains Fishes (http://www.itrainsfishesbonaire.com/),” and “Osaka Sushi and Teppan Yaki” (http://www.osakabonaire.com). There are more things to do but I don’t want this postscript to get longer than Ron’s article! -Linda.
We had a fabulous trip to the Gardens of the Queen off the coast of Cuba aboard the Jardines Aggressor I a few months ago. We went via the Oceans For Youth Foundation’s approved travel scheme, and once we landed at the airport in Cuba, everything was organised for us. The only individual planning we needed to do was for the flights there and back.

I’d been told that February was probably the best month for the ideal combination of best diving conditions and visibility with pleasant air temperatures, but scheduling the trip departing on 1st March was close enough. The optional stay in Havana was delightfully sunny and warm, even into the evenings, without being too hot. The diving conditions in the Gardens of the Queen were perfect with calm seas and visibility of 60-80 feet. Out there 60 miles from the mainland could be quite windy some days, and a sheltered spot was preferred for sunbathing when the breeze was up! Taking a towel to wrap around your shoulders for the high speed tender is also strongly recommended if you don’t want a cold ride back...

The reefs are everything that you’ve read about in the magazines – stunningly healthy with large numbers and diversity of fish species. When I asked people who had already been out there about the Gardens of the Queen, the most common remark I got was, ‘There are so many sharks!’ Now that I’ve been there myself, I can confirm that the sharks are a feature. The Caribbean reef sharks were the biggest any of us on the boat had ever seen (and our trip included a film group from the Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation, with people who have been diving the Caribbean for twenty years). The groupers are numerous and friendly, and some of them follow you around like dogs. The dives with the silky sharks where they gathered beneath the tenders would have made the entire trip worthwhile just on their own.

https://youtu.be/xNyvUEdS8hc
The Aggressor was a beautifully fitted out liveaboard with a great bed (I’ll admit we took the more expensive Master stateroom with the queen bed) and every facility you could want. The crew and dive guides were fantastic, and the food was always delicious, including the freshest caught lionfish available :-) 

The standard schedule was four dives a day, often with an additional activity such as snorkelling the mangroves or visiting the friendly hutias on the beach. We only managed one night dive on our trip – another was Unfortunately called off because one of the passengers was ill and had to have the paramedics attend them.

I cannot recommend this trip highly enough. If you haven’t seen Havana, the optional stay is definitely worth the time and expense, because the city is modernising fast. Who knows how long the old Havana atmosphere will last?

In practical terms, for travellers from the US, Cuba is a cash only economy, because credit cards from US banks aren’t valid there. European cards will work in the ATMs just fine, but if you don’t have one, make sure you take enough cash for the whole trip, including a generous tip for the boat crew.

If you’ve ever wanted to roll backwards off a boat into sharks, or put on your flippers to snorkel with a crocodile, the Jardines Aggressor is the liveaboard for you!
Apollo 13 never got the opportunity to land on the moon and Bruce Brown and I did not get to dive Cuba’s remote Gardens of the Queen (Jardines de la Reina) marine preserve due to severe weather in the latter part of May. To hear how we make “lemonade” of the situation, please read on.

Our plan was to go to Cuba in late May, tour Havana sites for the first two days, then dive the Gardens of the Queen for the last six days from live-aboard. This archipelago is one of Cuba’s largest marine protected areas, 840 sq. miles). As US citizens, we were not allowed to visit Cuba as tourists. Our friendly US Treasury Department required us to travel under one of their 12 sanctioned programs (ours was for education, called “People-to-People”); with an approved itinerary for all the days that we were to be in Cuba, plus a Visa which identified specific arrival and departure dates.

All went well with two the days of touring Havana with a private guide and driver. The next morning, we took a six hour bus ride, traveling east from Havana to a very small port village on the southern shore of Cuba, called Jucaro. At this port we were to immediately board our live-aboard, then travel five more hours (60 miles) to our beautiful marine preserve.

Before we left WA State, we had heard that our Cuban dive destination was being hit by severe thunder storms. Bruce and I had already been on a couple of destination dive trips during which a single day of diving had been cancelled due to severe weather. We were blindly confident that this tropical disturbance would pass by the time we got to the marine preserve. We had already made all travel arrangements about 6 months prior.
During our 6 hr. bus trip from Havana to Jucaro, we met up with two other divers who were also booked on our live-aboard. Joining us was a French lady who was living in London and a man from Chile. Ron Wilkinson (another MBDC Member) had already completed one week of diving at the Gardens of the Queen. We would be joining him for his second week of diving on the same live-aboard.

When we arrived in Jucaro on Saturday, the charter company (www.cubandivingcenters.com) informed us that the shallow seas between the port and the Gardens of the Queen were still very rough – 6 meter waves and strong winds coming from an unexpectedly direction, from the south. So instead of risking the five hour transit, the charter company said that they would try again the next morning, hoping for better weather. Our live-aboard (call the Le Reina) and Ron Wilkinson were already at the preserve. The charter company had decided it would make more sense to taxi us out to the Le Reina. The plan was to use another live-aboard as a “taxi” to ferry clients out to the preserve.

Also at the Port of Jucaro, were two groups “catch and release” fly fishermen (from Alabama, from Argentina) who were also trying to get out to Gardens of the Queen for a week of fly fishing.

The next morning (Sunday), we were expecting to try the five hour crossing again. However, the bad weather was still with us. The plan was scrubbed for the rest of the day. The new plan was to leave port at 4:00 AM the next day (Monday), for our third attempt.

During our time in Jucaro, the dive charter company needed to “over-night” all the fly fishermen and scuba divers. We were all housed in two live-aboard vessels that were still in port. Lucky for us, these floating hotels were available. There were no hotels or good restaurants in the small village of Jucaro.

On Monday we left Jucaro at 4 AM with a boat full of fly fishermen and four scuba divers, heading for the Gardens of the Queen. However, after only an hour of running, the captain
returned to port because the seas were still too rough to allow a safe crossing. After we returned to port, our charter company offered us scuba divers a voucher to re-schedule the entire trip at some future date. We had already lost two full days of a six-day dive trip. The prolonged severe weather would have likely impacted diving conditions for several more days. Later that same day, the Argentinean fly fishermen did make a successful 5 hour crossing to the Gardens of the Queen. However, our Alabama fly fishermen estimated that surface conditions would have been compromised for any good fishing. So they made plans to head back home on Tuesday.

Both Bruce and I, the lady from London, and the man from Chile decided to accept the offer to re-schedule the entire dive trip at some future date. For Bruce and I, this offer to re-schedule was a particularly good deal since we do not routinely purchase trip cancellation insurance.

In planning our departures, the divers from London and Chile were researching options to book an alternative Caribbean diving adventure where the weather was more accommodating. Since Bruce and I were traveling in Cuba under US Treasury Department and Visa restrictions, we decided not to attempt finding another diving adventure elsewhere. Rather, we decided to continue our Cuban cultural adventure as we headed home.

In the small village of Jucaro, cell phones seem to work OK for voice and text. No internet service at all in Jucaro for anybody, cell phone or otherwise. For some reason, cell phone calls with 800 prefixes did not work at all. We could not call the 800 number to American Airlines to rebook our flight home a few days early. Bruce called his son-in-law in WA State to rebook our flight back to the USA.

The next morning (Tuesday), Bruce and I took a 3 hours taxi ride to Camaguey. We had booked a hotel room in Camaguey for Tuesday night. Our cultural experience in Camaguey was absolutely outstanding. Clean city, friendly people, reasonably priced hotels, lots of history, many art galleries, great weather, and great food. Having already seen the capital of Cuba (Havana), we will use Camaguey as our port-of-entry when we return to Gardens of the Queen (Nov. 3 -10, 2018).

This is our first dive trip in which all days of diving for our chosen destination got cancelled due to severe weather. We may have booked our first trip early enough to avoid being blown to bits by a hurricane, but not earlier enough to avoid the season’s first tropical disturbances. www.divezone.net says that the Cuban dry season is from November to late April. I am disappointed that we did not get to dive. However, I am not bitter at all about the overall cultural experience. I learned a lot about Cuba and its people during the trip. We hope to learn more about the Cuban culture, Cuban history, and perhaps learn some more Spanish before our return trip in November.

Like Apollo 13, we were unable to land at our intended base. However, our choice to extend our Cuban cultural experience felt very good and will be useful in planning our return trip.
Carl and Bruce - near Camaguey, Cuba.
The billboard says: "Fidel, The grateful ones accompany you."
As described in Carl Baird’s funny article, he and Bruce Brown never made it to the good ship la Reina, one of two Avalon Diving boats serving the Gardens of the Queen reef. The reef, the boat and I were about 60 miles offshore from mainland Cuba (Jucaro) in the mangrove forest. Signing up for two weeks and arriving the week before, I was already on the boat when tropical storm Albert passed 100 miles away. Bruce, Carl and the other pair were stranded ashore. My trip to Cuba was wonderful despite Albert raining on our parade.

The first week on the boat was shared with only two other divers, so we each had our own stateroom. This was nice, because the boat is small. It would not have been good for me sharing the tiny stateroom with another person, and the small boat with seven other divers. After the first group left Saturday morning, dive leader Sergio and skiff captain Angel told me Monday mid-day that Carl and Bruce’s group had cancelled. So I had the whole boat plus the dive leader and skiff skipper to myself for the second week. That meant six-eight dishes for every meal, my own chef and waitress. I felt like I was being fattened up for slaughter. Or maybe a condemned man’s last meal.

My trip was 13 days of diving, 38 dives total, two extra dives over the standard 2x18 package. The crew was fantastic, Sergio and Angel the best I have seen. We dove one day in seas with 8’ rollers---hard on the skipper, especially, as he must stay in the boat for an hour while we are down. Wind/rain made visibility poor to medium (20 to 60 feet). Carl and Bruce will have much better visibility when they return next November (anybody interested in going with them should make reservations now, as they say the boat fills in that peak season).

The chef appears restaurant trained---nice presentation, but the food was over-cooked and most meats tough (leery of health issues?). Avalon diving company is 51% Cuban and 49% Italian and the Italians have taught the Cubans hospitality services well. Sadly, and not as salesperson Luisa had described, the crew was uncooperative about extra dives, and night dives are impossible. The two extra dives were like pulling teeth and nobody would give me a firm cost. In the end I tipped them extra (per Luisa) for, well, everything. To my surprise, after that, Sergio came to me and, in broken English, tried to get me to pay $100 more for the 2 extra dives "for the captain." I said I didn’t have the money and that was the end of that. As it was, the trip was expensive, $2800/week ($3700/week for the bigger boat?), plus $700 for Havana hotels coming and going and a few hundred for permits. Plus airfare.

Despite the high cost, the la Reina is not a luxury cruise. Bunks are functional but kind of like kids’ summer camp. Rooms, while air conditioned, smell strongly of diesel fuel and other odors. After two weeks everything I took smelled like diesel (a month later, some stuff still does---a funny souvenir). There is no place else to go to relax except the upstairs salon which is not air conditioned and totally open to insects. I used Coleman 100% DEET 2x/day after dives and minimized bites, but the insects are not to be toyed with (also SPF 50 sunscreen 2x/day, stayed in the shade and got a good tan anyway). Temps daily into the low 90’s.
The area is pristine, real wilderness. The boat docks in the mangrove forest (like bayous) and there is not a sound or a soul. Zero houses except the dive shacks on stilts. A new 33’ foam core dive skiff with twin Yamaha 150’s whipped us on a 15-30 minute ride to dive sites, Angel’s 40 mph wave planing an athletic event all by itself. The reefs are the best, thriving 50’ to 100’ tall with many narrow valleys, gullies, overhangs and swim-throughs. Rugged, beautiful underwater mountains with white sand, grassy bottoms. Drifted up and looked into the eyes of sand covered rays. All the usual coral, fish, turtles, eels, lobster. Dives 50 to 130 ft deep with walls dropping off out of sight. Lots of sharks (every dive). In 38 dives we ran into another diving group only once. Rarely saw another boat.

Most exciting moment was when Sergio pulled a lobster out of a coral hole to feed our “pet” three-foot grouper. Never seen an 80 lb. fish move so fast. He had the lobster, and Sergio’s entire hand, before we could react. Serg jerked his hand out of the fish’s mouth, suffering minor contusions, and we finished the dive without incident. But I’m sure he was sore for a week afterwards. The grouper followed us for the rest of the dive with the lobster’s feelers sticking out of its mouth. Next best moment was the remora joining to my leg (see pics below).

Would not have missed it for the world, but for the cost, doubt I will go back. All pictures below are snapshots taken from GoPro Hero 4 videos with VLC Snapshot function.

Schoolmasters, grunts and beautiful hard and soft coral are part of most dives. Current due to tropical storm Albert is evident it this shallow depth of about 20 ft.
Silky shark running about 9 ft greeting us on our return to the dive skiff. These swim by within a few feet, close enough to look them in the eye.

Fantastic coral overhangs are prominent at 60 – 90 ft depths and are usually populated with resting fish. This overhang is home to a semi-permanent school of 3-6 ft tarpons
One of several pet black groupers with porkfish grunts. Typical luscious soft coral waving in current at 25 ft deep.

Great shot of porkfish and schoolmasters and the world’s cutest blue striped grunt, curious about the GoPro mounted on a large sponge.
One of several barracuda resting beneath overhangs at about 70 ft depth. Many small fish and shrimp in white sand bottom---great trumpet fish and garden eels.
Pet black groupers do not hesitate to make their presence known to divers. They expect to be fed and usually get their way.
Cute hutia are about the only mammals in the mangrove forests, which they share with iguanas and sea birds. Beaches are rare, this one is entirely crushed coral. Most of the mangroves grow right out of the saltwater.

Cute and moderately friendly horse eye jacks resting below coral overhang at about 80 ft.
Nice school of bar jacks at about 90 – 100 ft depth. Not the greatest visibility down here as rain and wind above caused turbidity.

One of several Goliath groupers that adopted us as co-hunters. I inadvertently fed this one a dead baby octopus and he was my friend for life.
Pretty reef shark and snappers above beautiful white sand bottom and robust sea grass at about 80 ft deep.

Shot from the upper salon deck of the La Reina at anchor looking west. We anchored in the mangrove forest in calm seas despite big rollers to the west. Private catamaran joined us to get away from storm Albert.
La Reina crew. Dive leader Sergio, captain Mario, hostess Gisela, chef Jose, skiff captain Angel and deck hand / engineer.

Typical dinner is very nice, but insect repellent is mandatory in open salon.
Pet salt water crocodile by the anchored La Reina. Staff divers swim with 6 ft teenager but guests are not urged to join in.

Tropical storm Albert clouds approaching to the west of the mangrove moorage.
Ron under the dive skiff at ladder. Re-boarding with silky sharks puts a spring in your step.

Fish love, courtesy of this 2-3 ft remora. In poor visibility at 80 ft depth, this critter tried repeatedly to attach to Ron’s legs. In spite of kicking, thrashing and actual blows with the flashlight the fish connected with suckers once or twice. Ouch, love hurts!
Feeling Stiff? Try Sun Salutation
By Sue Bream

It is interesting to me how many different reactions I get from people when I mention yoga. “I took some classes, but I didn’t bend like the rest of the people”, or “I love it”, or “I have taken some classes, but don’t know how to do it on my own”.

Yoga Has Been Around Forever

With its roots in ancient India at least 5,000 years ago, it is incorporated in many fitness centers today as well as yoga studios. Personally, I have taken yoga classes on and off over the years, but have always “borrowed” certain poses for myself and for my clients that can fit into a workout routine, such as “downward facing dog”.

Sun Salutation

The Sun Salutation is a great way incorporate a simple yoga routine into your life. It can be a great warmup for a workout, a lead-in to a longer yoga session, or, a stand-alone way to loosen up your muscles and get your blood moving. It could also help you get focused and energized. You can start with a couple of rounds and eventually work up to as many as 10-12.

Essentially, the Sun Salutation is a series of yoga poses that are performed in a sequence and is coordinated with your breath.

There are tons of charts available in books or online of different sun salutation routines. While basically the same, some routines differ here and there. Here is one that I like (from dummies.com) because the individual pictured isn’t doing extreme back bends (which I don’t like) and it looks doable for most people.

If these moves are totally foreign to you, I recommend you take a yoga class and familiarize yourself with them first. If some of the moves work for you, but others don’t, a yoga instructor can help you modify them. For example, the cobra pose (g) might feel good to one person, but to another, it might be too much of a back bend. Another example is the lunge stretch (d and e). It can be done with an exercise ball for support.

Divers need a combination of flexibility and strength, both of which can be accomplished through yoga.

Sue Bream is an ACSM and ACE certified Personal Trainer and Pilates Instructor. Her business is “Fitness Choices.” Visit her website at www.suebreamfitness.com.
**Photos by Myra Wisotsky**

All Photos

Camera: Olympus OM-D EM-1 Mark II; Lighting: Sea & Dual Sea & Sea Strobes; Editing software: Lightroom

**Purple urchin**

Settings: f9, 1/100 sec, ISO 1000
Lens: Olympus M. Zuiko 8 mm
Fisheye PRO
Subject: Purple urchin
Location: Clark Rock, Nanaimo, BC

**Jen Vanderhoof and Egg yolk jelly**

Settings: f8, 1/25 sec, ISO 400
Lens: Olympus M. Zuiko 8 mm
Fisheye PRO
Subject: Jen Vanderhoof and Egg yolk jelly
Location: Sund rock
Photos by Fritz Merkel

All photos
Camera: Olympus EPL-3; Lighting: Sea & Sea. YS-D1 and YS-D2; Lens:

Settings: f 4.5, 1/60 sec, ISO 200; Focal length 7mm
Subject: Adult Male Wolfeel; Location: Day Island Wall

Settings: f 5.0, 1/60 sec, ISO 200; Focal length 7mm
Subject: David Rosenbaum with female Wolfeel; Location: Day Island Wall
Photos by Bob Bailey

All Photos

Camera: Canon EOS Rebel T2i
Lens: Canon 60mm macro lens

Settings: f11, 1/160th, ISO 200
Subject: Stalked Jelly
Location: Sekiu Jetty

Settings: f11, 1/160th, ISO 200
Subject: Mosshead Warbonnet
Location: Sekiu Jetty

Settings: f9, 1/160th, ISO 200
Subject: Multicolor Nudibranch
Location: Sekiu Jetty
Photos by Justin McCellan

All Photos
Camera: Olympus TG-4  Lighting: Sola 800 and Archon Light 860

Settings:  f 6.3, 1/200 sec, ISO200  
Subject: Decorator Crab  
Location: Seamount near Lopez Island

Settings:  f 6.3, 1/200 sec, ISO200  
Subject: Barnacle surrounded by sponge and Bubble Tunicates  
Location: Seamount near Lopez Island

Settings:  f 6.3, 1/200 sec, ISO200  
Subject: Three Line Nudibranch  
Location: Seamount near Lopez Island
Photos by Jen Vanderhoof

Camera: TG4; Lighting: single YS-D1 strobe; Edited: Lightroom
Subject: Crescent Gunnel in Eelgrass; Location: Alki Junkyard

Camera: Olympus E-M5; Lighting: No strobes; Edited: Lightroom
Subject: Goliath grouper; Location: Dry Tortugas
Thinking about Advanced Diver Training?

As dive instructor, I love to help others develop their dive skills. As a club member, I am happy to offer my fellow club members a 50% discount over the rates charged by local dive shops.

A few of the courses I am certified to offer include:
- Advanced Open Water
- Deep Diver
- Nitrox Diver
- Drysuit Diver
- Underwater Digital Imaging

**What's the catch?** It's simple. The only 'advertising' I do is word of mouth. If you would like to take a course, find at least three others to join you. After that, we find dates that work for all, for classroom and open water sessions.

Douglas Coutts
Doug.coutts@salishseadiving.com
(206) 849-0612
LEMBEH MANIA
Oct 31st-Nov 12th, 2018
12 days of critter-packed adventure at NAD-Lembeh resort

Join a great group of west coast divers for a critter packed adventure to the world famous Lembeh Strait. Many “bucket-list” creatures await you, from Mimic Octopus to Hairy Frogfish, and oodles of Nudibranchs! Located in the Coral Triangle, North Sulawesi boasts incredible biodiversity. Sites include black sand “muck” dives, coral patch reefs, mini-walls and stunning coral walls to the north. Your experience is greatly enhanced with a 1:2 Guide to diver ratio. The resort is set up beautifully for photographers, with a dedicated camera room. Meals are hearty, tasty and feature fresh farm raised fish and veggies from their hydroponic garden. Tours of the Minihasa highlands or Tangkoko Nature reserve will be available as an add-on option. Extra night dives may be added for a fee.

$2400USD (double occupancy)
Includes: 29 day dives, 3 night dives
Nitrox For Nitrox Certified Divers
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All meals, snacks, tea, coffee. water.
12 Nights accommodation :A/C room

For information:
EMAIL: scubamarli@gmail.com
MARLI WAKELING
UNDERWATER & NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY
About Marker Buoys

The Marker Buoy Dive Club of Seattle meets at 7:00 PM, the first Wednesday of each month (except July, which is our annual picnic) at the Sunset Hills Community Center, 3003 NW 66th St. 98117 in Ballard. The Marker Buoy Dive Club is one of the most active dive clubs in the Pacific Northwest. Membership level is over 200. Our members include some that are new to diving or to the Seattle area as well as those with over 1,000 dives in their log.

In addition to hosting many dives each month, monthly meetings are held at the Sunset Community Center in Ballard. Monthly meetings give members an opportunity to give reports on club dives of the previous month, information on upcoming dives, and occasionally slide and video presentations of dives. A guest speaker related to scuba diving, the marine environment, or something of interest to divers is featured every month. Club-sponsored activities include over 100 dives each year, dive planning parties, an annual picnic, and an annual banquet.

General Club Policies

Diver’s Education

The club will reimburse members $15 for successful completion of advanced certification courses that increases the member’s competency and safety. Limit of 3 reimbursements per club member per calendar year. Courses that qualify are advanced diver, rescue diver, dive master, instructor, nitrox, DAN O2 Provider, and initial First Aid & CPR (non-renewal). Reimbursement for other courses subject to board approval. Just show proof of course completion to Joan Hansen, Treasurer, for your reimbursement.

Meet Up/ Marker Buoys

Join our members only on-line web group! Find a last-minute dive buddy, ride, or directions to a dive, trip reports, as well as our newsletters:

http://www.meetup.com/Marker-Buoy-Dive-Club/

Weight Belt Replacement Policy

The club will reimburse any member who ditches weights in what they consider an emergency during any dive, anywhere. The reimbursement is for replacement cost of all items ditched and not recovered, up to a maximum of $150.

Sponsor a Dive, Earn an Air Card

Dive hosts receive an Air Card good at local dive shops when 6 Marker Buoy members participate on the dive. The Club Oxygen Kit counts as a buddy as long as one member of the party is O2 trained. Limit of 1 Air Card per club member per calendar month. The club has two O2 kits - currently with Fritz Merkel and Steve Kalilimoku. To request an air card, complete the “Dive Host Air Card Request Form” and submit it to the Treasurer, Joan Hansen.

Membership

Members must be a certified diver and 18 years or older. Any certified diver under 18 is welcome on club dives if a parent is a club member and comes as their buddy.

Marker Buoy 2018 Board

President: Myra Wisotzky
Vice President: Ron Richarson
Secretary: Jon Hollander
Treasurer: Joan Hansen
Programs: Gene Cornetz
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