

Buddy Line



President's Log Entry

The holidays are over and life is settling back into its less hectic routine, for most of us anyway. Earlier this month, the tsunami in Asia served as none too subtle reminder just how fragile life can be and how quickly the daily routines that we take for granted can literally be swept away.

We've all seen the news and heard the pleas for support, so I won't dwell on that, but I would like to draw your attention to a couple of diving-related articles about the tsunami (on page 2). Many of our members travel all over the world seeking out the best dive spots, and it's quite sobering to think that people we know could easily have been there celebrating the holidays underwater.

On a much cheerier note, we had a great meeting at the LGBT Center in San Francisco, including a couple of new members who found us through our web site. Everyone enjoyed the Galapagos video and pictures, and we spent some time getting to know each other, too.

Our next meeting is at Wallin's Dive Center on February 9 with guest speaker Geoff Bahr, the Volunteer Dive Team Coordinator for the San Mateo Sheriff's Department. This is the first of our joint meetings with the Kelptomaniacs, and I especially hope that our South and East Bay members find it to be more convenient.

The board has been spending some time discussing how best we can serve the club members, and ultimately, we need you to tell us. From time to time, we'll be posting some surveys so that we can make sure that we're providing the best possible experience for you. Bob Sommer, our local

dive planner, has already posted the first one regarding preferences for diving at Pt. Lobos. They're quick and easy to fill out, so please participate—the more we know, the better!

We also have a board position available. After three years of tirelessly working for NCRD, Mike Ford has decided to step down from the board. Anyone who's attending one of the many trips he's planned knows how hard he's worked for the club, and on behalf of the board, I'd like to thank him for his service. In particular, his trip planning has set a high standard for us to live up to.

The board is reviewing the by-laws of the club; they need some work to resolve inconsistencies and clarify some processes. Since this is a legal document, we would like some help from an attorney with a non-profit law background. If you know someone and would like to recommend him or her, please let me know.

And saving the best for last...NCRD's share of the Diving for Life proceeds is \$11,616! This money will be donated to one or more local charities, and we'll be hearing presentations from applicants at our March meeting. Look for more details in this issue of the Buddy Line.

Doug McGrath
President
Northern California Rainbow Divers
president@rainbowdivers.org

February 2005

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Calendar

- February 9
General Meeting
- February 10
Board Meeting
- February 12
Pt. Lobos Diving
- February 17
General meeting
- March 12
Pt. Lobos Diving
- April 11
General Meeting
- May 19
General Meeting

The Tsunami

From the Editor:

On this page, you'll find two articles about the tsunami; the first is an excerpt of e-mail from Joe Kaminski, an NCRD member who visited Thailand a couple of years ago.

The second is from the Coral Reef Alliance, a group dedicated to protecting and preserving the coral reefs around the world.

Please note that the information is included here for you to have, not as an endorsement of any charities by NCRD. I found these to be moving and relevant to us as divers, and while I hope you do, too, I also encourage you to always make informed decisions when choosing where to donate.

Doug McGrath

From Florence Depondt, Program Assistant with the Coral Reef Alliance:

The devastating impact of the tsunami which hit South Asia on December 26th has shown the importance of protecting coral reefs and other aquatic environments. Coral reefs and mangroves act as natural barriers, protecting coastlines from storm and wave damage.

Dive In To Earth Day offers you the unique opportunity to take a stand for the protection of coral reefs and your local marine environment, and raise global awareness about pressing conservation issues. It's time to roll up your sleeves and organize or participate in a Dive In activity - whether its a reef or lake cleanup, an educational snorkeling trip or a children's art contest!

For information on the project, how you can become involved, and great resources for organizers, please visit our web site or e-mail us.

[links/address below—Ed.]

Be sure to register your event online. The first 300 organizers to register by April 1st will receive our new and improved package with posters and support materials (also now available in Spanish).

Thanks to all of you who are making this possible.

We'll see you out there during the week of Earth Day!

- www.coral.org
- divein@coral.org

From NCRD Member Joe Kaminski:

During late November 2002 following a Himalayan trek in Nepal, I flew to Bangkok and Phuket, Thailand. I traveled north about an hour from Phuket to Khao Lak and stayed a place called Poseidon Bungalows. In all the places I have been in my life, I've never seen a bay with its palm trees, bamboo, flowers and ferns that felt closer to me than "paradise on earth." The quiet waters of the thatched roof restaurant, the odd night bird, the incredibly helpful Thai guy and his little boy who motorcycled me to Khao Lak National Park for hiking on the beach, the scrumptious food, and the day spent out boating and scuba diving near Similan Islands #8 and #9, all are etched in my memory.

I was naturally concerned and wondering about some of these locations so I contacted the scuba diving company I went

out with that day. Here was their description:

Dear all,

First of all we want to thank you very much for your mail. We were truly overwhelmed about how many messages we got. Please understand that at the moment and under the circumstances, we are not able to answer them all personally, but be assured we will do this at a later time.

A quick summary: We were lucky and could escape the tidal wave, but we have lost a lot of friends and acquaintances...and our office and house. Our Thai crew is OK as well, though they lost many of their relatives and also all their houses and personal belongings.

At the moment we are on the way to Europe, because it will be easier to rearrange things from there and we will try

to be back to Thailand—which is our true home country now—as soon as possible.

I could manage to get a laptop and from now on we are back in business. Please visit our web site in the next few days. We will give you a detailed update there. We also want to start some fund raising for the Thai people and if you want to help and support you will find all information there. We want to thank you again for your sympathy and hope to see you soon or again, just see you!

*All the best,
Wolfgang and Evi,
Scuba Diving Adventures*

Local Diving

by Bob Sommer

Hello Rainbow Divers,

Are you itching to get in the water? Can't wait for that warm water trip? Well you're in luck! We have world class diving right here in our own backyard at the Pt Lobos State Reserve just south of Monterey. If you've never been to Pt Lobos, you'll be delighted by the pure beauty that waits for you under the water. The Pt Lobos web site <http://pt-obos.parks.state.ca.us/scuba/scuba.shtml> has tons of information about dive sites and what you can expect to see.

If you have never tried cold water diving this is an excellent opportunity to do so with other NCRD divers!

The reserve, located three miles south of Carmel, offers picnic tables, restrooms, a fresh water rinse hose, and a boat ramp for easy entries and exits. \$7.00 covers the cost of the Point Lobos dive reservations. The group is limited to 12 divers, so re-

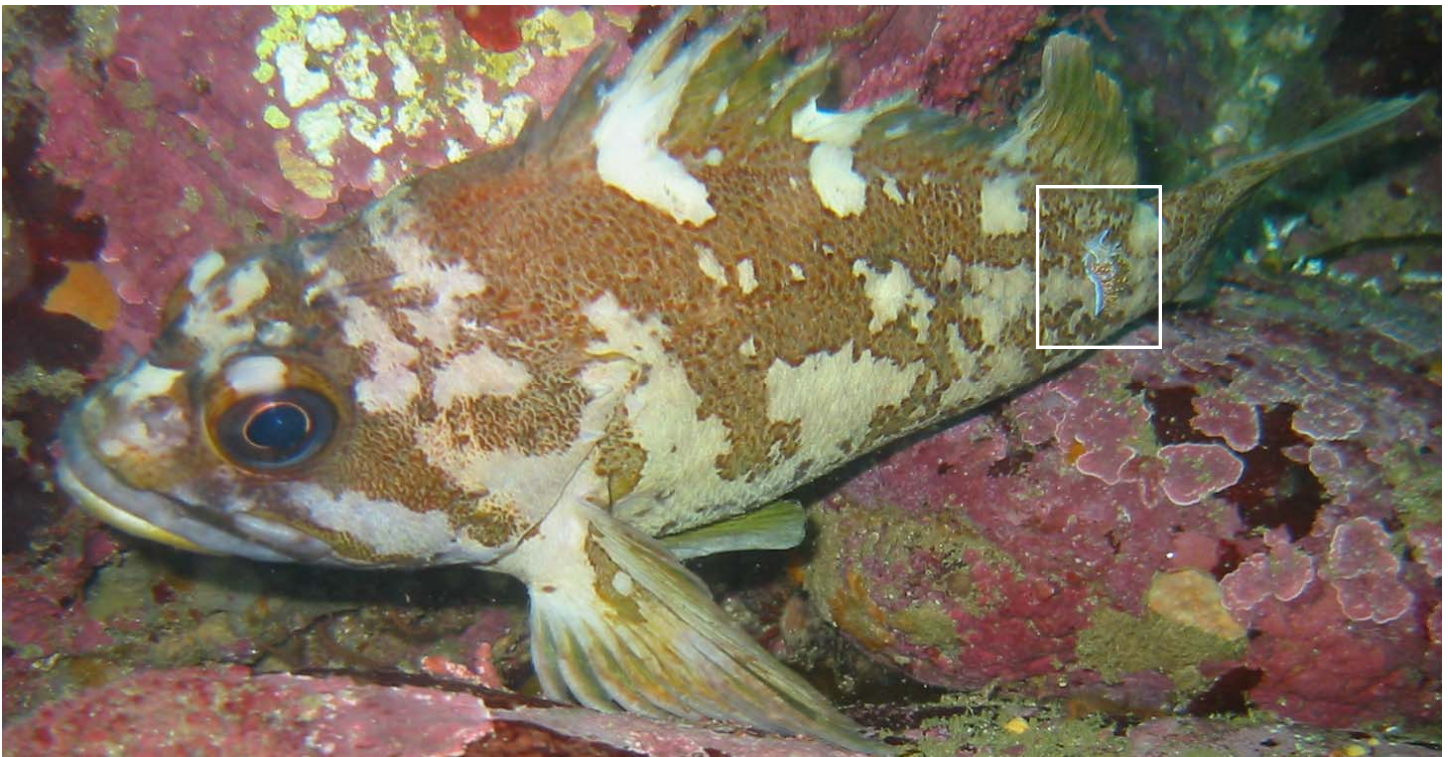
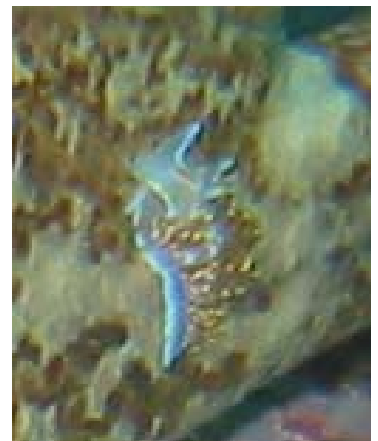
serve your spot by contacting your Dive Planner (me, Bob Sommer), at diveplanner@rainbowdivers.org.

You can sign up for as many dives as you like and reserving your spot now ensures that you won't miss out. We often have a waiting list for cancellations so avoid the rush and reserve your spot now!

- February 20 (10 spots left)
- March 19
- April 16
- May 14
- June 11
- July 16
- August 20
- September 17
- October 15
- November 19
- December 17

In order to better serve the needs of club members, if you are interested in local cold water diving, please take a moment to complete this survey:

- www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=47135827503



How often do you see a *Hermisenda* on a rock fish?!? Just one of the possibilities at Pt. Lobos. Photo by Brenda Kessler

Diving for Life Presentations

by Doug McGrath

This past October, 25 members of NCRD joined nearly 100 other divers in Fiji for Diving for Life. This gay and lesbian scuba jamboree brings divers together from all over the world for a week of great diving and camaraderie. During the week, there are a series of fund-raisers including raffles of donated equipment, trips, and so on; the total amount raised is apportioned to the clubs according to the percentage of attendees coming from each club. DFL raised \$46,000 this year; NCRD's portion is \$11,616, which we will donate to one or more local charities at our March meeting.

DFL was started in 1992 as an AIDS fund-raising event, and has since broadened the scope of charities it supports to include any health-related charity with a focus on the GLBTT community.

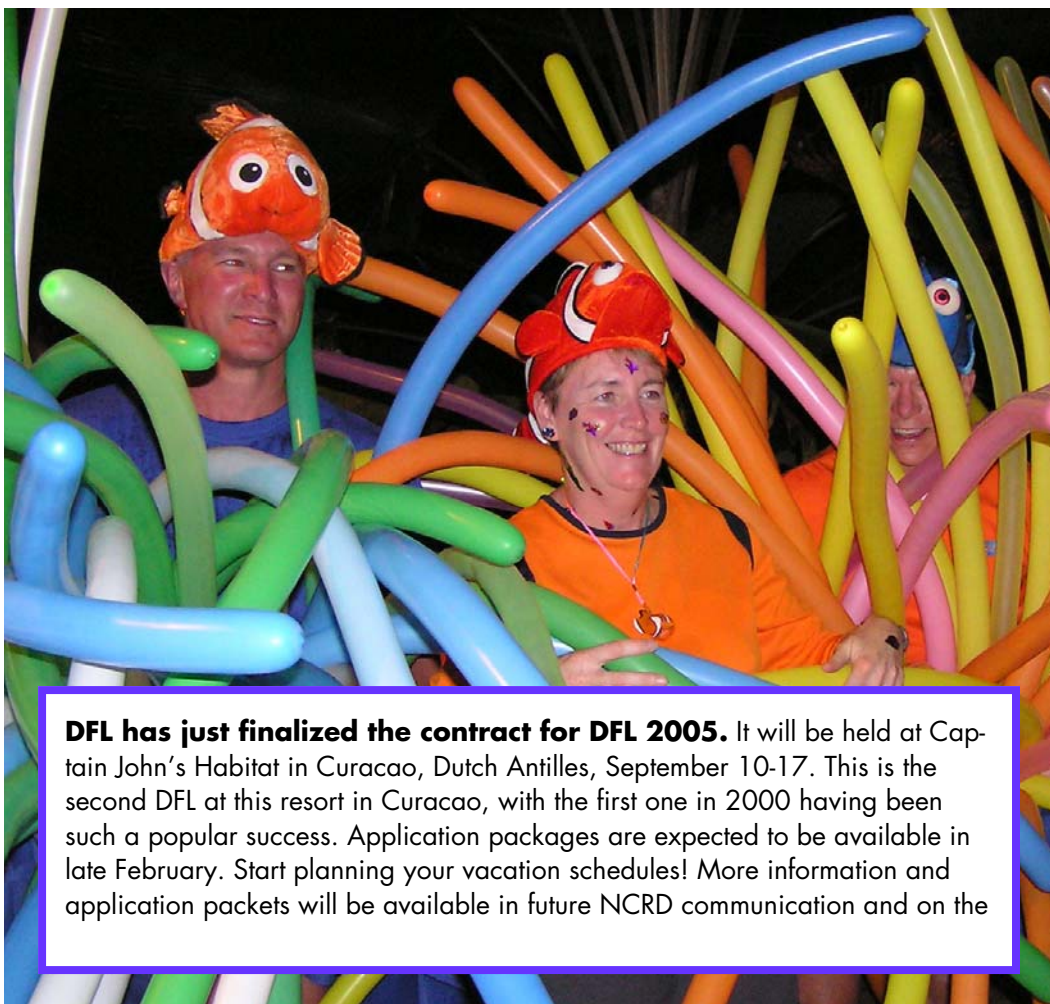
It's Up To You!

One of the best parts of this process is that our members get to choose the charities that apply and then select the recipients from the applicants. Many of our members have connections to the non-profit community, so please work your connections. This is a lot of money for many organizations to receive, and even if the award is split—which has been done

once—it can make a big difference in the ability of the recipients to serve their communities.

Here's How It Works

- Members contact eligible health-related charities serving the GLBTT community.
- If a charity is interested, the nominating NCRD member should contact me by March 10 to get on the meeting agenda.
- At the March 19 meeting, each charity makes a five-minute presentation describing what they do and how they would use the funds.
- After the presentations, the charities are excused and the NCRD members present at the meeting choose one or more recipients and award amounts.
- The selected recipients will be notified and must provide DFL with appropriate documentation (tax exempt letter, etc.).
- DFL will send the funds directly to the recipients.
- At our May meeting, we will have a public presentation award.
- Remember: **only** 501(c)3 charities are eligible, and they must provide health-related services to the GLBTT community.
- Direct questions to Doug McGrath at president@rainbowdivers.org.



DFL has just finalized the contract for DFL 2005. It will be held at Captain John's Habitat in Curacao, Dutch Antilles, September 10-17. This is the second DFL at this resort in Curacao, with the first one in 2000 having been such a popular success. Application packages are expected to be available in late February. Start planning your vacation schedules! More information and application packets will be available in future NCRD communication and on the

NCRD's Sharon Ponder and "schoolmates" as Nemos for the DFL 2004 Halloween Party, organized by Steve Graham and Patti Davidson. The Nemos took Grand Prize for their costumes. Photo by Patti Davidson.

Don't Let Your NCRD Membership Expire!

by Jack Johnson, Membership Coordinator

Some of you will be receiving a note from me about your membership expiration. Our membership is for a one year period and expires every January or July depending upon what time of the year membership is/was paid. Some memberships will have expired in January, 2005 but due to late notice, we've extended this until February 28, 2005.

We are working hard again for 2005 to bring additional value, members and great dive trips and experiences to our members and ensure that you have a great time, make new dive friends and benefit from being a part of this organization. We really want to continue having you as part of our membership.

Northern California Rainbow Divers offers three types of membership:

- *Individual*: \$35/year
- *Domestic Partners*: \$55/year For domestic partners sharing the same address. Each partner must fill out a separate form.
- *Newsletter only*: \$20/year For those living more than \$150 miles from San Francisco who wish to stay in touch.

To join NCRD, go to the Join page on our web site (www.rainbowdivers.org) and download the membership form. Fill it out and mail it to the address on the form to renew your membership in the greatest dive club in the world.

Why Should I Continue My Membership or JOIN?

You may know or have heard what makes NCRD so great: the friendly people, the amazing trips, the non-stop fun and excitement, the free pony rides on your birthday. Okay, so you don't get the pony. But you do get monthly boat and shore dives in Monterey. You do get fantastic deals on trips to places such as Saba, Co-

zumel, Alaska, the Galapagos, the Sea of Cortez, the Turks and Caicos, British Columbia, Roatan, and the Dominican Republic. You do get to participate in unforgettable adventures such as our Great White Shark Encounter, our North Coast Abalone Dive weekends, and our annual trip to the Channel Islands aboard the Vision.

And you do get to take advantage of the classes offered by our NCRD-affiliated instructors.

2005 is going to be another great year and we're really excited about encouraging more members to join us at our interactive meetings, trips and to share your own ideas and experiences to make this an even better organization

So in a nutshell, we sponsor a wide range of diving activities for our members:

- *Monterey Diving*: Day trips for shore and boat diving at the best spots in Monterey Bay, Carmel Bay, and Big Sur, every month.
- *Channel Islands Diving*: Long-weekend trips once or twice per year for liveaboard boat diving in southern California's Channel Islands.
- *Tropical Diving*: One- to two-week trips to warm-water dive locations such as Roatan, Cozumel, Hawaii, Belize, Saba, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. We also participate in [Diving for Life](#), an annual scuba jamboree in an exotic location with other gay dive clubs from the U.S., Canada, and Europe that raises

money for organizations in the gay community.

- *Classes and Instructors*: All-gay and lesbian basic scuba certification classes with instructors and dive-masters who are club members, as well as advanced certification classes, first aid/CPR classes, and rusty diver refresher classes.
- *Interactive Meetings*: Our monthly meetings in San Francisco and the surrounding area are fun social events and often feature guest speakers on underwater photography, dive safety, marine biology, advances in dive equipment, and much more.
- *Links, Associations & Information about other Clubs*: We stay in contact with most of the gay and lesbian dive clubs around the world and also encourage and participate in mutual dive trips.

Opportunity to Connect with Local Divers Like Yourself!

If you have any questions about membership, or about the club in general, feel free to drop me a line at membership@rainbowdivers.org. I'll do my best to clue you in.

From the Sydney Underwater Buddies (SUBS)

Mardi Gras Season rapidly approaches us here in Sydney, Australia. The weather remains hot and the visibility great. SUBS has a few events that we would like to let you know about. Anyone traveling in the area is welcome to come along, whether to just say "hi" or to participate. For more information, see our web site at www.gaydive.org.au.

Manta Encounters and More at Socorro Island!

Plus optional underwater photography workshop with Andrew Sallmon
April 23-May 1, 2005

- \$2900 per person, double occupancy
- \$250 additional per person for Executive Stateroom spots
- \$200 for digital photography workshop

Situated 220 nautical miles southwest of Cabo San Lucas in the Sea of Cortez, the islands of the Revillagigedo Archipelago are often referred to as the "Little Galapagos" because of their similarity to their more remote cousins. The rugged, largely uninhabited islands are home to many fascinating creatures, including hammerhead, whitetip, silky, and Galapagos sharks, eels, octopus, and scorpionfish. The real stars of the show, however, are the giant manta rays that call the islands home. These gentle animals will actually seek out encounters with divers, and the waters around Socorro Island is one of the best places in the world for manta encounters. Whale sharks are also known to frequent the area.

We're fortunate to have secured the best week of the season for our 8-day visit to Socorro Island. The weather should be calm and the seas warm, creating perfect diving conditions in which to explore this beautiful, untouched Eden. Best of all, we'll be on one of the nicest liveaboards you'll ever encounter, the 116" *Nautilus Explorer*.



The very comfortable *Nautilus Explorer*, complete with hot tub and every episode of *Sea Hunt*.

Cabins (double occupancy) on the *Nautilus* are roomy and comfortable, and each has its own bathroom and shower. The rest of the boat is just as nice, with an inviting lounge area and spacious dining facilities. The hot tub on the upper deck is

the perfect place for unwinding after a day of diving, and an onboard marine naturalist adds a bit of education to our time at sea.

This 8-day extended trip is ideal for divers who want to take pictures, hang out with big sea creatures, or just float silently in the deep. It has something for everyone, and it's an experience you will never forget. So pack your gear and get ready to splash into the blue.

The trip cost of \$2900 includes:

- Round-trip airfare from SFO
- Accommodations
- Meals
- Diving.

Not included are Nitrox fills, crew gratuity, and anything bought from the boat (including alcoholic drinks).

In addition to diving, we are also pleased to offer a digital photography workshop with renowned underwater photographer Andrew Sallmon (www.seait.com). For only \$200, you will receive daily discussions of photo techniques, evening slide shows, and one-on-one help from Andy.



The giant mantas are friendly at Socorro Island!

Space on this trip is limited to 20 divers, so register early to guarantee yourself a spot. A deposit of \$500 is required, with full payment due by January 15, 2005. Please note that the non-diver rate is the same as the diver rate.

This trip is a joint trip with Dive Dog Adventures. As of this writing, we need four more participants:

- 1 who will share an Executive Stateroom with a male NCRD member
- 1 who will share a Standard Stateroom with a female NCRD member
- 2 who will share with each other

For more information regarding the trip, please contact coordinator Doug McGrath at 408-515-7160 or via e-mail at so-corro@rainbowdivers.org.



Northern California
Rainbow Divers
548 Castro Street, #478
San Francisco, CA 94114
www.rainbowdivers.org

President, Doug McGrath
president@rainbowdivers.org

Treasurer, Hoa Tran
treasurer@rainbowdivers.org

Secretary, Dennis Nix
secretary@rainbowdivers.org

Program Chair, *open*
programs@rainbowdivers.org

Dive Planner, Clark Burton
diveplanner@rainbowdivers.org

Trip Planner, *open*
trips@rainbowdivers.org

Membership, Jack Johnson
membership@rainbowdivers.org

Newsletter Editor, Doug McGrath
editor@rainbowdivers.org

Dive Classes Coordinator, *open*
classes@rainbowdivers.org

Webmaster, Doug McGrath
webmaster@rainbowdivers.org

Diving for Life Liaison, Steve Graham
dfll@rainbowdivers.org

Club Policies

Board meetings are held once a month and are open to any member in good standing. If interested in attending, please contact any of the board members listed above for location. Membership dues are \$35/year, \$55/year for domestic partners at the same address, and \$20/year for newsletter only subscription (available to addresses more than 150 miles from San Francisco Bay Area). Advertising is available. Rates are \$7/month to club members for a business card-size non-changing ad. It is \$10/month for non-club members to advertise. If you are interested in advertising, please contact the editor. Club policy regarding money paid for club sponsored dives: unless otherwise noted, all monies are non-refundable. NCRD does not warrant, recommend or guarantee the products or services contained in advertisements in this newsletter.

Northern California Rainbow Divers, Inc. is a California non-profit mutual benefit corporation.

Upcoming Meetings

General Meeting

Wednesday, February 9, 7:00 PM

Wallin's Dive Center

Our next general meeting is the first of our joint meetings with the Kelptomaniacs at Wallin's Dive Center in San Carlos. The guest speaker is Geoff Bahr, the Volunteer Dive Team Coordinator for the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Location

Wallins is in San Carlos next to Hwy. 101:

1119 Industrial Rd. #7
San Carlos, CA 94070
www.wallins.com

See the Wallins web site for maps and directions.

Future General Meetings

- Thursday, March 17
Diving for Life Presentations
The LGBT Center
- Monday, April 11
New Gear Night
Joe Geiss of ScubaPro
Wallin's Dive Center
- Thursday, May 19
Program TBD
The LGBT Center
- Thursday, June 9
Kathy Brandt
Mystery Writer
Wallin's Dive Center

About the Joint Meetings with Kelptomaniacs

Mike Ford, our former programs director, also works at Wallins Dive Center in San Carlos. Mike has invited NCRD to hold some joint meetings with Kelptomaniacs, and we're trying it experimentally for the February, April, and June meetings.

Please note that NCRD is not endorsing Wallins' over any other dive shop; this is simply a practical way to solve the very significant problem of finding interesting speakers and topics for monthly meetings. For our often-neglected members outside San Francisco, the joint meetings at Wallins are significantly closer to home, and we hope to see more faces from the South and East Bay communities.

Board Meetings

The next board meeting will be Thursday, February 10 at Dennis Nix's home at 7:30 PM. Please e-mail him at treasurer@rainbowdivers.org for address and directions.

Out on the Web—Links of Interest

- Jim McDermott's Galapagos video:
homepage.mac.com/uwphoto/iMovieTheater38.html
- Diving For Life:
www.divingforlife.org
- Pt. Lobos:
pt-obos.parks.state.ca.us/scuba/scuba.shtml