

Buddy Line



President's Log Entry

This month, NCRD has the honor of awarding \$11,616 to one or more worthy charities. These funds, raised at the Diving for Life Jamboree, are NCRD's share of the total, and it's a substantial amount. If you've ever worked for or with a non-profit organization, you're already aware of the impact an award of this size can have. In our current situation of widespread budget cuts, many non-profits are feeling the pinch as their usual sources of grants diminish or disappear altogether.

Remember, only those present at our March 17 meeting will have the opportunity to decide how these funds are awarded. As of this writing, we have the following nominations:

- Project Inform
- Downtown Youth Clinic
- Family Link
- The Neil A. Christie Living Center

In other news, this past month, we had the first of our joint meetings with the

Kelptomaniacs at Wallin's Dive Center. If you weren't there, you missed a great presentation. Geoff Bahr of the San Matea Sheriff's Department Volunteer Dive Team and his co-horts in crime-fighting and rescue were a hoot! They had some fabulously funny stories covering everything from the stupidity of criminals to the insanity of county government to what happens to a carload of Depends when immersed in the bay. (I'm **not** making that up!) There's lots of grungy work, but they do some seriously cool stuff, too.

For our South Bay members, I've been talking to the guys with Rainbow Recreation, and they're very interested in getting together for some joint activities. Watch your e-mail for more information on that.

If you're interested in going to Socorro Island in April, there are still one or two spots available. For the underwater photographers, that trip includes an optional class from photographer Andrew Sallmon. You can see some of his photos at his web site (see the article). Beautiful stuff!

Also in this month's issue, check out the article from Karen Doby covering the club's latest warm-water trip to the stunning St. Lucia.

Finally, and most importantly, **don't forget to renew your membership!**

Doug McGrath
President
Northern California
Rainbow Divers

March 2005

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Calendar

- March 12
Pt. Lobos Diving
- March 17
General meeting
Diving for Life Presentations
- March 20
Diving at Pt. Lobos
- April 9
Diving at Pt. Lobos
- April 11
General Meeting
- April 23—May 5
Socorro Islands
- May 14
Diving at Pt. Lobos
- May 19
General Meeting
- June 9
General Meeting
- June 11
Diving at Pt. Lobos



The harbor in St. Lucia. Photo by Dennis Nix.

St. Lucia Calling

by Karen Doby

St. Lucia calling

[All photos by Karen Doby. Ed.]

79°F, sunny and clear, chance of scattered afternoon showers, breezes ENE @ 8mph, visibility 7 miles. The St. Lucia weather forecast beckoned as six happy NCRD travelers left home in cold, rainy January in search of a diver's island paradise. We were bound for the sunny Caribbean to experience the joys of warm water diving in winter, and we were not disappointed.

Outside our doorstep at the Marigot Beach Resort lay crystal blue waters, a shoreline of lazy palms, and a bay dotted with sailing vessels both modern and historic. It was absolutely gorgeous, and we could hardly wait until the next morning to get wet.

An underwater paradise

St. Lucia's nearshore waters are a marine-protected environment, and boat diving is done close to shore. The island's volcanic topology is characterized by steep drop-offs in excess of 100' depths, often within 30-40' offshore, with slight currents, mild surge, an average visibility of 50-80' and a water temperature of 80° in mid-January. Owing to the close proximity to shore, dive spots are sometimes shared with

snorkelers on excursion from cruise ships, but the sudden and steep inclines make fast tracks for divers seeking the adventure of the deep.

Names like Devil's Hole, Virgin Point, Bay of Pigs, Witch's Haven

and Superman's Flight peppered our log-books. Dive after dive we emerged with tales of octopus, moray eels, garden eels, harlequin eels, barracuda, lobsters, spiny lobsters, slipper lobsters, hard-shell crabs, pelagic crabs, decorator crabs, hermit crabs, arrow crabs, feather dusters, fire worms, Christmas tree worms, fan worms, mantis shrimp, coral-banded shrimp, pistol shrimp, drumfish, peacock flounders, lizardfish, stonefishes of various sort, 4 or 5 species of damselfish, butterfly fish, rainbow trumpets, sea turtles, parrotfish, puffers, grunts, snapper, and the elusive St. Lucia seahorse. I'd be remiss if I didn't also mention the gobies on the vast array of stony corals and sponges. In short, St. Lucia diving is a macro photographer's dream, although the ever-present damselfish demanded some unusual and



Lobsters aplenty! Several species are abundant

creative picture-taking postures!

Dive trip synopsis

There were a few things about the diving that really stood out for me on this trip. First were the swarms of **huge** schools of **small** fish. Second was the absence of large fish. This is the first week of diving where I've not seen even one shark, ray, or even a mildly big fish. Third were the private inshore traps that the DM warned us not to touch no matter what. And finally was the overabundance of small critters crawling the reefs in open daylight. Never have I seen a



Five happy divers in front of St. Lucia's Pitons.



Spotted drumfish practicing his figure-8s



(Right)
Octopus
sleeping
on a lazy
Sunday
afternoon



The ever-present bearded fireworm (bristleworm annelid).

place where the effects of overfishing were so apparent. (Maybe I should dive more.)

Dennis Nix did a terrific job organizing the trip. The Dive Fair Helen scuba operator was eager to please although not altogether efficient, e.g. on-time starts were rare. The dive boats were well designed for divers and roomy when cruise ship patrons were not onboard for snorkeling. The crew was friendly, although our DM had a penchant for manhandling the sea life. Another of the dive-masters turned out to be family and brought her girlfriend and sister to join us for farewell drinks on our last night on the island, where we sampled moonshine made of local rum—some of us more than others.

This was a fantastic week with a great bunch of divers. Everyone was so wonderfully compatible and relaxed. The people really made this a trip to remember. Many thanks to Dennis, Joe, Mark, Bernie and

Brain corals are home to sharknose gobies and many others. Photo by Karen Doby

Russ for a superb week of diving. Would I return to St. Lucia? Absolutely—I'm already dreaming of going back (no, Dennis, not for the “chocolate” or the moonshine)!

More photos on the next page...



Relaxing on the bow of the Dive Fair Helen





[Left] Spotted moray eel checking me out... am I edible?



[Above] Coral-banded shrimp at a cleaning station, looking for customers. [Left] Stonefish where you least expect them ...



[Above] St. Lucia seahorse, sighted near the base of the Pitons.



[Left] Arrow crabs are plentiful, lurking in crannies

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.

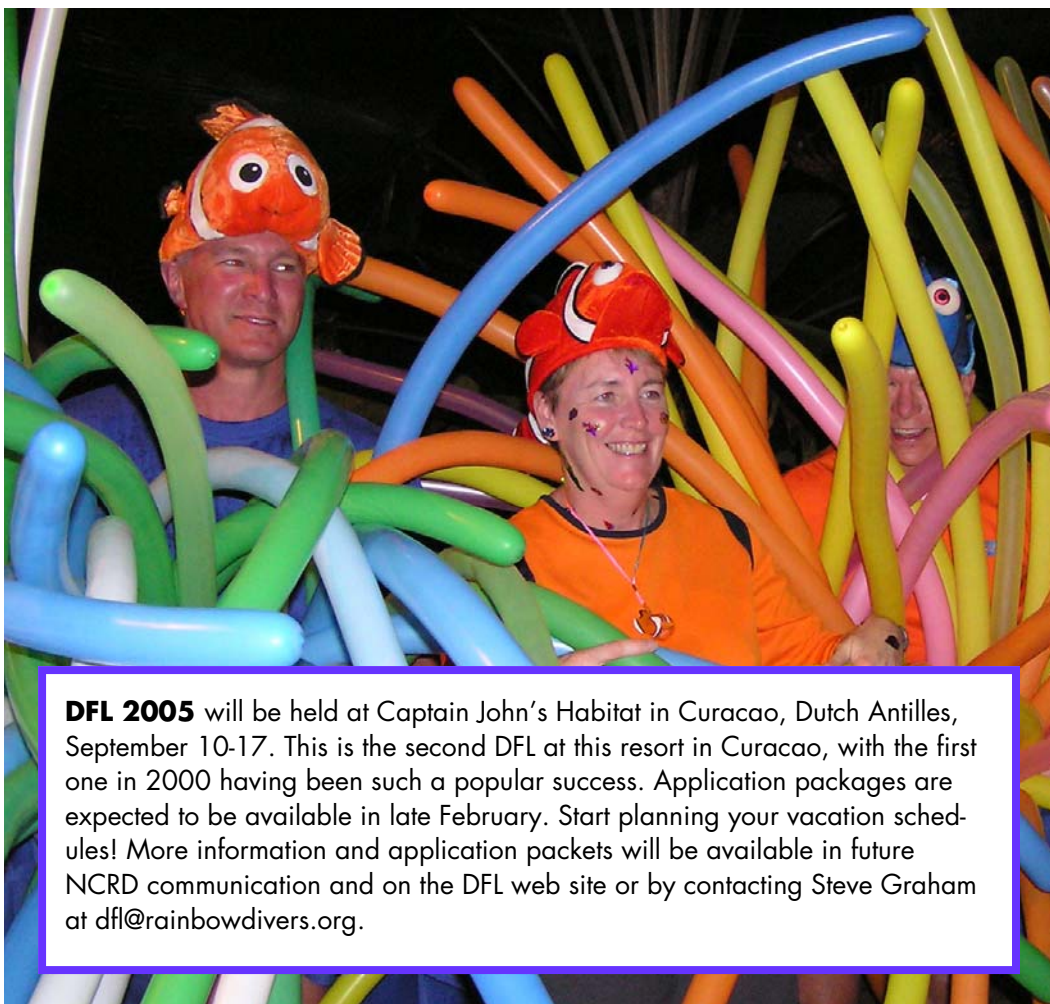
It's Up To You!

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 17 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 2005 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 DFL web site or by contacting Steve Graham at dfi@rainbowdivers.org.

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. Many memberships expired February 28, 2005, so be sure to renew now if you haven't already.

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, Cozumel, 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 live-a-board 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

Local Diving at Pt. Lobos

by Bob Sommer

If you've never been to Pt Lobos, you'll be delighted by the pure beauty that waits for you under the water. \$7.00 covers the cost of the Point Lobos dive reservations. The group is limited to 12 divers, so reserve your spot by contacting Bob Som-

mer at diveplaner@rainbowdivers.org.

- *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.

If you have any questions about membership, or about the club in general, feel free to drop me a line at membership@rainbowdivers.org.

mer at diveplaner@rainbowdivers.org.

March 19 · April 16 ·
May 14 · June 11 · July 16 ·
August 20 · September 17 ·
October 15 · November 19 ·
December 17

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.



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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

Thursday, March 17, 7:00 PM

The LGBT Center, San Francisco

At our next general meeting, we'll be hearing from the nominees for the Diving for Life award. Remember, **only those present can vote for the recipients. No absentee ballots!**

Location

The San Francisco GLBT Center
1800 Market Street (@ Octavia)

The MUNI METRO LINES J,K,L,M,N, the F STREETCAR, or MUNI BUS LINES 6,7,9, 10, 14, 21, 26, 47, 49, 66 and 71 all run within 5 blocks of the Center, many run within 1 block. Also, take BART to SF Civic Center, then transfer to Muni Metro or F lines.

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
Handicapped Scuba Association
(changed from original plan)
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 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, March 10 at Hoa Tran'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

- Diving For Life:
www.divingforlife.org
- Pt. Lobos:
pt-obos.parks.state.ca.us/scuba/scuba.shtml