



The Newsletter of the Northern California Rainbow Divers (NCRD)

Buddy Line

August, 2006

These Endless Days of Summer!

by Karen Doby

There are a lot of good reasons to be a part of NCRD. In addition to great diving, travel and adventure, interesting people, and loads of fun, this summer we've also had the privilege of meeting and diving with sister LGBT clubs from other parts of the world. Membership certainly has its rewards!

The summer dive season began when NCRD joined new friends from Lambda Divers from Washington, DC, for a fun-packed week in the tropical paradise of Roatan. Not to be undone, another group of enthusiastic NCRD'rs flocked to Utila to meet up with GLUG from London, UK, for a whale shark "hunt" in Utila. As if these weren't enough, 46 more LGBT divers from all over the world met mid-summer in places as far afield as Wakatobi and Komodo, Indonesia, to explore the

fascinating reefs and creatures who live at the Earth's epicenter of marine biodiversity.

This is not to say there hasn't been a lot of fun dry or close to home. NCRD's booth proved popular at both the San José and San Francisco Pride celebrations. And, of course, our now traditional summer BBQ at the home of Larry Chow and Ralph Wolf was a huge success, bringing together old and new members alike for an entertaining afternoon with good friends and great food.

Thanks to the dedication and hard work of the NCRD Board and Volunteers, this summer the rewards have gotten a whole lot better.



David at San José Pride

Photo by Karen Doby



Maureen & Chris extol the merits of "skin" diving at NCRD's San Francisco Pride Booth

Photo by Sharon Ponder



NCRD joined divers from GLUG (UK) for a week in the clear, warm waters of Utila



Where in the world is Whatsatobi?

Photo by Dennis Nix

CSI Underwater Comes to NCRD!

New Location for NCRD Meeting on August 17

by Peg Stone

Ever think of diving in San Francisco Bay? That's exactly what **Sergeant Dan Lopez** of the SFPD does for a living. Part of the San Francisco Underwater Dive Team, his beat includes the waters around San Francisco. Sergeant Lopez will tell us how he became a police diver, some cases he's worked on and the technical issues of police diving.

Sergeant Lopez will speak at the August meeting of the Northern California Rainbow Divers on Thursday, August 17. We'll meet at a *new* location at the **Castro Community Meeting Room** at 501 Castro, near 18th Street. This venue offers terrific public transit connections and lots of places to eat before or after the meeting. Socializing starts at 7pm, and at 7:30pm the program begins.

Sergeant Lopez brings a terrific main program. Ever wonder what salt water does to fingerprints left on evidence? How do officers find that gun the perp allegedly tossed into the bay? What are visibility and currents like in the SF Bay? What kind of search patterns do underwater "Dirty Harry"s use to find that body? The Sergeant will present a Powerpoint slide show and answer these and other fascinating questions from the world of professional forensic diving.

Also, there will be plenty of new and old divers to talk diving with and plenty of diving opportunities to catch up on, in both warm and cold water.

With CSI in reruns for the summer, what else is there to keep you at home on Thursday nights? Call a club buddy, suggest dinner in advance of the meeting to catch up, then come catch the best meeting of the year thus far!



LGBT Dive Trip to Solomon Islands, August 2007

The Solomon Islands offer some of the most pristine, unspoiled diving in the world, located in the South Pacific about halfway between New Guinea and Australia. On August 14-23, 2007, an LGBT liveaboard "vacation trip of a lifetime" has been arranged aboard the *Spirit of the Solomons*, diving in one of the most beautiful destinations on the planet on a great boat with world-class accommodations.

This 9-day trip is open to LGBT clubs around the U.S. and the world in hopes of filling the boat with a national or international group of LGBT divers.

To allow travelers the option of using frequent flier miles, international airfare is not included in the price of this trip. The package includes room, board,

scuba diving, other onboard activities and a \$90 government tax, and is exclusive of airfare, fuel surcharges, and personal or incidental expenses.

The liveaboard price varies according to the number of people who sign up:

1-10:	\$2,970.00
11-19:	\$2,708.00
20:	\$2,394.00

A \$500 non-refundable deposit will be required to register, followed by two payments of \$800.00, plus a last payment amount adjusted to reflect the number of participants.

For more information, please contact George Bogard by phone (972) 816-0945 or by email to awesomei@sbcglobal.net Details on the boat may be found online at <http://www.bilikiki.com/>

Editor's note: This dive trip is not organized or warranted by Northern California Rainbow Divers. This announcement is presented as an informational service only, for the benefit of those club members who may be interested.



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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 a newsletter-only subscription to addresses >150 miles from the SF Bay area.

Advertising is available for \$7/month to club members for a business card-size ad, or for \$10/month for non-club members. If you are interested in advertising, please contact the editor. NCRD does not warrant, recommend or guarantee the products or services contained in advertisements in this newsletter.

Unless otherwise noted, all monies paid for club-sponsored events are non-refundable.

NCRD's Monthly Photo Contest Winners Announced

For May and June, 2006

In May, **Mark Showalter** was diving in the Honduran Bay Islands during NCRD week with GLUG in Utila when he spotted this tiger grouper attempting to swallow an uncooperative blue tang. Of this shot taken with an Olympus C-8080 camera inside an Olympus PT-023 housing with an Inon D2000 strobe, Mark says, "The grouper had just caught the blue tang when our divemaster pointed it out, and the tang was still alive. We spent five minutes or more watching the grouper do its best to swallow the tang, but the grouper wasn't having much success."

June's prize goes to **Ed Bierman** for his photo of a wolf eel hanging out in his den at Vancouver Island. Ed was diving off the *Nautilus Explorer* liveaboard with an Olympus C-8080 equipped with a Sea&Sea auto strobe.

For their winning images, Mark and Ed receive a \$10 credit toward any NCRD event of their choice.

August 5 is the deadline for submitting July photo entries, and for the August competition, the deadline is September 5. Full details are available online at the NCRD website:

<http://www.rainbowdivers.org/photocontest.php> 



MAY WINNER: Tiger grouper with a mouthful! Photo by Mark Showalter

The Cayman Islands: Underwater Wonderland After the Boycott

Upcoming NCRD Meeting on September 21

by Peg Stone

Marty Hogan will show slides of the fabled wonders of the underwater Caymans from his trip aboard the *Cayman Aggressor* earlier this year. Many of us had left the Caymans "permanently" off our list of future dive trips after the Cayman Islands government made it clear a few years ago that gays were unwelcome on the islands. Since this policy has been publicly reversed (I guess money talks, and the boycott worked), one of the premier dive locales in the world is now much more attractive to the queer diver! Marty has taken the initiative to check it out and returns with some wonderful photos and tales. Come join us at yet another warm-water event, and find out how and why to put the Caymans on your wish list!



JUNE WINNER: Wolf eel at Vancouver Island

Photo by Ed Bierman

Utila Trip Report: Whale sharks, what whale sharks !?!!?

by Neil Stead, GLUG Trip Leader

Back at the start of 2005, I got an email from Deep Blue Resort in Utila. "Hi there," it said, "We found your website and wondered if you knew of anyone who would be interested in organizing a gay trip to Utila. We offer great discounts for group bookings."

Well, I get a few such emails per year, and normally they get filed in my "for future reference" folder. This one, however, got me interested when I checked out their website and discovered that Utila is famed for regular sightings of whale sharks. I'd only ever seen one before, many years ago in the Philippines, and had always longed to see more.

After being very pleasantly surprised at how great their group discounts really are, I decided to organize a trip. I knew that getting 20 people from GLUG to sign up would never be possible given the cost of getting there, so I sent emails off to our "sister" clubs in the U.S. and France. Within a month, I had more than enough people for a 2-week stay.

We landed on Utila and made our way to town in "taxis" (pickup trucks) to Deep Blue Divers, where the delightful **Shirley** was waiting with cold beers and water! Because the resort is a 15-minute boat ride away, we waited for others to arrive before eventually setting off to our final destination, Deep Blue Resort.

The resort sits on a strip of land between the sea and a big saltwater lagoon and is quite idyllic. **Steve** and **Jasmine** welcomed us into the bar/dining room/lounge and introduced the resort while we waited for our luggage to arrive on the skiff.

There are three buildings, all overlooking a sandy beach, set

among palm trees. Two buildings are accommodations, housing 10 spacious air-conditioned rooms with large balconies (with hammocks!), while the third is the aforementioned lounge and dining room, with the owners' accommodation above.

The next day after breakfast, we headed down to the boat dock where we were introduced to **Captain Swin** and our dive guides, who were an even more international group than us! **Mike**, an English instructor, lives permanently on the island while **Jess**, a bubbly divemaster from the U.S., spends the winters in Utila and the summers white-water rafting in the States. Our third guide, **Orlando**, was a rather cute 25-year-old Kiwi who'd been travelling the world for 5 years!

The guides were all excellent. They were happy to guide the less experienced divers but just as happy for others to do their own thing. Each dive was preceded by a comprehensive briefing of all the different options, and quite often the three guides would go different areas of the dive site, so we could choose which one we wanted to follow – if any!

While the fish life wasn't as abundant as some other areas of the Caribbean, there were plenty of corals, sponges, sea fans, etc., and plenty of other life too, if you took the time to look. I was amazed by the *Cryptic Teardrop Crabs* – these little guys decorate themselves with sponges and tend to hang out in vase sponges, along with brittle stars and coral banded shrimps. I'd only ever seen brittle stars on night dives before, but here they were happy to hang out in the open during the day.



Cryptic Teardrop Crab

Photo by Karen Doby

We enjoyed a great variety of dive sites too. On the north side of the island, there are ledges as well as sheer drop-offs plunging down 1000's of meters, while on the South

side, fringing reefs slope gently down to sand. One of my favorite dives was "Black Hill", a sea mount about 2 km offshore, which starts at about 22'/7m and goes down to 100'/30m or more. Here we saw eagle rays, free swimming moray eels, a toadfish, huge schools of spadefish, not forgetting the resident turtles.



White Seahorse Photo by Karen Doby

There are hardly any currents around Utila. Steve told us that a Utilan drift dive is where the divers swim in one direction while Swin moves the boat! We had our first experience of this one morning when the dive guides told us that we were going on a "Mystery Dive". This was one of the few dives where they insisted that we follow them and not surface without first letting them know. Once in the water, we set off at a fairly brisk pace along a coral ridge. I was beginning to think this really wasn't such a great dive when suddenly a wreck loomed up ahead. The *Halliburton* is a cargo boat that was sunk deliberately almost 8 years ago on May 4, 1998. The base of the wreck lies in around 28m/90' of water, and there is plenty of fish life in and around it, particularly in the wheelhouse, where large groupers and angelfish hang out. I also encountered the biggest arrow crab I've ever seen on this dive.

Evenings were spent drinking in the bar (in moderation, of course!), playing pool or darts, or comparing photos. Everyone tended to mix at mealtimes, so that in the course of the week, everyone had shared a table with everyone else at some point.

The food, prepared by Jasmine and a couple of Honduran women, was good but, it has to be said, not great. While lunches were quite varied, most evening meal choices were of the "meat and two veg" variety, and on

about day 4 we started to wonder whether we would get any form of potato other than mashed! (Thankfully, we did!) There was plenty of it, though, and perhaps we're rather more discerning than the straight groups they normally get!

Steve is passionate about whale sharks and indeed marine ecology in general. He's a very experienced diver and has a hundred different stories, which he's more than willing to share over a beer or two. Following him on dives was fascinating. Despite his passion for one of the biggest creatures in the sea, he's also an expert at picking out macro life, from jawfish with eggs in their mouths to tiny, tiny nudibranchs crawling across the sand.

Both he and Jasmine try to ensure that the resort is as eco-friendly as possible without sacrificing comfort. One example of this is that rather than supplying endless non-recyclable plastic water bottles, each guest receives a large bottle at the start of their stay and then refills it whenever needed from the supply in the lounge. All the buildings have large gutters which collect any rainwater and store it in tanks for use in washing and showering.

Shore diving was very pleasant. From the resort, there's a single sand channel that cuts through the reef wall. You can turn left or right from the channel and follow the wall for as far as you like. When you decide to turn around and come back, it's easy to find your way back to shore at the right point – you just look for the sand channel. On the second dive, I was feeling very proud at having found some “neck crabs” in a sea fan, when **Charlie** pointed out the large eagle ray swimming past! We also found a large turtle, which kindly swam very close to me and I got a great close-up photograph of its head.

For the second week, we had a whole new set of faces to learn. As well as our friends from **Northern California Rainbow Divers**, four guys from **Plongée Arc-en-Ciel** in Paris also joined us (who thankfully spoke excellent English – my French is very rusty!). Unfortunately, this week was when we saw a few travel problems. Two women from Rainbow Divers missed a connection in San Salvador and had to spend the night there before flying on to Honduras early the next morning. When they arrived, their luggage didn't. It took another couple of days for the redoubtable Shirley (Steve's mum, by the way) to track it down. Worse than this, however, was **Dave Stuver's** experience. His flight into Houston was delayed due to thunderstorms. He missed the flight to San Pedro Sula and instead transferred onto a flight to Roatan, where he caught

a ferry to La Ceiba, then another back to Utila the next morning. Unfortunately, he managed to part company with his bags in Houston. Despite Shirley's best efforts, he had to survive the week without it. It finally turned up mid-afternoon on Friday when Dave was in town quad-biking and having fun until 10pm. Still, at least he had clean clothes to travel home in!

“But what about the whale sharks?” I hear you cry! Well, unfortunately, Mother Nature didn't want to play ball with us. The first few days were very windy, with plenty of waves and white horses. Unfortunately, this means that it's almost impossible to see fish jumping, which is how we know where whale sharks are. Swin and the dive guides did their best, but the water was just too rough to see them. Finally on Friday morning of the first week, Swin spotted another boat, stationary and far out to sea, and got on the radio to them – yes, they'd seen a whale shark! We motored over there, and at last we could see the boil!

Trying to drop snorkelers on top of a whale shark is a slow, frustrating process. Only half the boat could jump in at once, so there we were, sitting along the side of the boat, waiting for Swin or the dive guides to spot the shark coming to the surface. As soon as they did, the boat would motor over, and, with luck, drop the snorkelers more or less on top of it. The anticipation is amazing – everyone peering to see where the fish are jumping – and then suddenly, it's “go, go, go!”, and you jump into the water, clutching your mask, and Voila! there it is – a huge shark shape. As I got in it was already starting to dive. Luckily I'd remembered to turn my camera on before I jumped in – I swam down towards it, and managed to get a single shot. I wasn't even sure if I'd gotten it. With the sun directly overhead, it was almost impossible to see the viewfinder, so I just pressed the shutter and hoped for the best!

I suddenly realized that breathing might be a nice idea, so I finned hard back to the surface, gasping for breath! There was a lot of whooping and hollering going on at the surface; for many people this was their first ever whale shark sighting. We quickly got back on the boat, and then went through the same slow, frustrating process for the other folks, who eventually got to see it about 10 minutes later. We hoped that we would get another jump, but the shark had obviously decided that it didn't like all the attention.

After about ten minutes waiting for it to reappear, we admitted defeat, much to the disappointment of a couple of guys who'd managed to miss seeing it the first time around.

Unfortunately, that was the only whale shark we managed to jump in with in for the whole two weeks. The NCRD and PAEC guys were even more unlucky. Although the weather was better the second week and we got close to a couple of whale sharks, they didn't really want to come out to play. Apparently, there have been significantly fewer sightings of whale sharks in general in Utila this year, leading to speculation that their migration patterns could be changing. Probably the most galling thing, however, was sitting at Utila airport



Juvenile Drumfish

Photo by Karen Doby

waiting for our homeward flight, listening to a group of other divers talking about the six (yes, *six*!) whale sharks they'd seen the previous day!

I know that some people were more disappointed than others at the lack of whale sharks. For me, whale sharks were always going to be a bonus, and the diving, hospitality, and good company were more than enough to make the trip to Utila worthwhile.

I'd like to thank everyone who made the trip such a success, and particularly the guys from SAA Scuba who gave me a “Distinguished Service Award” in the form of a fossilized shark tooth!



Fun Times for NCRD Divers and Our Friends

Images from Roatan with Lambda Divers

Photos by Ralph Wolf and Karen Doby



You want me to do what?!

Photo by Ralph Wolf



Never mind the mess; you try eating with 1 foot!



You're not the ugliest boy I ever kissed!



Now this is the life!

Photo by Ralph Wolf

Lambda Dive Club in Washington, DC, and Northern California Rainbow Divers converged in April for an incredible week of diving at the Inn of Last Resort in Roatan, one of Honduras' Bay Islands. With easy diving and many new friends, it was everything we'd hoped for, and more!



Who could resist those baby blues?

Photo by Ralph Wolf



Twenty happy divers from NCRD and Lambda Divers at the end of an unforgettable week in Roatan



Someone tell Karen she's blocking my view

Meet Your Dive Buddy: *Maureen McEvoy, NCRD Member Since 1991*

by Dennis Nix

Photos provided by Maureen McEvoy

Buddy Line: Everyone's got a story as to how they came to San Francisco, so let's start with that. How did you arrive in San Francisco?

Maureen: I grew up in a small town in upstate New York. I was really lucky; an art teacher that I was very "fond" of had the kindness and insight to tell me to go to school in San Francisco. I graduated from the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland and never left the Bay Area.

Buddy Line: They teach diving at the College of Arts and Crafts?

Maureen: No, I was a fine arts major, then after college went into sales and marketing.

Buddy Line: But you work as a dive instructor?

Maureen: Actually, I work full-time during the day at the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce. On nights and weekends, I'm in the water, leading trips or teaching diving.

Buddy Line: You're so passionate about diving, why not do it full time?

Maureen: I did do it full time, for two years. What I realized was, it's impossible to make a living doing it, no matter how much you love diving. What I decided to do was to teach classes at nights and on weekends. I also try to arrange classes several times a year for NCRD members. My life's pretty well balanced – I live in a fabulous house on the coast, have a job I love in San Francisco with the Chamber of Commerce, and a part-time job working as a dive instructor. It just doesn't get any better.

Buddy Line: I understand you didn't see the ocean till you were 15, yet now you're a dive instructor? How did that happen?

Maureen: I was bored at work one day and wondered what it would take to do that scuba

diving thing. I got out the Yellow Pages and picked the best looking ad – it was Wallin's Dive Center in San Carlos where I've been ever since. I was certified in 1987 and a few years later, started teaching.

Buddy Line: What are your classes like?

Maureen: That's one of the best parts about diving, seeing the excitement of others as they learn about the ocean and diving. Safety, of course, is number one, but having fun is a close second. I like to take time to make sure that everyone is having a good time and that they're learning to be safe, considerate divers.

Buddy Line: What do you love about diving?

Maureen: In a word, nudibranchs. I discovered a nudibranch in a tide pool one day almost 30 years ago and started teaching myself all about marine biology. I took classes, read books and set out to find out everything I could about our marine critters.

Buddy Line: Nudibranchs?

Maureen: Nudibranch translates to "naked gill", and they're beautiful little shell-less snails. Sometimes they're referred to as "sea slugs". I wrote an article for NCRD's last newsletter about them. My very favorite place to see nudibranchs is right in our own backyard, Monterey.

Buddy Line: How do you feel about being referred to as the club's Critter Queen? :-)

Maureen: Oh, do they call me that? Actually, I prefer "The Mistress of Macrocystis". :-)

Buddy Line: That's a fairly extensive camera rig in the photo. When, why and how did you get into underwater photography?

Maureen: I took up underwater photography only so I could have my own slides for a lecture series I do called "Marine Discovery Adventures". I happily gave it up after I had a substantial collection. I prefer being present in the moment under water and not behind the camera.

Buddy Line: For many avid divers, going "pro" sucks the fun out of diving. Has being an instructor dampened your enthusiasm for diving in any way, and if yes, how have you dealt with it?

Maureen: I love being an instructor. Although it's hard work (and I'm always



Maureen at Point Lobos

saying, "I don't know how much longer I can do this!"), it really energizes me and makes me feel like I'm giving something back to the environment that I care so much about by training divers to care about it too.

Buddy Line: It's obvious that you're passionate about diving; do you have any passion left for anything else?

Maureen: I manage to make time for a few other interests. I'm very involved in educating people on being Green Citizens. I do a quarterly forum through the Chamber of Commerce for businesses called "Saving Green by Going Green". I live on the coast in Moss Beach overlooking Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. Watching flocks of pelicans gliding by my window in the morning gives me a whole different perspective on life, keeping me grounded and helping me remember that we're all connected to a much bigger picture than just our jobs and our cars. I love being at home and riding my bike when I don't have to drive anywhere. I also love having dinner parties at my home and just relaxing with friends when I finally have some "down" time.

Buddy Line: Thanks, Maureen.



Our Mistress of Macrocystis on the prowl for nudies



Dear Dive Nerd



Ever had a dive-related question but didn't know whom to ask? One of our long-time, seasoned divers and divemasters extraordinaire is now available to help! No question is too silly or difficult for our dive nerd. Give it a try! All questions may be sent to DiveNerd@rainbowdivers.org

I want to buy a dive light but it's confusing to compare models across different manufacturers because they all report beam strength in different units: one uses lumens, another candlepower, wattage, etc. What are these and how do I compare them to find the brightest light?

It gets worse! With the new LED and HID lamps, color temperature comes into play. Also, you have to consider the divergence angle of the beam. Do you want a flood light or a spot light? Finally, even if manufacturers were to use the same units, they may have measured differently! Do they report the divergence angle in the air or in water? Did

the engineers take careful measurements, or did marketing guys just make up some numbers?

Lumens and candlepower take physiological factors into account. They both weigh the spectral distribution of the lamp against the sensitivity of the eye before averaging over wavelength. Lumens is the total light output, while candlepower is the peak brightness at the center of the beam. For example, if you refocus your light from flood to spot light, lumens doesn't change, but candlepower goes way up.

Watts is a measurement of physical power. It doesn't depend on focus or human factors. With lasers, the energy of the lights is reported honestly in watts; for example, 25 watts of light focused to a small area will cut steel! With light bulbs, though, people cheat and measure the electrical power going into the bulb. Ordinary light bulbs are not very efficient at turning electricity into light. That's why a 25-watt bulb will barely light up the inside of your fridge. Unless you know the efficiency of the bulb, you can't compare electrical watts to lumens.

Was that helpful? For most divers, I'm guessing it wasn't.

If you're shopping online, you can use the numbers to compare models by the same manufacturer, but that's about it. You are much better off bringing some fresh batteries with you to a dive shop and asking if they will let you try out a couple

of lights side by side. If you dive in cold water, wear your gloves when you try them out.

Here are a few low-tech reasons a light might get dimmer over time:

1. weak batteries. (duh!)
2. Scratches or smears on the plastic lens/window. (glass is better)
3. Scratches or smears on the LED lenses.
4. Corrosion on the switch or battery contacts.
5. Corrosion, scratches or smears on the reflector. This can have a surprisingly big effect!
6. Evaporation of the lamp filament onto the inside of the bulb. This looks like a black smoke stain inside the light bulb.

When you're comparison shopping for a light, you should also look at how the light is made. How much do replacement bulbs cost? Do you get a new reflector when you buy a new bulb? What is the estimated battery life?

Also, can you use rechargeable batteries? Is the window glass or plastic? Is the light fixed focus or adjustable? Do the water-tight seals look reliable to you?

Also, open the light up and look at the battery and switch contacts. Are they bare brass or copper? Those will work great for a while, but they'll corrode and become flaky over time. It's better if they are nickel-plated, so your light will stay bright and reliable even after a few years of use.



When comparing underwater dive lights from different manufacturers, try them out with fresh batteries, side-by-side, at your local dive shop.

For what it's worth, it's been my experience that having the brightest light on the boat doesn't make you very popular. If everything around you is lit up like a nuclear power plant, much of the nocturnal sea life and even other divers will see you coming and slip away, before you even knew they were there.

Sometimes the cheapest and easiest way to make your light brighter is to just hold it closer to the thing you're looking at. I use two AA cell spotting lights on my camera, and they double as my dive light. My eyes adjust in a few minutes. Sometimes, if there's a full moon and if I know the dive site, I've even been known to turn my lights off and dive by the moonlight (make sure you have a tank light and your buddy knows the plan before you try this.)

Oh yeah. Never, *ever*, buy an underwater headlamp. It may seem like a great idea, but it's impossible to avoid blinding your buddy.

In my certification class, we were taught to dive with a snorkel, but I find that many divers don't use them. Was this just a gimmick to sell me more gear?

Beginning divers typically use air more quickly than experienced divers. They also don't have the real-world experience to reliably finish their dive and get back to the boat or shore with 500 PSI. That makes a snorkel both a valuable tool and a cheap piece of insurance. At the start of the dive, you can snorkel around to get oriented and just plain relax without using canned air. If you do mess up the dive plan or navigation, it can make a long surface swim at the end of the dive much more pleasant. In rough seas, an experienced diver without a snorkel might swallow some water waiting for the boat. An inexperienced diver in the same conditions might get really stressed. In the worst case, they might even panic, forget their basic scuba skills and drown.

I wouldn't call the snorkel a sales trick, mainly because a basic snorkel is really quite cheap. If your snorkel cost as much as your fins and looks more like a Hummer than a bent piece of pipe, then you've been had!

Slightly experienced divers tend to give snorkels a bit of attitude: "I never use it", "It just catches the kelp", "I always come back with at least 500 PSI", "It twists up my mask strap", "They're just for beginners", etc.. Your dive nerd admits to having been a passionate snorkel-hater for most of my second 100 dives.

These days, I keep a snorkel folded up in my BC pocket. I've never used it, but it doesn't get in the way, catch kelp or twist my mask strap now. I figure in any situation where I would really need it, I'll have plenty of time at the surface to attach the snorkel just the way I like it before my tank is empty.

Stuff happens, and my particular BC is *not* a Coast Guard-rated life preserver. It's designed to hold me comfortably *face down* in the water. If I ever get seriously carried away by a current or get left behind by a boat, I'd like the option of sleeping or at least relaxing on the surface for a few hours, without having to worry about swallowing water or drowning.

Are split fins better than flippers?

On a bicycle, is first gear "better" than second? I've tried split fins. To me they seem like I'm just kicking in a lower gear. There's less resistance for each kick, but you have to kick more to get where you are going. They're not a magic bullet, but I can see some advantages as well as disadvantages.

The pros are that you can move your legs around easier, so maybe it's easier to change your position or direction. Also, bicyclists are told that a cadence of 80 to 100 RPM is optimal. When my 39-year-old legs are kicking in traditional fins, I'm doing maybe 20 kick cycles a minute,

probably too slow to be optimal. Perhaps if I used split fins and kicked faster with less resistance, I could do the same work without cramping as often?

The cons that I see are that you push the same amount of water around with your thighs, for a smaller bit of push from the fins in each kick cycle. They might be less efficient for this reason. Also, if you wear ankle weights to stay trim in cold



water, split fins will make you waste more power just throwing those weights around.

Diving isn't really about racing and performance, though. It's more about strolling through the woods to see what's out there than about running a marathon.

When I go for a nature walk, any old sneakers will do. Maybe thinking too much about footwear misses the point of going for the walk in the first place? 



General Meetings

Aug. 17: Sgt. Dan Lopez

Sep. 21: Cayman Diving

New Location!

Castro Community
Meeting Room, 2nd Floor
501 Castro Street, SF.
@ 18th Street

Getting There

The Muni Metro lines J, K, L, and M, the F streetcar, and Muni bus lines 24, 33, 35, and 37 all serve the Castro neighborhood. Also, take BART to SF Civic Center, then transfer to Muni Metro or the F streetcar.

Calendar

Please see details at
<http://www.rainbowdivers.org/calendar.php>

San Francisco Bay	Monterey Bay	Far Away
<p>Aug. 11-13 Class/Pool Sessions Wallins Dive Center San Carlos, CA. SSI Open Water Class</p> <p>Aug. 17 General Meeting Meet Sgt. Dan Lopez SFPD Marine Division Castro Community Meeting Room, 2nd Floor</p> <p>Sep. 21 General Meeting Marty Hogan presents "Cayman Islands: Underwater Wonderland After the Boycott" Castro Community Meeting Room, 2nd Floor</p> <p>Oct. 19 General Meeting Farallones Marine Sanctuary Association Castro Community Meeting Room, 2nd Floor</p>	<p>Aug. 5 Boat Dive Sanctuary Charter Monterey, CA.</p> <p>Aug. 6 Shore Dive Monastery Beach Monterey, CA.</p> <p>Aug. 19-20 Class/Ocean Sessions SSI Open Water Class</p> <p>Sep. 9 Shore Dive Scenic Drive Carmel, CA.</p> <p>Sep. 10 Boat Dive, 8am Sanctuary Charter Monterey, CA.</p> <p>Sep. 16 Shore Dive Pre-Vision Dive & Social Point Lobos, CA.</p> <p>Sep. 17 Shore Dive Rusty Diver Day & Social Breakwater Pier, Monterey, CA.</p> <p>Oct. 7 Boat Dive (tentative) Sanctuary Charter Monterey, CA.</p>	<p>July 28 to Aug. 4, 2006 Wakatobi Dive Resort Sulawesi, Indonesia</p> <p>August 26-27, 2006 Salt Point & Fort Ross Sonoma Coast, CA.</p> <p>September 16-23, 2006 DFL @ Anse Chastanet St. Lucia, BVI, Caribbean</p> <p>November 3-5, 2006 Annual Vision Liveaboard No. Channel Islands, CA. includes Wreck Diving</p> <p>February 16-23, 2007 Molokini Crater & Kihei Coast with Mike Severns Diving Maui, Hawaii</p> <p>March 23 to April 2, 2007 Ocean Rover Liveaboard Thailand and Myanmar</p>



Northern California Rainbow Divers

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