



The Newsletter of the Northern California Rainbow Divers (NCRD)

# Buddy Line

February, 2007

## *Diving for Life Success! Vote on February 13 Rainbow Divers to Donate \$10,328 to Local Charities*

*by Kelly Thiemann*

Twenty-one Northern California Rainbow Divers (NCRD) members attended the fifteenth annual Diving For Life Scuba Jamboree at Anse Chastanet in St. Lucia this past September, 2006. One hundred forty-one LGBT divers from gay dive clubs around the world came to dive, party and raise funds for local health-related charities. The monies raised are allocated back to participating dive groups on a pro-rata basis. The total amount raised was \$60,000 through a combination of live and silent auctions and a raffle. Locally donated dive items from Pinnacles Dive Center (Novato), Captain Aqua's (Dublin) and Wallin's (San Carlos) were used to raise funds. NCRD will receive \$10,328 to distribute to charities.

our communities. You may already know about the good work that some of these organizations do, and it will be *your* job to nominate a group that should receive our support.

At our February 13<sup>th</sup> club meeting, nominations will be accepted from NCRD members. Short presentations can be made by either sponsoring club members or representatives of the nominated groups. After the group representatives depart, the members present will decide whether to grant all of the funds to one charity or to split it among several groups. Voting is always hard, as these are all worthy groups and any contribution will make a significant impact on their budgets and activities.



Thanks to NCRD member **Gary Morgret**, a vibrantly colorful school of rainbow fish now adorns the Diving For Life logo.  
*Banner ©DFL, printed with permission.*

Now comes the fun part, choosing which charities will be recipients of the funds. Last year's recipients include: Healing Waters, Lyon-Martin Clinic, Gay Men's Health Collective of the Berkeley Free Clinic, Asian and Pacific Islander Wellness Center and Magnet. While delivering the checks to Healing Waters and Asian Pacific Wellness Center, I was given an in-depth tour of both facilities by their respective Executive Directors. I came away with new respect for the work that our non-profit partners do in

Please consider sharing information about your favorite health-related local non-profit with your fellow members. Nominated groups must be 501(c)(3) organizations and serve the health needs of lesbians and/or gay men.

Even if you don't have a group to nominate, please come to vote! Let's celebrate giving something back to our community while having fun times with our fellow divers.



## **Donating to Charity: Here's How It Works!**

*by Doug McGrath*

- NCRD members contact eligible 501(c)(3) charities serving the LGBT community.
- If a charity is interested, the nominating NCRD member should contact **Kelly Thiemann** by February 5 to get on the nomination agenda.
- At our February 13 general meeting, each charity will make a 10-minute presentation describing what they do and how they would use the funds.
- After the presentations, charity reps are excused, and NCRD members present at the meeting will choose one or more recipients and the award amounts.
- The selected recipients will be notified and must provide DFL with appropriate documentation (such as tax exempt letter, etc.).
- DFL will send the funds directly to the recipients.
- At our next meeting, NCRD will have a public presentation award.
- For more information, please contact Kelly Thiemann, our DFL Liaison, at [dfi@rainbowdivers.org](mailto:dfi@rainbowdivers.org).

## Making Those 2007 Dive Resolutions

by Peg Stone

OK, you've made the usual New Year's resolutions: lose "x" pounds, get more sleep, go to the gym more, maybe even get a personal trainer, file those back taxes, get a girl/boyfriend or drop the one(s) you have, buy or sell a house, whatever.

What's missing? How about a resolution that will be easy to do and feel good to accomplish? How about a resolution about *diving*?

1. You might just resolve to get back in the water.
2. If you dive a lot, make a resolution to do *one* thing to increase the safety of your diving this year. Can't think of anything? How about real buddy checks this year (oh yeah, that).
3. If you are a warm-water junky, you might commit to trying cold-water diving (at least tepid-water diving: think Hawaii or San Diego or the Channel Islands).
4. There's always that next level of training or a refresher course. Decide to work your way up through Rescue Training, doing yourself and your buddy a favor.
5. And how about First Aid, CPR, and Oxygen

Administration? If you have taken these courses, you almost certainly need a refresher. If you haven't gotten certified in these areas, 2007 is a great year to do it.

6. Consider giving back to the club: you could find a speaker for a meeting (who would *you* like to hear from?); you could help out with the pride booth or organize a contingent to march in the pride parade; you could write an article for the newsletter; you could organize a local trip or even one to an exotic locale; help with the BBQ or holiday party; you could recruit a few new members (the proverbial toaster oven always awaits the good recruiter!). You don't have to give up your life to help, take on just one thing this year. I promise — it will feel great!
7. Plan a dive vacation: sign up for an NCRD trip or just run off with friends to the nearest warm-water spot or a long weekend up the coast.
8. Get on an advocacy list for ocean conservation issues. The Ocean Conservancy, the Marine Mammal Center, the Farallon Marine Sanctuary Association, REEF, CORAL, and many others offer easy ways to send email comments on proposed policy issues affecting the oceans (and they can always use money).
9. Invite someone in the club that you like but don't know too well to dinner or to dive with you. Make a friend!
10. Now add your own ideas to this list, and hop on it! Make this year the Year of Diving! Oh, and happy 2007!

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

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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.



## Odd Entry in NCRD's Monthly Photo Contest

*For December, 2006*

In December, our very own Chicken of the Sea was diving in Homosassa Springs, Florida, and snorkeling with manatees when one day she spotted this unusual two-headed, red-bellied sea turtle. Although the Chicken has been scolded on numerous occasions that club mascots are ineligible for entering NCRD's monthly contest, this oddity of nature does warrant some acknowledgement of Chicken's unique find. Of this image taken with a Sony V3 with internal strobe, Chicken squawks, "See? Even I can peck a point-and shoot camera! There's no excuse for anyone not to enter NCRD's photo contest. Let's see 'em, divers, send us your shots!"

February 5 and March 5 are the deadlines for submitting January and February, 2007, photo contest entries, respectively. Full details are available online at the NCRD website:  [www.rainbowdivers.org/photocontest.php](http://www.rainbowdivers.org/photocontest.php)



DECEMBER ENTRY: Two-Headed Red-Bellied Sea Turtle

Photo by Chicken of the Sea

## 10 Best Reasons to Get in the Water in 2007

by Peg Stone

1. You can't hear any news stories while you are underwater.
2. Overfishing and species depletion continues apace — better see the underwater world while it's still there.
3. Controlled, double-blind studies have found that diving shoots endorphins to unequalled levels. If you have given up drinking or your antidepressant, this is the place to go to get high!
4. Elevator riding is much more interesting when you can practice ear clearing while dropping from the 31<sup>st</sup> floor to the street, while contemplating what a 310-foot deep dive would be like.
5. Diving puts life into perspective: life is short, we are specks in the universe whirling through the galaxy on one crazy, beautiful ball of a planet.
6. You never run out of cocktail conversation if you've just been on a dive.
7. You become the coolest person in the gym when you're working out to stay in shape for diving.
8. The more you dive, the better a diver you are.
9. All the cutest queers dive, and you get to hang out with them.
10. There's no TV underwater, no cell phones, no pagers, no PDAs, and no relatives. 

### *It's Official!* DFL Announces 2007 Location

Banana Beach Resort, a tranquil getaway on the small, beautiful island of Ambergris Caye off the coast of Belize, has been declared as the site for the 16th Annual Diving For Life Jamboree, to be held from September 29 through October 6, 2007. Check out the resort at <http://bananabeach.com/>

Dive operations in Belize will be hosted by Ambergris Divers. More information is online at [www.ambergrisdivers.com](http://www.ambergrisdivers.com)

Registration info for Diving For Life is posted on the DFL website at [www.divingforlife.org](http://www.divingforlife.org)

## Dancing with Mermaids

*An interview with Karen Casella*

**BL:** How exciting! You went to Crystal River, Florida, and got to swim with West Indian manatees.

**KC:** Yes, it was my first experience with them and just incredible! Of all the creatures in the sea, they've become one of my favorites. They're interesting, very different from how I'd imagined they would be.

**BL:** Really? How so?

**KC:** Well, for one thing, they're enormous. I thought they would be more about the size of a seal or sea lion, but they're actually much larger than that. The adults grow up to 13 feet long and weigh as much as 3,500 pounds. Another thing, I had *no* idea they'd be so hairy all over their bodies!

**BL:** Hmmm, makes me wonder how they ever got dubbed as "mermaids"?

**KC:** Well, they sort of *look* like mermaids, if you like bald, full-figured gals with wrinkly skin, wiry whiskers and no teeth! But if you squint your eyes, you can see how they might once have been mistaken as half woman, half fish. The top half has a head and two "arms", and the back half has a tail like a fish. One story goes that Christopher Columbus' men saw them when they sailed through offshore Florida. They'd probably had a little too much to drink, or maybe they'd just been at sea a bit too long, but they thought they saw beautiful women

swimming under the water when it was probably manatees they were looking at.

**BL:** Manatees don't have teeth?

**KC:** They do, but only molars in the back where you can't see them. They don't have front teeth. Instead, they have prehensile lips with sharp pads lining the inside.

**BL:** Prehensile? Explain, please.

**KC:** Although they are marine mammals, manatees are related to elephants. In the same way that elephants are able to use the ends of their trunks to pick things up, manatees use their lips to grab onto things like plants or even camera lenses.

**BL:** What do manatees eat?

**KC:** You'd like them — they're fellow vegetarians, herbivores in fact. They eat sea grasses and other aquatic plants that grow on the floors of the rivers and fresh water springs. They eat constantly, up to 100 pounds a day, because their foods are very low in calories. They also seem to love sweet potatoes, carrots and cabbage, which they're fed in captivity in wildlife parks. Florida Fish and Wildlife Department regulations disallow giving the wild manatees food or water.

**BL:** Water? That's interesting. What are some other interaction regulations?

**KC:** You can't approach the manatees; you have to let them come to you. Approaching them is bad and considered "pursuit". You can touch them but only



Two young'uns, face to face Photo by Karen Doby



Manatee Dental Floss

Photo by Karen Doby

with one hand at a time, as two hands on a manatee is considered "riding" them. You can't disrupt them while they are sleeping or mating, and you can't enter their sanctuaries. SCUBA isn't permitted.

**BL:** Was it difficult to get close to them?

**KC:** Not at all! They're very curious. Almost immediately when you get in the water, they come over to investigate their new visitor. It was a little disconcerting at first because I wasn't expecting them to be so large or to have so many of them crowding around me at once. They were like big puppies who kept following me wherever I went and rubbing their bodies up against me and each other. Not touching them was *not* an option! They liked being scratched, especially behind their armpits and on their bellies. They'd even roll over onto their backs to get stroked on their chests, sometimes twirling slowly in place doing a funny little dance. It was a hoot! They don't like being touched on their face or head, though. The other thing, if they don't want anything to do with you, they swim away, maybe as fast as 30 mph, or go into sanctuaries where people aren't allowed.

**BL:** What is manatee skin like?

**KC:** Gray, thick, rough. Many of the animals have barnacles or thick patches of algae growing on their backs. These come off, though, as they shed their skin. One of the things that struck me is how

*(continued on page 5)*

## Notes from the Board

by *Ralph Wolf*

Now that the holiday rush is over it's time to settle into the new year. The new Board is getting organized and looking ahead to 2007 and 2008!

First, a big welcome to our new Board members: **Chris Whitney** and **Charles Binkley!** **Feney Matthews**, **David Zippin**, **Kelly Thiemann** and I signed up for another lap, while long-time board members **Gary Morgret** and **Dennis Nix** are stepping down.

On behalf of everyone on the Board and in the club, I'd like to thank Gary and Dennis for their many years of active membership and service to the club. You've each done far more than your share of the work to keep the club strong as trip leaders, Board members, and in many other large and small roles. The club needs more people like you! We

hope you'll continue to be active, relax and enjoy membership in the club you've helped build.

I seem to have become President, and I asked Feney to take the title of Vice President so she can keep me honest and out of trouble. As Secretary, Kelly Thiemann will keep the rest of the volunteers honest by jotting down our commitments and reminding us of them. Our Treasurer, David Zippin, will hold the most important job: keeping an eye on expenses, reviewing trip financials and making sure the money comes and goes as it ought to.

Our first volunteers' meeting will be in Palo Alto on Sunday, Jan 21<sup>st</sup>. Everyone who would like to help out is welcome. We'll be figuring out how to make better

use of technology, considering some additional trips and deciding how to make club meetings more interesting and relevant for our members. If you'd like to join us or just share your thoughts, please email [president@rainbowdivers.org](mailto:president@rainbowdivers.org). Your opinion matters!

There will be no general club meeting in January. The planning for it just fell through the cracks; that's the nature of volunteer organizations. We'll pick things up in February with DFL donations.

Let's go diving!



*(continued from page 4)*

loose and flabby their skin is. Also, it's common to see scars all over their bodies.

**BL:** Scars?

**KC:** From long, deep wounds from boat propellers. This is one reason why some environmentalists want to ban touching the manatees altogether. Manatees like people and associate people with boats. In Crystal River, the boats sit high on the water on pontoons and have very small propellers since they must motor only at idle speeds with no wakes. But manatees are migratory, and once they leave protected waters, boat propellers can be very large. Most of the damage we see on the Florida manatees wasn't done in Florida, rather when they left and went somewhere else. Most manatee deaths are attributed to run-ins with boats.

**BL:** Where else do they go?

**KC:** Manatees can't live in water colder than 68°F, so in winter they migrate to the warm, shallow waters of the Florida springs and rivers where the water is 72°F year-round. But in summer, they're found

as far west as Louisiana, as far north as Virginia, and as far south as Brazil.

**BL:** Did you see any babies?

**KC:** Oh yes, lots of mothers with babies. The babies were the most playful, and the mothers were the largest of the animals. A few times, we saw mating activity at the surface at a distance from the boat. Manatees don't mate for life. Females begin mating around 7-9 years of age. The males, who don't begin mating until they're about 9 years old, go off and leave the mother to raise their baby by herself. Cows give birth to one calf every 2 years.

**BL:** Was anything particularly charming about the manatees?

**KC:** So many things! Besides being incredibly docile and gentle, they'd grab onto the anchor rope to floss their teeth. They would hang out there for as long as the boat stayed, chewing and working the rope in their mouths. It was pretty comical and very cute! At one point, a gaggle of them had lodged their flippers in the rungs of the boat's ladder, perching themselves halfway out of the water, so that swimmers couldn't get into the boat.



Manatee Photo by Karen Doby

**BL:** I can see how they might get hurt if they're that attracted to boats and people.

**KC:** Yes, although scientists now report that manatee populations have grown sufficiently to maybe take them off the endangered species list. But it's a two-edged sword. On one hand, it's great that the manatee populations are recovering. But there's concern now that manatees are outgrowing their habitat and won't be able to find enough food in warm, protected areas.

**BL:** Thanks, Karen.



## Northern California Rainbow Divers' Annual Holiday Party a Blast!

by Peg Stone

On December 21, the temporary Steinhart Aquarium flung its doors wide to welcome forty Rainbow Divers to our annual holiday bash. Early arrivals headed directly to the aquarium section (was it the fish or the fact that the bar was set up there that drew them into those winding passage ways?), toured the dinosaur exhibit and stood entranced by the display of brightly patterned



Photo by Sharon Ponder

tropical fish. Backed by the music of a live band and a full cocktail bar (the usual third Thursday evening offerings of the Aquarium), the party got off to a great start.

The aquarium staff gave us a private tour of the coral growing facility, where hot full-spectrum floodlights and calcium-charged water prompt the coral polyps into overdrive, producing coral for the large displays of the new aquarium (opening in



Photo by Sharon Ponder



Photo by Sharon Ponder

late 2008 back in Golden Gate Park). A great food spread (pulled together at the last minute by **Ed Pon** and myself) and, let us say, supplemental beverages (state liquor laws forbid any additional alcohol to be provided by the party planner – me – and I am a very, very law-abiding citizen), led to a festive and lively atmosphere in our private meeting room. The room itself was worth the price of admission (actually, the club paid the admission fees for NCRD divers and their friends), filled with wooden cases of old microscopes and curios, with a stuffed Cayman alligator and turtle, among other interesting items, arranged on the walls. Photos from the club's 2006 trips played on the screen behind the food spread.

With a style and presence that would have left even Catherine the Great dumb with admiration, **Feney Matthews** as club President seized the microphone and podium and issued a variety of Executive Orders and Proclamations, claiming an imperial right to do as she wished, including granting a lovely "best newly certified diver"



Photo by Sharon Ponder

award to her girlfriend, **Robin Baker**. The awards to club volunteers, including

**Ralph Wolf, Peg Stone, and Karen Doby**, inspired a spirited competition for prized spots on the Board and as worker bees in the club

(see article on

page 7). The party also featured a huge array of door prizes: ten VIP passes to the aquarium, donated by the aquarium; an Oceanic hat and backpack, also donated by the aquarium; and three books related to diving, the most coveted being a large-format book on the best 60 dive spots in the world.



Photo by Sharon Ponder

All those attending received astonishingly beautiful Rainbow Divers calendars for 2007 (more are available for sale at \$10 each, and I bought 5 to wow friends and relations). Big thanks to Ralph and Karen for producing these beauties while living through every glitch known to humankind in laying out and printing the calendars (Ralph can now give you a complete rundown on trade-offs between recycled and OEM cartridges for color laser printers).

The club "meeting" wound down as stuffed and sated Rainbow Divers celebrated the year ahead. Trips to

Maui, Thailand, the Galapagos and the Channel Islands are all in the offing, and



(continued on page 7) Photo by Sharon Ponder

## New Slate Seizes NCRD Board Spots!

by Peg Stone

In a bloodless coup, a strong group of divers seized control of the NCRD Board at the December holiday party. Fighting back a mad rush, **Ralph Wolf** daintily accepted the President position for 2007, following **Feney Matthews'** class act in 2006. Feney has stepped aside to become Vice President (a new position); **Kelly Thiemann** takes on the Secretary position; and **David Zippin** will become Treasurer, supplanting Ralph. **Charles Binkley** and **Chris Whitney** are our new Board members at large.

A number of other club members, unable to ascend

to the peaks of "officerdom", will carry out the *real* work of the organization.

**Tim Shannon** is taking over local dive planning (and has already been doing a great job at this), and **Peg Stone** will become non-local trip guru (leaving the program planning spot); **Karen Doby** will continue to produce those fantastic newsletters; **Chris Whitney** will continue to tidily record all the membership comings and goings; and **Doug McGrath** will continue to serve as webmaster. **Sharon Ponder** will take over as program planner. Several members offered to help out as needed for special projects.

However, if power, glory, and licking stamps attracts you, don't despair. There is always room for more people to get involved. Don't be shy, just call a Board member or volunteer and you too can have fun doing as well as diving! How

about volunteering to research and arrange for new caps and T-shirts for the club? How about leading the planning or staffing for the club's presence at the Pride parades (San Francisco or San Jose)? You could produce the calendar for next year. Or organize a trip to some sweet dive spot you want to go to. Offer to cover for the program planner or the local dive planner if they can't make it to one of the events they've arranged. Help with the cooking at the summer BBQ, or organize the holiday party. See, there's tons of stuff to do.

If your life just doesn't have room for helping out the club, here's one thing you can do: thank the people who *are* pulling the oars that move the club forward. If you bump into them on a dive trip or at a meeting, speak up. Give them a hug and a pat on the back. They'll appreciate it! 

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ideas flew about other trips for 2007 and 2008. Suggestions to hold club meetings quarterly and on weekends were made, and the possibility of the ever-lurking survey of club members raised its head yet once again.

At last we waved farewell to the skeleton of the blue whale in the lobby, gave a nod to the looming dinosaurs, and

boogied on out into the December rain, happy to have seen fish and friends once again. Stay tuned to the NCRD website ([www.rainbowdivers.org](http://www.rainbowdivers.org)) and the buddy

e-list for information on club meetings, special events and trips for 2007. If you

missed this party, you may have a chance to catch the venue and the good times next December! 



Photo by Sharon Ponder



Photo by Sharon Ponder



Photo by Ed Bierman

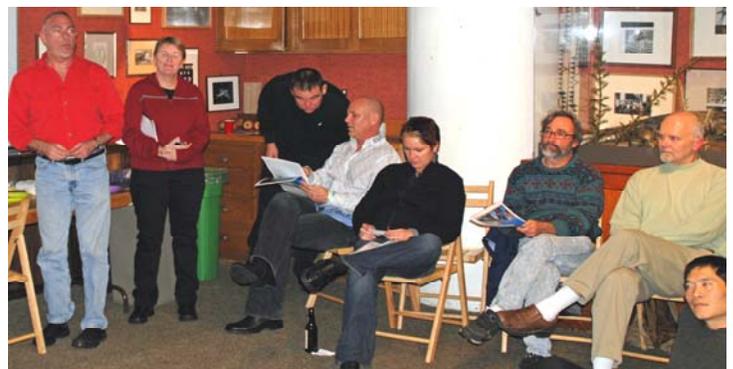


Photo by Ed Bierman

## Galapagos Islands: Trip Filling Up Fast

If you've been thinking about diving with the Northern California Rainbow Divers (NCRD) in the Galapagos Islands in July and August, 2007, but haven't gotten around to signing up, you shouldn't wait too much longer. This mid-2007 trip is selling out.

If you'd like to join this wonderful adventure, you need to act fast; only **one open space is available** as of this writing! A wait list will be available once the trip fills, for an off-chance to go should a registered diver drop out. For more info, please send email to [galapagos@rainbowdivers.org](mailto:galapagos@rainbowdivers.org)



## In Memory of Nancy Parker Davidson

by Karen Doby

It is with sadness that I report the passing of Nancy Parker Davidson who, along with her partner Linda, fell victim to a road rage incident on New Year's eve.

I met Parker last April during NCRD's joint trip with Lambda Divers in Roatan. She was my last-minute roommate, asking with eagerness if I would permit her to share my single room as there was no other space at the Inn. She was thrilled to be on the trip so that she could dive with her brother, Bob.

Parker, a respected psychologist who worked with homeless people, would often



hike at dawn and take pictures of animals as the sun rose in the sky. Once, I

awoke to her screeches of delight when an iguana graced a tree limb outside our room.

Those of us on the dive trip remember her as warm and compassionate. Parker was fun to talk with and easily integrated herself into the circle of divers. She was also excited to have found new love recently and delighted in showing Linda's picture between dives.

Lambda Divers established a memorial fund in Parker and Linda's names to benefit health care for the homeless. To contribute, please contact [editor@rainbowdivers.org](mailto:editor@rainbowdivers.org) for details.



Northern California Rainbow Divers

## COCOS ISLAND

March 19 – April 1, 2008

11-day Liveboard on the *Undersea Hunter*

NCRD members: US\$3,500 (includes marine park fees)

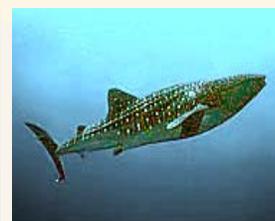
Cocos Island, a tropical island lying over 340 miles offshore of Costa Rica's Pacific coast, is a paradise of flora and fauna existing nowhere else on the planet. It is the only island in the tropical eastern Pacific with a humid tropical forest. It is also the first point of contact with the northern equatorial counter-currents, creating an underwater wonderland famous for the biological diversity in the surrounding marine ecosystem and world renowned for huge schools of pelagics: hammerheads, tuna, dolphins, whale sharks, and rays. Costa Rica's Cocos Island National Park was declared a World Heritage Site in 1997 in recognition of its critical habitats for marine wildlife, especially for large pelagic species.



Hammerhead Sharks



Giant Manta Ray



Whale Shark

The waters of Cocos Island thrive with hammerheads and white tip sharks, marbled stingrays approaching 6' in diameter, manta rays up to 12' across, bottlenose dolphins, giant moray eels and the occasional whale shark. Additionally, we will see Moorish Idols, large schools of jacks and tuna, Creole fish, lobsters, octopus and other various reef life. Silky sharks, silver tips, sailfish, marlin, and green turtles are also in the area. The key word in describing Cocos Island diving is *action!* Divers can expect some of the best big-animal encounters of your lives!

We'll enjoy 3-4 boat dives daily over 7 full dive days, dive guide and naturalist services, 3 delicious meals prepared fresh onboard daily, shore excursions as well as the unforgettable company of fun-loving, safety-minded LGBT divers.

Space is limited to 14 divers. This is a rare opportunity to get an all-LGBT liveboard at a highly coveted dive destination. Checks and credit cards are accepted, and an installment payment plan is available (see club website for terms and details).

Questions? Email the trip leader at [cocos@rainbowdivers.org](mailto:cocos@rainbowdivers.org)



**Reservations:** [http://www.rainbowdivers.org/trips\\_cocos.php](http://www.rainbowdivers.org/trips_cocos.php)

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## 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](mailto:DiveNerd@rainbowdivers.org)

### ***Is it uncool to wear your PADI "divemaster" cap on a dive outing?***

No. But keep in mind that you may raise people's expectations of you and thus accept a greater liability risk if you go advertising that you are a DM. One thing real divemasters never say is "Don't worry, I'm a DM; I'll make sure nothing happens to you."

I used to wear mine when I was actively DM'ing classes to say, "Hey, I'm your go-to guy if you have a question."

At a club shore dive, I'll still look after other divers when I can, but I don't promise anything and I do it discretely. I don't want any diver, except my dive buddy, relying on me!

Divers need to rely on themselves and make their own choices about who their role models are. Being too eager to show off your divemaster card might interfere with that.

### ***Why do I see so many people using steel tanks in Monterey, but almost everyone uses aluminum in warm water? I've heard aluminum tanks become more buoyant at the end of the dive than steel... is that the reason?***

First of all, let's get one thing clear: the weight change of a scuba tank during a dive depends *only* on the amount of air you let out of the tank during the dive. The difference between a full and empty aluminum-80 tank is *exactly* the same as the difference between full and empty steel-80 tanks.

80 cubic feet of air weighs about six pounds, so if you start at 3000 PSI, your tank will be five pounds lighter when you are at 500 PSI. This is true for any 80 cubic-foot tank, in warm or cold water, in fresh water or salt water, even on land.

This myth about aluminum tanks changing more came about because a typical aluminum tank will go from two pounds negative to three pounds positive in the course of a dive, while a steel tank will change from nine pounds negative to four pounds negative. Both became five pounds lighter, but if your BC is too loose, the aluminum-80 will start to drift away from you at the end of the dive and might *appear* like it's pulling you up more.

If that happens, as seen in this photo, the problem is *not* your tank. In addition



to being over-weighted, this poor student was given a rental BC that is 3 sizes

too big for him! He needs to fix his BC before diving again.

So, what *is* the difference between steel and aluminum, and what does it have to do with cold water? Steel tanks have a few benefits over aluminum ones.

They are often fitted with high-pressure DIN valves, which allow you to stuff 3500 PSI into the tank instead of just 3000 PSI. A high-pressure steel tank with 100 cubic feet of air looks a lot like an 80 cubic-foot aluminum tank but carries nearly 30% more breathable air.

A steel tank typically weighs four pounds less out of the water than an aluminum tank, while also weighing seven pounds more in the water! So, if you take seven pounds off your weight belt to make your steel tank setup just as buoyant as the aluminum one, the total rig will weigh 11 pounds less in air. That's a big difference if you're walking on sand or climbing stairs at the end of a dive!

It sounds too good to be true, but it works because steel is both stronger and

denser than aluminum. Because it's stronger, the volume of metal needed to make a steel bottle is much lower. As a result, it displaces less water and is less buoyant.

The downside of steel tanks is the cost. An aluminum-80 runs about \$145, while a steel-80 costs \$270 ([www.leisurepro.com](http://www.leisurepro.com)).

Some people worry about rust in steel tanks, but aluminum will corrode too; they just call it "scale." Steel tanks are galvanized to slow down corrosion, but salt water will do in any tank eventually.

The real issue is tank failure. Tanks have a burst disk to release the air safely if there's a dangerous over-pressure. In addition, they must be visually inspected annually and hydrostatically tested every 5 years, to catch failing tanks before they go "boom". Still on rare occasions, tanks will fail while being filled. Some older aluminum tanks were made out of an alloy that got brittle with repeated load and unload cycles. Every exploding tank story I could find online was about an old aluminum tank.

No matter what your tank is made of, you can extend its life by only filling it with clean, dry gas from a reputable shop. Don't let it run empty, and rinse it with fresh water before storing it. If you do that, any tank should last ten years and thousands of dives.



# General Meetings

January 21  
February 13

## Meeting 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><b>Jan. 21</b> <i>Volunteers Meeting</i> Palo Alto, CA.</p> <p><b>Feb. 13</b> <i>General Meeting</i> 501 Castro Street, SF Castro Community Meeting Room, 2nd Floor</p> <p><b>Mar. TBD</b> <i>General Meeting</i> 501 Castro Street, SF Castro Community Meeting Room, 2nd Floor</p> <p><b>Jun. 8-10</b> <i>San José Pride</i></p> <p><b>Jun. 23-24</b> <i>San Francisco Pride</i></p> <p><b>Jul. 22</b> <i>NCRD BBQ &amp; Swap Meet</i></p>	<p><b>Jan. 28</b> <b>Boat Dives</b> <i>Cypress Sea</i> charter Monterey, CA</p> <p><b>Feb. 3</b> <b>Shore Dives</b> <i>MacAbee Beach</i> Monterey, CA</p> <p><b>Feb. 3</b> <b>Night / Shore Dive</b> <i>Pipeline (Breakwater)</i> Monterey, CA</p> <p><b>Feb. 4</b> <b>Boat Dives</b> <i>Sanctuary</i> charter Monterey, CA</p> <p><b>Mar. 3</b> <b>Shore Dives</b> <i>Otter Cove</i> Pacific Grove, CA</p> <p><b>Mar. 3</b> <b>Night / Shore Dive</b> <i>Breakwater Pier</i> Monterey, CA</p> <p><b>Mar. 4</b> <b>Shore Dives</b> <i>North Monastery Beach</i> Carmel, CA</p>	<p><b>February 16-23, 2007</b> <i>Molokini Crater &amp; Kihei Coast</i> with <i>Mike Severns Diving</i> Maui, Hawaii</p> <p><b>March 23 to April 2, 2007</b> <i>Ocean Rover</i> Liveaboard Thailand and Myanmar</p> <p><b>July 30 to August 6, 2007</b> <i>Galapagos Eco Explorer I</i> Liveaboard Galapagos Islands, Ecuador</p> <p><b>March 20-31, 2008 <i>NEW!</i></b> <i>Undersea Hunter</i> Liveaboard Cocos Island, Costa Rica</p>



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