

Buddy Line



President's Log Entry

At our March meeting, the NCRD members present awarded the Diving For Life funds to three different worthy charities: Project Inform, Downtown Youth Clinic, and the Neil A. Christie Living Center. Look for more information about the awards in this newsletter. Congratulations to all three of these organizations!

In other news, in April, a number of us experienced amazing encounters with giant manta rays at Socorro Island. This was a huge thrill for all of us! One of my dreams has always been to dive with these huge, graceful creatures, and the experience certainly lived up to my expectations. We'll be showing off slides and videos from this terrific trip at our July meeting.

There are some behind-the-scene things going on—the board is working hard to get some of the internal processes working more smoothly. Among other things—and thanks to the diligent efforts of Hoa Tran—we will have updated by-laws to send out soon.

I would also like to thank Karen Doby for her extraordinary contributions to this month's newsletter. March was a difficult month for my partner and me, and although life has finally returned to normal, I've had little time and energy to spend on the *Buddy Line*. Thanks to Karen's initiative, thoughtfulness, and energy, we have some great articles and photos.

We also are delighted to have Peg Stone leading our November Vision trip to the Southern Channel Islands. Peg has written a fabulous description of the trip—if you haven't done the Channel Islands, don't miss it!

Finally, it's nearly time for San Francisco's annual Freedom Parade, and as always, NCRD will have a booth on that Sunday. Jack Johnson is coordinating booth efforts; look for more information from him soon. We'll need people to work in the booth, so please help out—it's a lot of fun!

Doug McGrath, President
Northern California Rainbow Divers
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Just one of many, many close encounters with the breathtaking mantas at Socorro Island. *Photo by David Zippin.*

NCRD Members Select Worthy Charities

At NCRD's March meeting, members heard presentations from several charities. Ultimately, the members present chose to split the Diving For Life award among three of them:

- \$1000 to Project Inform
- \$5308 to the Neil A. Christie Living Center (San Jose)
- \$5308 to the Downtown Youth Clinic (Oakland)

May 2005

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Calendar

- May 19
General Meeting
- June 9
General Meeting
- June 11
Diving at Pt. Lobos
- June 25-July 5
Alaska with the Dive Dogs
- June 26
Pride Weekend
- July 9
Diving at Pt. Lobos
- July 21
General Meeting
Manta Encounters
- August 13
Diving at Pt. Lobos
- August—TBA
Summer Social
- September 10
Diving at Pt. Lobos

Whale Sharks! Whale Sharks! Whale Sharks!

GLUG Whale Shark Trip—May 2006

by Karen Doby

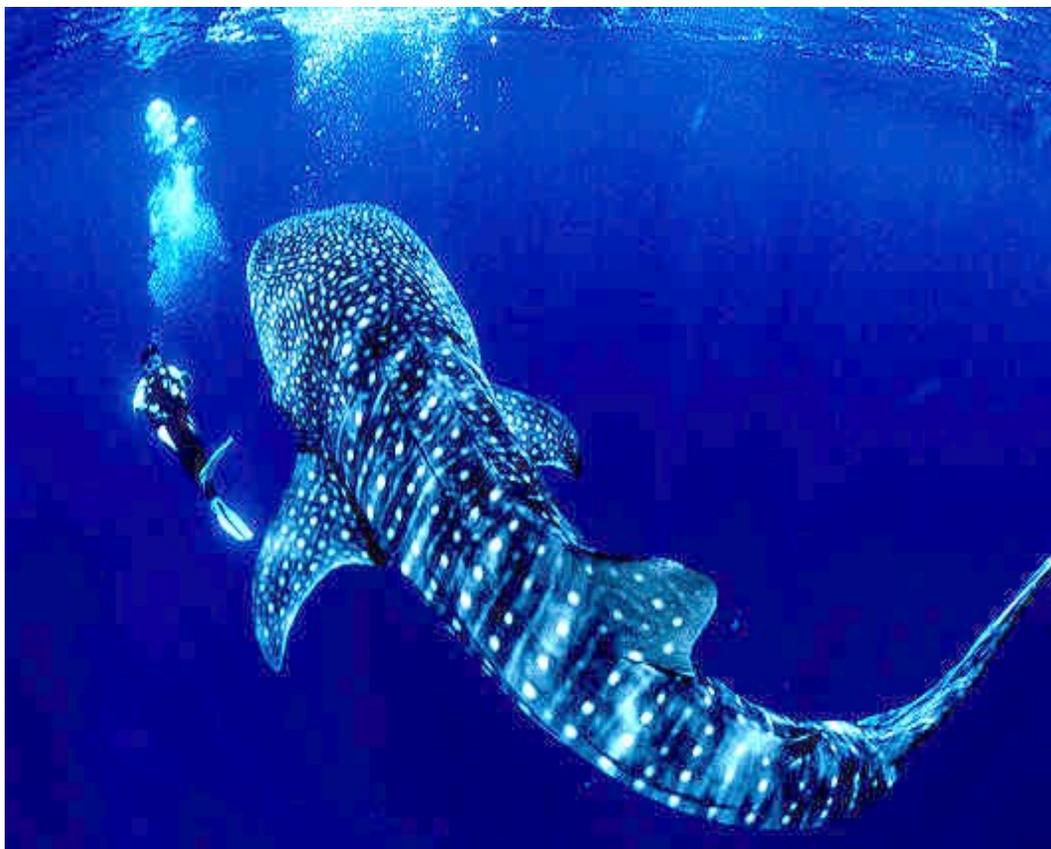
The largest fish in the sea, found in lengths up to 60 feet and weighing up to 45 tons, whale sharks are also among the most mysterious. Little is known about these magnificent, gentle giants – how many live in the world's oceans, how long they live, when they reach sexual maturity, even how they give birth. What we do know is that they are solitary dwellers, rarely found in groups, and spend most of their time in warm waters near the surface. Whale sharks are slow swimmers, cruising no faster than 3 mph, yet are thought to be highly migratory. Although their mouths are lined with three thousand very tiny hooked teeth on both jaws, whale sharks neither chew nor bite their prey, preferring instead to filter-feed on large concentrations of zooplankton, squid, and small fish. Fortunately for us, whale sharks are not aggressive, posing no threat to humans and generally sporting indifference toward scuba divers.

An excellent opportunity has arisen for NCRD members to dive with these striking creatures. London's Gay & Lesbian Underwater Group (GLUG) has invited NCRD to join them in May, 2006, on a jaunt to the Deep Blue Resort in Utila, Honduras, during high season for Central America's whale shark migration. Deep Blue is a PADI 5-star resort located right in the Honduran whale shark migration path, rendering a good possibility of whale shark sightings (of course, sightings cannot be guaranteed). Deep Blue is collaborating with ECOCEAN in a 5-year scientific research project to compile an extensive whale

shark videographic and photographic library to help ensure the conservation and future survival of these ecologically threatened animals.

In addition to whale sharks, Utila offers a rich and varied ocean environment for our diving pleasure, with warm water and clear visibility. The north side of the island is marked by sheer walls plunging to a depth of over 3,000 feet, bounding the second-largest coral reef in the world. The south side is characterized by shallow fringing reefs from 15-120 feet. On these teeming reefs, divers can expect to see a large variety of marine life including long-lure frogfish, large-eyed toad fish, hawksbill turtles, moray eels, lobsters, octopus, spotted drums, tunicates, perhaps even dolphins and manta rays.

Divers are invited for a week at the all-inclusive Deep Blue PADI Gold Palm 5-star resort, replete with spacious, air-conditioned rooms with large balconies overlooking Utila's white-sand beach onto the beckoning waters of the Honduran Caribbean. GLUG's land-only package includes all meals, 3 boat dives per dive day plus unlimited shore diving, internet access and other amenities (please note that international airfare is not included). GLUG has negotiated a significant 20% discount off Deep Blue's normal rates for an unbelievable trip



Hmmm...who's sighting whom? Photo courtesy of Deep Blue.

price of \$960, with further discounts possible if we fill the resort. This warm-water destination is one of the best dive deals of 2006 – not to mention the company of other GLBT divers from clubs around the world!

GLUG will be diving in Utila for two weeks, each week limited to twenty divers. Although the first week (April 29–May 6, 2006) has sold out almost immediately, several spaces are still available through GLUG for the second week (May 6–13, 2006). Trip dates, prices, space availability, logistics, and ongoing updates for this incredible, popular adventure are posted on GLUG’s website www.glug.co.uk and in the trip flyer at www.glug.co.uk/Events/DeepBlue2.pdf.

(All photos courtesy of AboutUtila.com; maps courtesy of Deep Blue.)



A local Utila reef resident. Photo courtesy of Deep Blue.



Yum...whale shark food! (above) Utila is off the coast of Honduras in the Caribbean (below)



Several species of frogfish can be sighted in Utila waters. Photo courtesy of Deep Blue.

Popular November Vision Trip Returns to Spectacular Southern Channel Islands

November 3–7, 2005

by Peg Stone

CRUISE FOR FOUR DAYS through the crystal waters of the Pacific in autumn, plunging into kelp beds filled with rockfish and brilliant orange garibaldis, stalking the rare nudibranch, spying on scorpionfish secreted among the hydrocoral – this diver's bliss awaits you on NCRD's annual trip to the Southern and Northern Channel Islands. Such fabled dives as Farnsworth Bank, Nine Fathoms and Wycoff's Ledge have lured divers to the Channel Islands for decades. November offers peak visibility – 60 to 80 feet is not unusual – and temperate weather. NCRD's annual voyage on the Vision promises, as always, to be an enticing combination of good friends, old and new; great food; and lots of spectacular diving. By arranging a rare four-day trip, we offer the best of the Southern and Northern Channel Islands at the best time of the year.

What makes this trip so special? First, the disparity in marine life between the Southern and Northern Channel Islands gives you a broader range of dive experiences than almost any four-day trip can



Early arrivals start to load their gear. Nothing to do for the next three days except life's essential functions: eating, sleeping, and diving!

offer anywhere in the world. Different species haunt the kelp beds of these islands because of water temperature differences and every dive offers something unique: sea lions that frolic with you throughout the dive, moray eels gazing from beneath a ledge, scads of small colorful nudibranchs everywhere you look, horn and swell sharks sleeping in the rock

piles, bat rays circling above on a night dive. Weather dictates where we'll dive, but with even modest luck, you will come back to dock with a life experience under your belt from one or more of these dives.

Second, the trip offers dives interesting to both newer and more experienced divers. There are plenty of shallower dives near the

island edges; and also some early morning pinnacle plunges that will satisfy the most jaded of dive addicts. And if you're new to the club, this is the place to make friends and become an integral part of the Rainbow Divers community. Even if you board the boat not knowing a soul aboard, you will disembark with new friends and buddies to dive with back in the Bay Area.

Third, there is the camaraderie of fellow queers (and friends) on the boat – shall we watch *Bound* tonight on the VCR? Or a John Waters flick? Who's up for another hilarious round of hearts or Taboo between dives? Did you see that black bass? It was big as a Volkswagen bus! Let's watch that underwater video shot on the last dive while eating those warm



Jim McDermott cruising through heavy vegetation near Bird Rock.
Photo by Ralph Wolf

mid-morning muffins. And who's in line first for more of that fabled Vision cuisine? I won't even discuss what happens below decks in the bunkroom while the happily coupled and exhausted 5-dive-a-day divers are snoring away – needless to say, what happens on the Vision stays on the Vision!

Fourth, we limit the load on the Vision to 28 divers (if non-divers come along, we can expand this up to 30) – on a boat that holds 40. This makes room on the dive deck, speeds up tank refills, and shortens the line for all that delicious food! It also leaves some bottom bunks empty, so we can store our many après-dive fashion statements comfortably!

Finally, if you've always wanted to venture beyond your tropical experiences and try colder water diving, this is the place and time! The water temperatures are often in the 60's, much cozier than Monterey, and there are plenty of more experienced divers to buddy up with. We hope to arrange for classes to be offered during the trip. And it's a great place to try night diving – with that special dessert waiting on board when you come back, and the spectacle of sea lions and harbor seals chasing the flying fish drawn by the boat's spot lights.

Three special plusses make this dive trip a must. First, you can bring non-diving partners and friends along—we have options to hike the islands, play on kayaks, or simply suntan and read trashy novels on the upper deck. Second, for those who sign up promptly, there's a special lottery that will grant one lucky winner a half-price trip! Third, if we sell out this limited-load trip, we will continue the NCRD tradition of giving rebates estimated at \$20 per person to all NCRD members on the trip. As a nonprofit club, our purpose is to give you the best dive experience at the most reasonable price we can. We get a 30% discount on prices by booking the whole boat—and we're passing that on to you!



Frances, Kim, Sharon, and other Rainbow Divers on the October 2001 trip. Photo by Kristin Barker

We will depart by 10 PM on the night of Thursday, November 3 from Santa Barbara and return, exhausted and exhilarated, by 5PM on Monday, November 7. With the rise in gas prices and the extended trip to the southern islands, the

trip cost has, unfortunately, gone up. The cost for the four days of sleeping, diving, and eating is \$675. For this price we even throw in pods of dolphins chasing the bow

Date	Due
Now through June 30	NCRD member exclusive registration period
July 1	Trip open to non-members
By July 1 or with application	Application and \$175 deposit due
July 15	Additional \$250 due
August 15	Final \$250 due
August 31	Deadline for payments to be eligible for ½ price lottery
September 15	Lottery winner drawn
By September 30	Bunk assignments—first paid, first assigned basis
By October 7	Directions, gear rental guidelines, request for dietary, rides needed and offered, and other details sent to participants
October 28	Last minute reminder email sent
November 3, by 10 PM	All on board!
November 7, 5 PM	Return to dock

The Vision Trip (continued)

waves while the boat spins donuts in the middle of the Santa Barbara channel on the way back to port!

So don't miss out! Send in your application now – and encourage some friends to join you! The application is posted at rainbowdivers.org. If you have questions, you can e-mail the coordinator, Peg Stone, at mjstone529@comcast.net.

As to payment timing, there are two incentives to pay early—first, participants choose their bunk assignments in order of receipt of full payment. If you have a favorite bunk on the Vision, send in your full payment right away and get your pick of the best spots! Second, remember, all participants fully paid up by August 30 will participate in the special lottery for the one half-price discount on

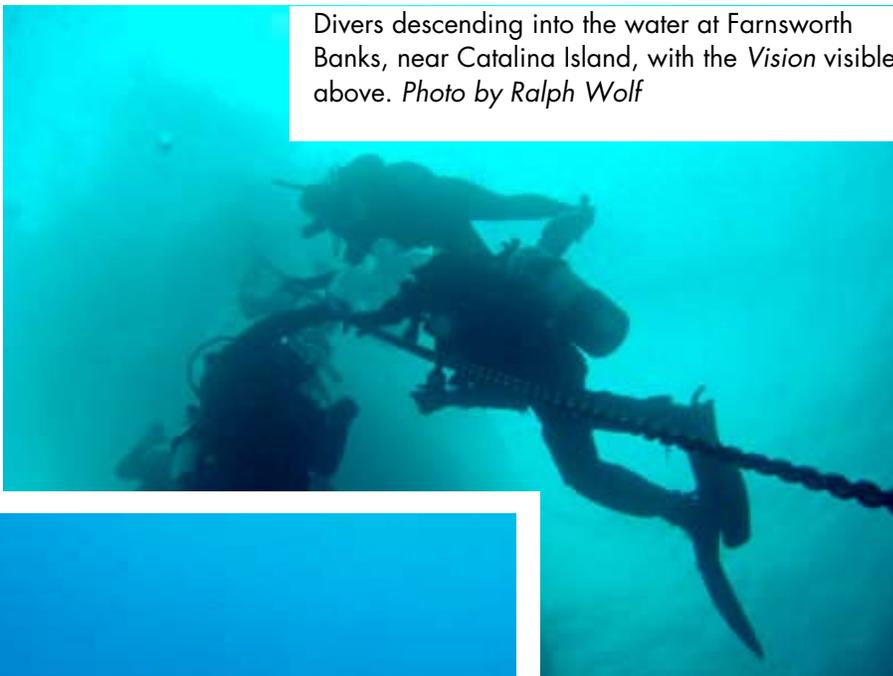


Two bat rays out in the sandy area near the sea lion rookery, at Santa Barbara Island. *Photo by Jim McDermott*

A group of sea lions near the rookery at Santa Barbara Island.
Photo by Jim McDermott



Divers descending into the water at Farnsworth Banks, near Catalina Island, with the Vision visible above. *Photo by Ralph Wolf*



trip spots are non-transferable. If the boat sells out despite cancellations, those canceling will have their fees refunded – to the extent that the boat remains fully booked – on a first-paid-first-refunded basis (another incentive to pay early!). In case of trip cancellation by the club due to any circumstances, all payments are fully refundable.

the trip given to the lucky lottery winner. The odds on winning this price break beat anything you can find at a casino—so don't forget to send in your payments when Peg sends you a reminder! A four-day trip to the Channel Islands for \$338—such a deal! All deposits are nonrefundable and

NCRD members have an exclusive sign-up period, and the sole right to rebates – and membership is cheap, easy and rewarding (I won't say who in the club this reminds me of, partly because there are so many of you...), so if you want to sign up for this trip right away and you are not yet a member (or let your membership lapse recently), just go to the website and become a member of the best little ole dive club in the U.S.!

See you on the boat!

Local Diving Update

*Fee Increases for Point Lobos
by Karen Doby*

SCUBA divers visiting Whalers and Bluefish Coves pay a small permit fee into a special account that supports the Point Lobos dive program. Since this program was established ten years ago, tens of thousands of divers have been awed by the raw beauty of this pristine marine reserve. In addition to world-class diving, the park provides a picnic area, a fresh-water rinse area, flush toilets and a boat ramp, all of which help make local [Point Lobos diving](#) a very comfortable and enjoyable experience. These services are provided and maintained by park staff out of funds paid by divers into the special account.

On March 1, 2005, Point Lobos raised the diving reservation and permit fee for all scuba divers. Accordingly, NCRD's board has increased club fees from \$7 to \$10 per diver for club-sponsored events in Point Lobos. In addition, vehicle entrance fees to the park will increase on July 1, 2005, to \$8 per automobile.

As many as 15 buddy teams per day are permitted to dive in Point Lobos. The diving permit allows divers entry into the reserve as early as 9 a.m. until half an hour before the posted closing time (5 p.m. in winter and 7 p.m. during summer hours). Please note that divers are expected to be out of the water at least 30-45 minutes before the park closes for the day. Additional rules and regulations are posted at the rangers' entrance station and on the park's website:

<http://pt-lobos.parks.state.ca.us/geninfo/rules.htm>

Check out the NCRD-sponsored group dives to this protected marine reserve. The \$10 fee per person covers the park diving fee plus NCRD amenities. The [NCRD calendar](#) lists the dates for all club outings to this incredible Northern California dive site.

SCUBA Show 2005 Coming in May

by Karen Doby

On May 21-22, the Long Beach Convention Center will once again host the largest dive expo in the western U.S., the SCUBA Show 2005. Unlike DEMA, which targets only diving industry professionals, the SCUBA Show is oriented toward consumers. For a full two days, the Convention Center will be brimming with dive travel agents, charter boat operators, dive resort managers, equipment manufacturers, retail shops, and many others to give divers like you and me an opportunity to learn about the latest in dive technologies and destinations, and take advantage of show specials and other great deals on equipment and dive travel.

A visit to the exhibit hall, which sprawls over 57,000 square feet, is always an adventure not to be missed. There is usually so much activity in the exhibit area that it can be tempting just to wander for a few hours to get a sense of its layout and representation before starting serious discussions with any of the vendors. Booth after booth is filled with equipment manufacturers on hand to introduce and demonstrate the latest and most popular dive gear and related accessories. Retail shops with gear on hand for store promotions will often have drawings and door prizes for free giveaways and substantial discounts. Travel agents, liveaboard operators, and vacation retreats from around the world will have videos, photos, and representatives on premises to talk about the features and amenities of their specific operations. Naturally, many of these vendors offer show specials and significant discounts to SCUBA Show attendees. In the past, some truly incredible deals have been offered to introduce divers to unknown and exotic locations.

One of my show favorites is the continuously running underwater film festival. A welcome and quiet respite, the film festival offers solace from the at-times

oversensory exhibit hall experience, offering instead a diversity of short films ranging from ecology issues in the Galápagos, to wreck diving in Bermuda, safe use of computers and other gear, as well as highlights of liveaboard experiences in every corner of the globe. In addition, three concurrent seminar tracks feature live presentations from established experts in various aspects of scuba: underwater photography and video; dive medicine and safety; wreck, cave and other technical diving; and dive travel. The information in these talks have helped countless divers develop skills, learn more about dive safety and make informed decisions on gear upgrades, equipment purchases, and vacation destinations. Featured speakers and topics vary from year to year, so that presentations are always fresh and timely for the audience.

Finally, one of the best attributes of the SCUBA Show is that it never fails to give something back to the community it serves. Proceeds from the Saturday night Casino party are donated to the non-profit Catalina Conservancy Divers, a group of volunteers working to protect and restore the underwater marine ecosystem of Santa Catalina Island. This group directs and sponsors envi-

(continued on page 8)



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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, May 19, 7:00 PM

The LGBT Center, San Francisco

At our next general meeting, we'll have a trip report from the St. Lucia trip from last January, information on the upcoming Vision trip in November, and a DVD from Wakatobi Dive Resort in Indonesia (to gauge interest in a trip there).

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, 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 June meeting.

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 members outside San Francisco, the joint meetings are significantly closer to home, and we hope to see more faces from the South and East Bay communities.

SCUBA Show (continued)

ronmental research and cleanup, species identification, and recreational diver education in the Southern Channel Islands.

Because the SCUBA Show is held in Long Beach, the weekend can be extended to include several dive-related side trips to nearby areas of interest. Southern California beach diving is excellent; one of my favorite Orange County haunts is Divers' Cove in north Laguna Beach. Santa Catalina Island is an hour's ferry ride away, where divers can enjoy the protected underwater marine park at the Casino wall, or just enjoy the picturesque town of Avalon. Dive boats leaving from the nearby 22nd street landing in San Pedro often have space available for a 3- or 4-tank ocean dive. Long Beach's renowned Aquarium of the Pacific is literally next door to the Convention Center itself.

And, of course, the gay scenes in Long Beach and nearby Los Angeles are alive with restaurants, bars, films, dance halls and other activities to fill those evening surface intervals.

Detailed information and advance registration for the SCUBA Show 2005 are available online at

www.saintbrendan.com/attend05_info/info05.html